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Peng, Norman; Chen, Annie

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Norman Peng[a] and Annie Chen[b]

[a]Glasgow Caledonian University, UK; [b]University of Roehampton, UK

Author's contact detail:
Dr. Norman Peng
Professor in Marketing
Glasgow Caledonian University
Glasgow School for Business and Society
Cowcaddens Rd, Glasgow G4 0BA
Email: norman_peng@hotmail.com
Telephone: +44 (0)141 331 3117

Professor Annie Chen
Roehampton University
Roehampton Lane
London, SW15 5PJ
T: +4420 8392 7311
E: annie.chen@roehampton.ac.uk

Author bio

Annie Chen is a Professor at the University of Roehampton. Dr. Chen's publication has appeared in the International Journal of Hospitality Management, Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Travel and Tourism Management, and International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management.

Norman Peng is a Professor in Marketing at Glasgow Caledonian University. His publications have appeared in the Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Travel and Tourism Management, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, and International Journal of Hospitality Management.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to conceptualize the antecedents and consequences of luxury hotel consumers' sense of belonging. This study incorporates an "expectation" variable into a stimulus-organism-response model to investigate the influence of perceived experiential value on consumers' satisfaction, sense of belonging, and behavioral intentions. In total, 489 Taiwanese consumers were recruited, and structural equation modeling was used to examine the proposed model. The results demonstrate that perceived experiential value influences consumers' satisfaction, which in turn influences their sense of belonging. Moreover, a sense of belonging can affect consumers' consumption intentions. Furthermore, expectations positively moderate the relationship between perceived experiential value and consumer satisfaction.

Keywords: luxury hotel; expectation; experiential value; sense of belonging, SOR model; social identity theory

INTRODUCTION

The global personal luxury goods and services market was expected to grow by 6-8% and to be valued at US$320.8 billion in 2018. Approximately one-third of this steadily growing market relates to the consumption of luxury services (Bain & Company 2018). When participating in tourism activities, some tourists opt for luxury service products, as these products have become more accessible to middle-class consumers since the 1980s (Hung et al. 2011). This development has attracted researcher interest, which has continued to increase since the 2007 global financial crisis (Chen and Peng 2018).

Scholars and marketers have proposed that additional studies of this market and its consumers can have theoretical and practical implications (Chen and Peng 2014; D'Arpizio et al. 2017), but such research is scarce. As a result, several gaps exist in the literature regarding luxury service products, such as luxury hotels. Based on work by Berthon et al. (2009) and Chen and Peng (2014), a luxury hotel is defined as a hotel that is unique, has superior quality, provides excellent service, and symbolizes the wealth and status of its consumers.

Research findings from existing studies examining luxury good consumption behavior might not be fully transferable to luxury service product consumption behavior because of service products' intangible and perishable characteristics (Chen and Peng 2018). Such characteristics are particularly relevant in the case of experiential value because consuming luxury services is expensive and typically lasts only several days or a few hours. Experiential value has been suggested to be a key factor influencing an individual's satisfaction and/or behavioral intentions; however, studies investigating the effect of experiential value have reported inconsistent findings regarding its relationship with luxury products (Chen and Peng 2018; Shukla and Purani 2012; Wu and Liang 2009). Because of these inconsistencies, the literature concerning the effect of experiential value on consumers of service-based products can benefit from additional research. Furthermore, few studies have explored consumers' intentions to purchase luxury service products when participating in tourism activities. The findings of the few studies that have examined this behavior suggest that consumers' perceptions of the value of luxury services might be different when they are traveling for tourism purposes from when they are not (Chen and Peng 2018; Yang and Mattila 2016) Additional research on consumers' intentions to purchase luxury service products may provide a new understanding of the appeal of luxury service products.

Studies adopting social identity theory to investigate brand community suggest that individuals experience a sense of security when using products/brands with which they have a strong emotional connection (Sen et al. 2015). Additionally, consumers will act in favor of a brand if they feel that they belong to its community (Tuškej et al. 2013). Researchers have observed that marketing managers have tried multiple strategies to establish a more enduring emotional bond between consumers and their brands/products (e.g., Hung et al. 2011; Shukla and Purani 2012). Some consumers have been shown to have a strong sense of belonging to the community of a luxury product/brand. Nevertheless, current luxury service product consumption studies can further examine how to harness luxury product consumers' sense of belonging and how it may influence consumers' behavioral intentions.

Third, Wong and Dioko (2013) suggested that consumers with high expectations have a narrow tolerance zone and are easier to please when service providers' performance and value meet their desired service level. This factor might be particularly relevant in the context of purchasing a luxury service when traveling because this might be an expensive and rare consumption decision that occurs in an environment with which the consumer is less familiar (Berthon et al. 2009; Chen and Peng 2018). However, no known study has explored how consumers' decision to purchase luxury services might be moderated by their expectations.

An examination of this factor's influence can provide new insight to enhance our understanding of consumers' luxury service product consumption experience.

Building upon social identity theory, this research investigates how luxury hotels' experiential value influences consumers' intentions to revisit and recommend such hotels by incorporating an "expectation" variable into the stimulus-organism-response model (SOR model). The SOR model suggests that environmental stimuli (S) can influence organisms (O), which can in turn affect responses (R) (Chen et al. 2015). This model is suitable for this research because luxury service providers are known to use different environmental stimuli, such as conspicuous decorations, to promote consumers' positive emotions and subsequent behavioral intentions (Jang and Namkung 2009).

Using the SOR model, the purpose of this research is to offer a multidisciplinary social science perspective on the antecedents and consequences of luxury hotel consumers' sense of belonging. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to the literature and practice in the following ways. First, it investigates the factors that contribute to luxury hotel consumers' behavioral intentions. In particular, the effect of consumers' sense of belonging is explored. Second, this research examines the effect of service staff excellence, aesthetics, escapism, and consumer return on investment (CROI) on consumer satisfaction. Third, this study investigates the moderating effect of expectations on the relationship between the experiential value of luxury hotels and consumer satisfaction.

Research context

This research focuses on consumers from Taiwan. Between 2017 and 2018, the Asia-Pacific region exhibited larger outbound tourism visitor growth (4.5%) than regions such as Europe (4.3%) and the Americas (4.3%). In the Asia-Pacific region, Taiwan has performed well in terms of outbound tourism visitor growth since 2015 (Statista 2019; Tourism Bureau 2019). This is partially because Taiwan's society and businesses began to recognize the importance of tourism activities after the 1980s (Tourism Bureau 2019). In 2017 and 2018, 33.9% of Taiwanese consumers made at least one international trip, and their average trip duration was approximately 8 nights (Tourism Bureau 2019). Moreover, Taiwanese consumers have shown that they are passionate about luxury services (Chen and Peng 2018). Based on these developments, it can be inferred that some Taiwanese tourists have several opportunities to purchase hotel stays before traveling, and some tourists are motivated to purchase or repurchase luxury hotel stays (Peng and Chen 2019b).

A review of studies involving Taiwanese tourists' luxury hotel consumption behavior found that participants were mainly aged between 31 and 50 years and held a university degree or higher (Peng and Chen 2019a; 2019b). Additionally, more female than male consumers stayed in luxury hotels, and many participants stayed in luxury hotels on more than one occasion. Regarding their consumption characteristics, Taiwanese luxury hotel consumers who travel for tourism purposes prefer hotels that have a high utilitarian benefit, provide hedonic value, and can symbolize consumers' wealth and status. Such consumers place less emphasis on luxury hotels' economic value (Peng and Chen 2019a). Notably, there are different types of luxury hotel customers (e.g., business versus tourism), and they may have different <u>preferences</u> when choosing a hotel. <u>However, this is not within the scope of this research.</u>

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of luxury products/brands and luxury hotels

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Luxury is a relative concept, and the idea of luxury can fluctuate over time (Ko et al. 2019). However, researchers investigating luxury products and brands seem to have reached some consensus regarding the characteristics of luxury products and luxury hotels. For example, Berthon et al. (2009) suggested that luxury products are products that are carefully crafted, unique, and conspicuous. Researchers studying luxury hotels have proposed definitions of luxury hotels based on their benefits. Peng and Chen (2019a) defined luxury hotels as hotels that are unique, are superior in quality, provide excellent service, and can symbolize the wealth and status of their customers. Other researchers have proposed definitions of luxury hotels based on their star ratings. In their studies, Huang et al. (2015) and Kele et al. (2017) considered hotels with 4 or 5 stars to be luxury hotels. This present study adapts Peng and Chen's (2019a) definition as the theoretical definition and uses the hotel star rating as the operational definition.

Overarching theory and concept – Social identity theory and sense of belonging
This research adapts social identity theory as its overarching theory and uses the SOR model as its main framework. Social identity theory suggests that individuals have the desire to belong to a particular community and behave accordingly (Tuškej et al. 2013). As companies increasingly realize that they may be able to improve their business performance through a deeper relationship with customers, the concept of social identity has gained prominence in the brand community field (Heere et al. 2011).

Studies based on social identity theory have found that consumers may develop customer-company identification because they share similar self-definitional attributes with the company (Tuškej et al. 2013). Social identity theory is also useful for examining tourists, as these consumers often make consumption decisions based on their personal and social identities (Qu and Lee 2011).

Brand community studies adopting social identity theory have found that individuals experience a sense of belonging when they use products/brands with which they have a strong emotional bond (Sen et al. 2015). A sense of belonging can be defined as a consumer's feeling of identification with or attachment to a company and/or an organization (Lin et al. 2014). Individuals engage in behavior that is favorable for a company if they feel a sense of belonging (White et al. 2012). For example, social media users are more likely to use a platform continuously once they develop a sense of belonging with that platform (Lin et al. 2014).

The concept of a sense of belonging has been studied in the context of online behavior (e.g., Laux et al. 2016; Lim 2014; Tsai and Bagozzi 2014). Consumers develop a sense of belonging to an online community by developing and maintaining relationships and feelings of membership, identification, and shared values as they continue to be exposed to it (Lim 2014; Tsai and Bagozzi 2014). A sense of belonging differs from loyalty, as the latter can be considered customers' behavior in purchasing and repurchasing a specific branded product (Al-Agaga and Nor 2012). However, a sense of belonging is often considered an antecedent to consumer loyalty and behavioral intentions (Al-Agaga and Nor 2012; Hung et al. 2019).

To summarize, social identity theory suggests that individuals have a desire to belong to a particular community and behave accordingly. In the consumption context, consumers may develop customer-company identification because they share similar self-definitional attributes with the company. This theory serves as this research's overarching theory to help explain why luxury hotel consumers might revisit and recommend a preferred luxury hotel. Furthermore, in the context of this research, the authors suggest that the sense of belonging is not the same as loyalty. A sense of belonging can be defined as a consumer's feeling of identification with or attachment to a company and/or an organization (Lin et al. 2014),

whereas loyalty refers to customers' behavior in purchasing and repurchasing a specific branded product (Al-Agaga and Nor 2012). However, the two concepts are closely related (Al-Agaga and Nor 2012). With the literature on social identity theory reviewed, the next section introduces the framework of this study.

Stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model in previous hospitality research
Under this research's overarching theory, which is the social identity theory, the SOR model is used as its main framework to conceptualize luxury hotel consumers' behavioral intentions (Chen et al. 2015). The SOR model has been applied to luxury service product consumption contexts (e.g., Chen et al. 2015; Jang and Namkung 2009; Peng et al. 2017). Jang and Namkung (2009) used an extended SOR model to investigate the influence of luxury restaurant-specific stimuli on luxury restaurant customers' emotions. In addition to incorporating restaurant-specific stimuli, they also included restaurant-specific measures of emotion. These authors found that service quality and atmospherics positively affect customers' positive emotions, whereas product quality has a negative influence on customers' negative emotions (Jang and Namkung 2009). Most importantly, their findings show that only positive emotions can significantly influence luxury restaurant diners' subsequent behavioral intention.

Chen et al. (2015) investigated Taiwanese diners' luxury restaurant consumption behavior by incorporating customers' interactions with other customers into an SOR model. Their findings reveal that luxury restaurants' stimuli can influence diners' emotions, which in turn can influence their intentions to revisit and recommend the restaurants. Specifically, restaurants' atmospherics can positively influence diners' positive emotions, while food and diners' interactions with other customers can have a negative effect on customers' negative emotions. Furthermore, restaurants' service staff can affect diners' positive and negative emotions significantly. In contrast to Jang and Namkung's (2009) results, Chen et al.'s study found that both positive and negative emotions can influence diners' intentions to recommend and revisit a restaurant.

Building upon Chen et al.'s (2015) research, Peng et al. (2017) added a "chef's image" variable to their proposed SOR model to examine teppanyaki restaurant stimuli's effect on diners' emotions and behavioral intentions. Their findings show that the chef's image, service staff quality, and food quality can affect the positive and negative emotions of diners. Other diner and restaurant atmospherics affect only the negative emotions of diners. Finally, both positive and negative emotions can affect diners' behavioral intentions toward teppanyaki restaurants. Compared to previous studies, the present research is unique as it focuses on luxury hotels and their experiential value. Furthermore, it separately investigates consumers' satisfaction, which is a relatively short-term emotional response, and their sense of belonging, which is a more intense and enduring emotional reaction to that brand.

Experiential value and expectation
The present study focuses on experiential value when examining the influence of the luxury hotel environment on consumers because a significant part of customers' luxury service consumption experiences is co-created by the service staff and customers (Peng et al. 2017). According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), consumers sometimes acquire products for the experiences associated with a consumption decision.

The ability of experiential value to evoke consumers' fantasies and feelings and create a sense of fun might be particularly relevant to the promotion and consumption of luxury service products because of these products' intangible nature (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Berthon et al. 2009). Luxury hospitality service providers have been found to use

multiple methods to stimulate consumers' emotions and/or satisfaction (Chen and Peng 2014; Chen et al. 2015). When examining luxury restaurants' perceived experiential value, Wu and Liang (2009) suggested that this context includes aesthetics, escapism, CROI, and service staff excellence. In this research, service staff excellence refers to lodgers' overall perception of the relative inferiority or superiority of a luxury hotel's service personnel (Chen et al. 2015). CROI relates to consumers' perception of the cost and sacrifice involved in staying in a luxury hotel (Wiedmann et al. 2009). Aesthetics measures a consumer's perception of a luxury hotel's beauty and artistic value (Chen et al. 2015). Escapism refers to a luxury hotel's ability to help lodgers relax, escape from real life, and/or avoid real-life problems (Bowditch et al. 2018).

To measure the subsequent influence of luxury hotels' perceived experiential value, this research investigates consumers' satisfaction and sense of belonging (Lin et al. 2014). Lin et al. (2014) stated that satisfaction and sense of belonging are both emotional constructs. Satisfaction measures a lodger's overall affective appraisal of a luxury hotel in which he/she has stayed (Hung et al. 2019). This research measures consumers' evaluation of hotels' aesthetics, service staff excellence, and ability to provide a temporal escape to its visitors and whether the cost of staying at a luxury hotel is justifiable. Sense of belonging measures a consumer's feeling of identification with or attachment to a luxury hotel in which he/she stayed (Lin et al. 2014). Sense of belonging is a more enduring reaction than satisfaction (Lin et al. 2014). By testing both variables, this research is able to explore the connection between a relatively short-term response to a luxury hotel's environmental stimuli and a more enduring connection between a luxury hotel and its consumers. To measure consumers' responses, this study focuses on behavioral intentions, which measure consumers' level of commitment to consistently revisiting and recommending a preferred luxury hotel (Jang and Namkung 2009).

This study incorporates consumers' expectations into the proposed framework as a moderating variable. In this study, expectations are what customers feel they should receive while staying in a luxury hotel (Wong et al. 2017). The expectation/disconfirmation paradigm is one of the dominant models in consumer satisfaction research (Harrington et al. 2011; Oliver 1980). Some scholars assume that satisfaction is the outcome of a comparison between the expected and perceived performance of a product or service. However, other researchers believe that expectations have other roles (Fornell et al. 1996; Parasuraman et al. 1988). For example, Wong and Dioko's (2013) research on casino visitors is one of several studies that have extended the disconfirmation paradigm literature by suggesting that expectations have a moderating effect on the relationships among perceived performance, perceived value, and customer satisfaction. Consumers who stay in luxury hotels when participating in tourism activities might have high expectations of this service because this consumption experience does not occur on a regular basis and luxury hotels are more expensive than non-luxury hotels. Nevertheless, the moderating effect of expectations on the relationship between experiential value and satisfaction can benefit from additional research.
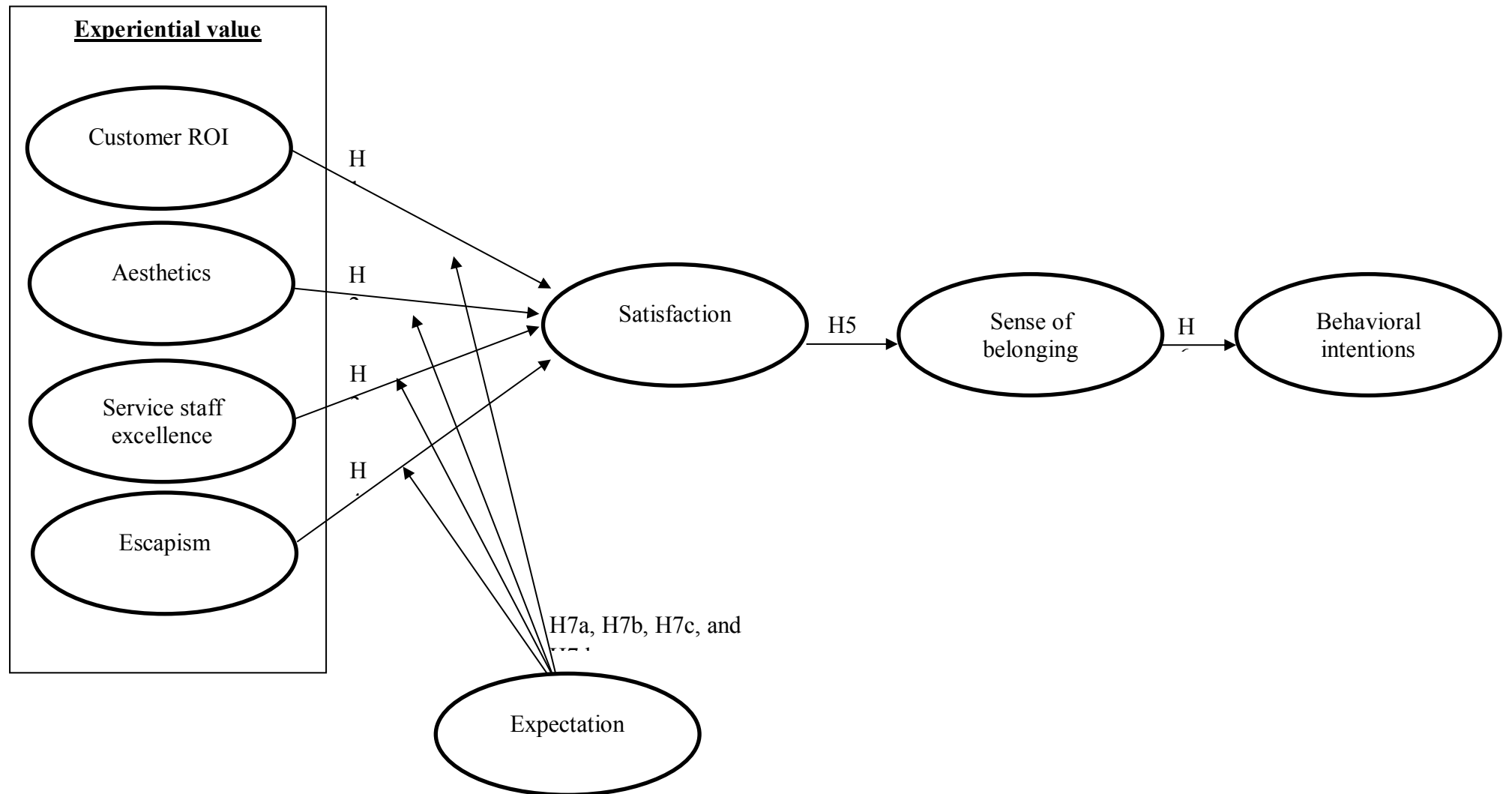
RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES
The research framework of this paper is based on a review of literature examining the SOR model, perceived experiential value, and expectations (Figure 1). The first hypothesis of this research examines the effect of CROI on consumer satisfaction with luxury hotels. Researchers who have examined luxury products' consumption value have recommended that consumers compare the utilities derived from a brand/product with the sacrifices made to obtain it (Hennigs et al. 2012; Shukla and Purani 2012; Wiedmann et al. 2009). Consumers are aware that luxury service-based products can be more expensive than non-luxury

products; however, they justify the cost because of the potential benefits, such as positive memories (Tsai and Wang 2017; Wu and Liang 2009).

In their research on how consumers select fine dining restaurants, Harrington et al. (2011) revealed that suitable prices and value for money are two important criteria consumers consider. Similar to the consumption of luxury restaurants, consumers must weigh the cost and sacrifice involved before staying in luxury hotels, as more than a room and bed are required to satisfy consumers' basic needs; the experience must also include superior atmospherics and product/service quality (Chen and Peng 2014). As consumers try to maximize benefits and minimize costs when staying in luxury hotels, they are concerned about issues such as whether their investment yields adequate positive return. The following hypothesis (H1) will be tested:

H1: Consumers' return on investment has a positive effect on their satisfaction with luxury hotels.

Figure 1- Research Framework

Experiential value

Customer ROI

Aesthetics

Service staff excellence

Escapism

H

H

H

H

Satisfaction

H5

Sense of belonging

H

Behavioral intentions

H7a, H7b, H7c, and

Expectation

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The second hypothesis is related to the influence of aesthetics on consumers' satisfaction with luxury hotels. Studies on environmental psychology have noted that consumers' evaluation of luxury service-based products is heavily influenced by the consumption environment (Chen et al. 2015). Luxury service providers, such as luxury restaurants, use multiple methods to stimulate consumers' sense of enjoyment (Yang and Mattila 2016). One of these methods involves highlighting their product's aesthetic value, such as restaurant decorations and ornaments (Chen et al. 2015; Chen and Peng 2018).

In their research, Wang et al. (2010) and Wang et al. (2011) confirmed that perceived aesthetics is a key factor that can influence consumers' satisfaction with a consumption experience. In the case of a luxury hotel stay, researchers have noted that luxury hotels build their image and attract consumers by emphasizing their aesthetic value (Chen and Peng 2014; Yang et al. 2015). For example, luxury hotels invest heavily in their décor (Yang et al. 2015). Based on the above discussion, we will test the following hypothesis (H2):

H2: Aesthetics has a positive effect on consumers' satisfaction with luxury hotels.

The third relationship examined in this research is the impact of service staff excellence on luxury hotel consumers' satisfaction. In luxury hospitality product consumption literature, the performance of service staff is a key factor that can affect consumers' emotions and satisfaction (Chen et al. 2015; Peng et al. 2017; Wu and Liang 2009). For example, if staff members in luxury restaurants are knowledgeable about their products, such as the characteristics of all the items on the menu, then diners are happier with their experiences (Peng et al. 2017).

In the luxury hotel consumption context, service personnel have several opportunities to interact with consumers, such as greeting them when they arrive and providing room service. In their study, Mohsin and Lockyer (2010) suggested that service staff are what make a luxury hotel unique because most luxury hotels have similarly luxurious physical facilities. This research will examine the following hypothesis (H3):

H3: Service staff excellence has a positive effect on consumers' satisfaction with luxury hotels.

The fourth hypothesis examined in this research is the impact of escapism on luxury hotel consumers' satisfaction. In the literature on memorable tourism experiences, researchers have found that engaging in different experiential contexts that are unlike tourists' daily routines, such as their work and home lives, is one of the key factors that motivates individuals to participate in tourism activities (Kim et al. 2002). For example, one of the top reasons that individuals attend festivals is to escape from daily life in a manner that enables the creation and sharing of memorable experiences (Kim et al. 2002).

Escapism is also important to consider when studying consumers' satisfaction with their luxury product consumption experience. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver's (2018) interviewees mentioned that luxury products have the ability to provide a temporal escape. This is because the symbolic meaning of luxury brands often consists of certain fantasy-based, out-of-the-ordinary elements. Through marketing communication materials and physical environment management, luxury service providers, such as hotel, resort, and cruise operators, try to create an image that their products can provide consumers with an experience that is different from their everyday routine (Hwang and Han 2016). Based on the literature concerning tourism experience and luxury product consumption, the following hypothesis (H4) will be investigated:

H4: Escapism has a positive effect on consumers' satisfaction with luxury hotels.

The fifth hypothesis examines the influence of satisfaction on luxury hotel consumers' sense of belonging. Online community researchers have studied satisfaction's influence on sense of belonging (Lim 2014; Lin et al. 2014). For example, Lin et al. (2014) suggested that satisfaction and sense of belonging are both emotional constructs applicable to social network site users, but satisfaction is an antecedent to the sense of belonging. These authors suggested that satisfied consumers are more likely to feel that they are a member of a social network site's community. In the tourism event management literature, Lee et al. (2012) found that a festival attendee's satisfaction can affect his/her sense of belonging in relation to the event, the destination, and other attendees.

Studies have shown that consumers' satisfaction with luxury brands, which is a relatively short-term emotional reaction, often causes them to develop a more intense and enduring reaction to that brand, such as a sense of belonging (Hung et al. 2011; Shim et al. 2017). Having highly satisfied customers is generally important for luxury brands' success, which might explain why luxury brands, including luxury tourism products, often have a strong community of supporters who feel a strong sense of belongingness to the brand. Building upon Lee et al.'s (2012) findings and the literature concerning luxury brand communities, the present study extends the luxury service product consumption literature by proposing the following hypothesis (H5):

H5: Satisfaction has a positive effect on consumers' sense of belonging to luxury hotels.

The sixth hypothesis relates to the effect of consumers' sense of belonging on their behavioral intentions. Researchers studying brand communities have proposed that a sense of belonging is a key antecedent to consumers' recommendation and purchase intentions (Cheung and Lee 2012). This is because consumers with a strong sense of belonging to a brand are more likely to experience a sense of comfort and security when they use the brand's products (Sen et al. 2015).

The concept of brand community has been investigated in the contexts of social network sites and tourism destinations (Ekinci et al. 2013; Lin et al. 2014). The results of these studies have demonstrated that being able to identify with a brand and its community can shape consumers' revisit and recommendation intentions. Hospitality research has also found that the key to developing a long-term relationship with consumers is building consumers' sense of belonging with regard to service providers (Tsai 2014). Having a strong brand community might be advantageous for luxury hotels because selecting tourism products, including hotels, requires some planning (Sirakaya and Woodside 2005). If consumers feel that they are members of a luxury hotel's community, the process of planning hotel stays might be less complicated because consumers have certain levels of attachment to and confidence in the hotel; therefore, these consumers are more likely to recommend and revisit that hotel (H6).

H6: Sense of belonging has a positive effect on consumers' behavioral intentions.

The seventh hypothesis investigates the ability of expectations to moderate a luxury hotel's perceived experiential value and consumers' satisfaction. A review of the luxury product consumption behavior literature shows no known study has investigated this relationship. Nevertheless, there is circumstantial evidence to support this proposition.

Some researchers have suggested that expectations might have indirect effects on consumers' purchase behavior (Wong and Dioko 2013). For example, Wong and Dioko (2013) extend the disconfirmation paradigm literature by confirming that the influence of perceived value on satisfaction can be positively moderated by customers' expectations. Similarly, Matzler et al. (2007) propose that spending levels, which are often related to tourists' expectations, moderate the attribute performance-satisfaction-loyalty chain in the tourism context.

In the case of luxury hospitality services, consumers' expectations might be able to moderate the influence of luxury hotels' perceived experiential value on consumers' satisfaction because consumers with high expectations have a narrow zone of tolerance and are easier to please when the performance and value of services meet their desired service level (Zeithaml et al. 1993). Based on the above discussion, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the effect of a luxury hotel's perceived experiential value on consumers' hotel satisfaction will be more intense for consumers who have high expectations than for those who have low expectations.

> H7: The relationships between perceived experiential value (a. CROI, b. aesthetics, c. service staff excellence, and d. escapism) and satisfaction are moderated by expectations.

RESEARCH METHODS
Sampling and data collection methods
Three steps were followed to ensure the reliability and validity of the main study. First, a copy of this study's survey was sent to three researchers familiar with hospitality studies and experiential value for inspection. These researchers confirmed that the items used were suitable for this research. Second, ten real luxury hotel customers were recruited through purposive sampling to ensure that the meanings of the survey questions were clear. Third, a pilot test (N=133) was conducted to determine the reliability and content validity of the survey.

In the main study, the data were collected by trained research assistants. A nonprobability, purposive sampling technique was used to obtain the data. The research assistants approached individuals who were entering or leaving a luxury hotel in the cities Taipei, New Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung, which are Taiwan's four largest cities, by using the interception technique. The aim of the research was explained to the consumers who agreed to participate, and a set of screening questions was then asked.

To be eligible to fill out the survey, potential respondents needed to 1) be over the age of 18 years, 2) have some interest in staying in luxury hotels when traveling abroad for tourism purposes, and 3) have stayed in luxury hotels when traveling abroad by themselves (rather than as part of a group package tour) within the previous six months. Previous studies involving luxury hotel consumers and gastronomy tourists have used similar criteria when screening their participants (e.g., Peng and Chen 2019a; Tsai and Wang 2017).

The survey was administered to respondents who passed the screening process. The research assistants checked for missing data and debriefed and thanked the participants for their assistance once the survey was returned. During the nine-week data collection period, 489 usable surveys were collected. The effective return rate was 78%. To ensure that the research participants understood the context of this research, a description of luxury hotels and examples of luxury hotels (e.g., Palace Hotel Tokyo) were provided to the participants before they completed the questionnaire (Chen and Peng 2014). The demographic profile of the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1- Characteristics of the Participants

Variables	Demographic traits	%
Gender	Male	41.1
	Female	58.9
Respondent's age	Between 18-30 years old	9.0
	Between 31-40 years old	48.3
	Between 41-50 years old	27.6
	Between 51-60 years old	10.4
	61 and above	4.7
Education	High school degree	3.1
	College degree	45
	University	38.2
	Postgraduate degree or above	13.7

Survey design

Participants completed a questionnaire consisting of two sections (Appendix 1). The first section collected participants' demographics. The second section included 26 statements about consumers' behavioral intentions (Jang and Namkung 2009), satisfaction (Hung et al. 2019), and sense of belonging (Lin et al. 2014), as well as about escapism (Wu and Liang 2009), aesthetics (Tsai and Wang 2017), CROI (Tsai and Wang 2017), service staff excellence (Tsai and Wang 2017), and expectations (Wong et al. 2014). The original items were written in English. The items were translated by the authors of this study into Mandarin. Then, the items were translated back into English by a native English speaker who had not read the original English questions. All three individuals worked together to eliminate inconsistencies in the translation.

As this study is multidisciplinary research, the statements used in the survey were generated based on a review of previous environmental psychology, marketing, and tourism and hospitality research. To make the items relevant, the contexts of the original questions were modified to the context of this research; for example, "Tainanese food" was changed to refer to the luxury hotels in which the participants had stayed. In designing the items, a seven-point Likert-type scale was used. The items for each variable are presented in Appendix 1.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Model measurement

We used IBM SPSS AMOS 25 to analyze the data. A two-step approach to structural equation modeling (SEM), as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), was used for the data analysis. The results shown that all the factor loadings on the intended latent variable were significant and greater than 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Additionally, the squared-multiple correlations supported the reliability of the items used. All the constructs had Cronbach's alphas and composite reliabilities higher than the recommended threshold of 0.7; therefore, construct reliability was supported (Hair et al. 2012).

To examine convergent validity, the data were assessed in terms of factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE values ranged from 0.51 to 0.83 as shown in Table 2; therefore, convergent validity was confirmed (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Last, to test discriminant validity, this research compared the AVE for each individual construct with the shared variances between this individual construct and all the other constructs. Because

the AVE value for each construct was greater than the squared correlation between the constructs, discriminant validity was confirmed.

We checked the variance inflation factor (VIF) value and collinearity tolerance value because we observed relatively high correlations among some variables. The VIF ranged from 1.59 to 2.59, well below the conservative threshold of 5.3 (Hair et al. 2006), suggesting that the results of the regression model were not substantially influenced by multicollinearity.

A common latent factor (CLF) method was used to check for common method variance (Podsakoff et al. 2003). A latent variable was included in this research's confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model and was then linked to all the observed factors in the model. The comparison between the standardized regression weights in the new model and those in the original model showed that the results were similar; therefore, common method bias was not a significant issue for this research.

Table 2. Correlation between constructs following CFA

	Mean	SD	CrA	CR	AVE	CROI	SE	A	ES	S	SB	BI
CROI	5.07	1.39	.92	.92	.74	**.86**						
SE	5.78	1.52	.93	.94	.83	.69	**.91**					
A	4.55	1.62	.88	.89	.72	.60	.59	**.85**				
ES	5.20	1.18	.71	.73	.51	.42	.44	.32	**.72**			
S	5.20	1.43	.91	.91	.78	.61	.63	.55	.43	**.82**		
SB	5.03	1.18	.89	.89	.67	.65	.62	.69	.42	.41	**.89**	
BI	4.27	1.67	.94	.93	.80	.40	.38	.64	.24	.48	.63	--

-Bold numbers on the diagonal parentheses are square root of each construct's AVE value
-SD= Standard deviation; CrA= Cronach's Alphas; CR= Composite reliability; AVE= Average variance extracted
-CROI= Consumer return on investment; SE= Service excellence; A= Aesthetics; ES= Escapism; S= Satisfaction; SB= Sense of belonging; BI= Behavioral intentions

Structural model
After the overall measurement model was found to be acceptable, the structural model was examined. The model fit was good (χ^2/df=3.30; RMSEA=0.069; CFI=0.945; NFI=0.924). H1 was supported (t=3.7; β=0.22; p<0.001) because CROI had a positive impact on consumers' satisfaction. H2 was supported (t=3.99; β=0.23; p<0.05) as service staff excellence had a positive impact on consumers' hotel satisfaction. H3 was supported (t=4.26; β=.22; p<0.001), suggesting that aesthetics significantly affects consumers' hotel satisfaction. H4 posited that escapism positively influences consumers' hotel satisfaction, and the result obtained from the statistical analysis supported this hypothesis (t=5.94; β=.23; p<0.001). H5 was supported (t=19.52; β=0.85; p<0.001): consumers' luxury hotel satisfaction had a positive impact on their sense of belonging. H6 was supported (t=15.51; β=0.88; p<0.001) as consumers' hotel satisfaction had a significant impact on their behavioral intentions toward the hotel.

Moderating effect of expectation (H7)
A multigroup analysis was performed to test the moderating effect of consumer expectation. The survey participants were divided into two groups, a high expectation group and a low expectation group, using means split before the analysis. The mean for respondents' expectation was 5.20 on a seven-point Likert-type scale. For this reason, those with expectation means greater than 5.20 were labeled as the high expectation group (N=282), and those with means below 5.20 were labeled as the low expectation group (N=207).

The chi-square difference between the constrained and unconstrained models was assessed by the difference in degrees of freedom (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). This was to examine the differential effect between the high expectation group and the low expectation group. All the path coefficients in each group were freely estimated in the unconstrained model. In the constrained model, the path coefficients for the relationships between the experiential value variables and satisfaction were set equally across the two groups. The chi-square difference (Δchi-square=76.41, Δdf=6) between the unconstrained model (chi-square=851.29, df=436) and the constrained model (chi-square=927.70, df=442) was significant ($p<0.001$). The findings confirmed that the high expectation group and the low expectation group were significantly different on the model level. Coefficients for each path were compared between the two groups to identify where the significant differences appeared. Statistical tests revealed that the moderating role of consumer expectation existed on four hypothesized paths (Table 3); therefore, H7 was supported.

Table 3. Expectation's moderating effect (H6)

Path estimated	Constrained model (χ^2/df)	Unconstrained model (χ^2/df)	$\Delta\chi^2$, Δdf=1	Moderating effect
H7a: CROI$\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	855.9/437	851.29/436	4.6*	Supported
H7b: Aesthetics$\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	855.3/437	851.29/436	4.01*	Supported
H7c: Service staff excellence $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	855.76/437	851.29/436	4.47*	Supported
H7d: Escapism$\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	855.7/437	851.29/436	4.41*	Supported

DISCUSSION

This section further elaborates upon how this study narrows the following gaps in the literature: 1) Existing luxury consumption research focuses on luxury goods more than luxury services. 2) Findings regarding the effect of luxury hotels' experiential value on consumers' decision-making process have been inconsistent; additionally, the antecedents and consequences of consumers' sense of belonging require further examination. 3) The moderating effect of expectations on the effect of experiential value on consumer satisfaction remains unexplored. The implications of this research for theory and how the findings compare with those of similar studies are discussed.

Research concerning luxury service consumption

The global personal luxury services market has steadily grown since the 2000s (Bain & Company 2018), but luxury product consumption research has placed greater emphasis on the consumption of goods than on that of services (Peng et al. 2017). In contrast to Shukla and Purani's (2012) finding that experiential/hedonic value has negative influences on consumers' overall evaluation of luxury accessories, this study's result aligns with Chen and Peng's (2018) and Wu and Liang's (2009) findings that experiential/hedonic value has significant and positive effects on consumers' satisfaction with luxury services. Considering that a hotel stay is an intangible consumption experience and that luxury hotels have been known to use their environment to differentiate themselves from non-luxury hotels (Peng and Chen 2019a), this study's results add to the discussion on the influence of experiential value on consumers' evaluation of luxury products.

The effects of experiential value

The results of previous studies investigating the effect of luxury service products' value on consumers have been inconsistent and scarce (Chen and Peng 2018; Yang and Mattila 2016). The findings of this research reveal that luxury hotel consumers' return on investment has a

positive effect on their satisfaction. In other words, consumers will be more pleased if they are happy with a luxury hotel's prices, and this result is consistent with the previous luxury product consumption literature (Wiedmann et al. 2009). Consumers often have multiple hotels, including luxury and non-luxury hotels, to choose from when they travel; therefore, whether the cost of a luxury hotel is justified continues to be a concern for consumers.

Although this study focuses on consumers who had previously stayed in luxury hotels, the finding regarding CROI differs from the findings reported by Chen and Peng (2018), who studied tourists' consumption of luxury restaurants. In their research, perceived financial value had no significant influence on whether consumers dined at luxury restaurants. A possible explanation is that staying at a luxury hotel tends to be more expensive than dining at a luxury restaurant. Furthermore, the duration of a hotel stay is usually longer than that of a dining experience at a luxury restaurant. Therefore, tourists might be more sensitive to the cost of luxury hotel stays than to the cost of dining at luxury restaurants.

The antecedents and consequences of consumers' sense of belonging
Current luxury service product consumption studies do not fully indicate how they operationalize luxury product consumers' sense of belonging and how it might influence consumers' behavioral intentions. This research extends the SOR model by exploring whether consumers' short-term response (i.e., satisfaction) to environmental stimuli can lead to a more enduring bond between a luxury service and its consumers (i.e., sense of belonging).

One of this study's key findings is that consumers' satisfaction with a luxury hotel, which is a relatively short-term emotional reaction, can lead them to develop a sense of belonging to that hotel, which is a more intense and enduring emotional reaction. Thus, highly pleased customers can be considered important for luxury hotels' success because these consumers can be developed into a group of supporters who feel strongly about the hotel. Compared to non-luxury products, a unique characteristic of luxury products is their ability to provoke a strong emotional bond among their users; nevertheless, few luxury service product studies have empirically examined this relationship. This research's results provide some support for the generalizability of these two factors' relationship in the luxury product consumption context.

Another key finding regarding consumers' sense of belonging is its ability to positively influence consumers' luxury hotel revisit and recommendation intentions. If a consumer feels that he/she belongs to a luxury hotel's community, he/she is likely to recommend the hotel to others and to stay in the same hotel in the future, likely because he/she has a certain level of attachment to and confidence in the hotel. The concept of sense of belonging has been studied in the context of online consumption behavior (e.g., Laux et al. 2016; Lim 2014; Tsai and Bagozzi 2014). Nevertheless, few luxury service product studies have empirically examined the relationship between sense of belonging and behavioral intentions, even though some researchers have suggested the potential importance of this relationship (e.g., Tsai 2014).

The moderating effect of expectations
Perhaps the most interesting finding of the present study is that expectations are able to moderate the relationship between the perceived experiential value of luxury hotels and consumer satisfaction. On the one hand, this result aligns with Zeithaml et al.'s (1993) suggestion that consumers with high expectations are easier to please when service providers' performance meets consumers' desired service level and Wong and Dioko's (2013) finding that the relationship between perceived value and satisfaction intensifies as consumers

increase their expectations. On the other hand, because the current study examines the dimensions of experiential value separately, it might shed new light on the literature on consumer expectations. Consumers who have higher expectations are highly concerned with the question of whether staying in a luxury hotel makes financial sense. Such consumers also pay closer attention to a hotel's aesthetics and service staff performance, and they are more responsive to the issue of whether this experience helps them forget their daily routines.

CONCLUSIONS

Implications

This study has several implications for practitioners to consider. First, luxury hotels that would like to encourage consumers to repurchase and recommend their services need to review their customers' sense of belonging during their stay and their satisfaction with the hotel. If consumers feel that they are part of the hotel's community and find other members in this community to be friendly, they are more likely to act in favor of the hotel.

Converting customers' short-term satisfaction into an enduring sense of belonging can be challenging because most luxury hotels have the ability to satisfy their customers' needs. Hotel operators might need to exert more effort beyond ensuring that their customers are pleased and content during their stay to harness their sense of belonging. A luxury hotel stay is generally not a product that consumers need on a regular basis (Peng and Chen 2019a); therefore, building a strong virtual brand community might be a way to keep consumers interested and engaged even when they are not staying at the hotel. Luxury hotels that intend to further develop customers' sense of belonging through online communities such as Instagram or Facebook could pay extra attention to the sites' ability to allow consumers with similar travel preferences to interact with one another (e.g., on a discussion forum), provide the newest or member-only promotional deals (e.g., flash sales) and occasionally host online competitions (Lin et al. 2014). Luxury hotels might gain some valuable insights from observing luxury fashion and accessory brands that already have a strong online community.

Second, consumers typically have multiple hotels to choose from when visiting a tourism destination. For this reason, hotel managers need to ensure that their customers are pleased and joyful during their stay, as the dimensions of experiential value are antecedents of hotel customer satisfaction. In other words, practitioners from luxury hotels need to offer high experiential value to their customers, which includes ensuring that the hotel has excellent service staff, is aesthetically appealing, offers value for money, and helps its customers escape from their everyday routines. To achieve these objectives, practitioners need to provide rigorous training for hotel staff, update the hotel's environment regularly, have a good understanding of what creates an extraordinary hotel stay experience, and ensure that the price is comparable to the prices of other nearby luxury hotels.

Conclusions

Building upon social identity theory, this research contributes to existing knowledge in hospitality research by investigating how the experiential value of luxury hotels influences consumers' sense of belonging and subsequent behavioral intentions. In addition, this study incorporates an "expectation" variable into the SOR model. Moreover, this research narrows the gaps in the tourism literature and luxury product consumption studies by considering research from the environmental psychology, marketing, and tourism and hospitality literature and offers a multidisciplinary social science perspective on the consumption of luxury services.

The significance of the results for H1, H2, H3, and H4 demonstrates the importance of experiential value. Consumers are content if luxury hotels offer good value for money, are

aesthetically appealing, have excellent service staff, and can provide a temporal escape to their visitors. H5's results suggest that satisfaction, which is a relatively short-term response to a luxury hotel's environmental stimuli, can increase consumers' sense of belonging, which is a more enduring reaction. This finding is important because it shows that consumers' emotional response to stimuli has two stages. The finding of H6 shows that consumers who feel that they belong to the community of a luxury hotel in which they had stayed have greater intentions to revisit and recommend that hotel. This finding is consistent with the literature concerning building a successful brand community.

Finally, the results obtained from testing expectations' moderating effect confirm that the effects of escapism, aesthetics, CROI, and service staff excellence on consumers' luxury hotel stay satisfaction are greater among consumers with high expectations than among consumers with low expectations. This study is among the first to reveal that consumers with higher expectations are easier to please and are more responsive to luxury hotels' stimuli than those with lower expectations.

Limitations and future research opportunities
This research contributes to the understanding of the relationships among stimuli, organisms, responses, and expectations in the context of a luxury service product; however, this study is not free of limitations. First, there are different types of luxury hotels. Some hotels might focus more on their heritage (e.g., Ritz Carlton London), while other hotels might emphasize their trendiness (e.g., W Hotel Taipei). This research did not consider the congruence between a consumer's self-identity and a luxury hotel's image. Future luxury hotel research might consider the effects of "ideal self-congruence" and "actual self-congruence". Second, this study focuses on Taiwanese consumers, and approximately 75% of the participants were aged between 31 and 50 years. Therefore, the results might vary when applying this research's framework to consumers from other cultural and age groups. Future research could improve the generalizability of this study's results by applying this study's framework to consumers with more diverse backgrounds.

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Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire (English version)

Please answer the following questions

A. My gender is: □ Male   □ Female   □ Other   □ Prefer not to say

B. My age is: □18 – 30   □31 – 40   □41 – 50   □51 – 60   □ 61 above

C. My highest education level is

□ Postgraduate degree or above   □University   □ College degree   □ High school degree   □ Other   □ Prefer not to say

D. The last luxury hotel that I stayed when traveling for tourism purposes in is _____.

Please tick the box on each line to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree 7
1. Staying at Luxury Hotel X has good economic value. (CROI1)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
2. If it is fully booked, I am willing to rearrange my itinerary in order to stay at Luxury Hotel X. (CROI2)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
3. I am happy with the price of staying at Luxury Hotel X. (CROI3)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
4. The total expenditure of staying at Luxury Hotel X is acceptable. (CROI4)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
5. Luxury Hotel X's staff members are willing and able to provide service in a timely manner. (SE1)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
6. Luxury Hotel X's staff members make the effort to understand my needs. (SE2)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
7. Luxury Hotel X's staff members are competent (i.e. knowledgeable and skillful). (SE3)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
8. The environment of Luxury Hotel X is aesthetically appealing. (A1)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
9. Decorations of Luxury Hotel X are attractive. (A2)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
10. The style of Luxury Hotel X is very impressive. (A3)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
11. Staying in Luxury Hotel X is so enjoyable that makes me feel comfortable and relaxed. (ES1)	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

12. Staying in Luxury Hotel X makes me feel like being in another world. (ES29) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

13. Staying in Luxury Hotel X released me from the reality and helps me truly enjoy myself. (ES3) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

14. I was satisfied with my stay at Luxury Hotel X. (S1) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

15. I was contended with my stay at Luxury Hotel X. (S2) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16. I was pleased with my stay at Luxury Hotel X. (S3) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

17. I feel a strong sense of belonging to Luxury Hotel X. (SB1) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

18. I feel I am a member of Luxury Hotel X's community. (SB2) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

19. I feel Luxury Hotel X's members are my close friends. (SB3) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

20. I like other members of Luxury Hotel X's community. (SB4) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

21. I would like to come back to Luxury Hotel X in the future. (BI1) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

22. I plan to revisit Luxury Hotel X in the future. (BI2) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

23. I would recommend Luxury Hotel X to my friends or others. (BI3) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

24. Before my experience with Luxury Hotel X, I expected that the overall service performance would be… (E1)   Very poor ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Excellent

25. Before my experience with Luxury Hotel X, I expected that its ability to perform the promised service reliably and accurately would be… (E2)   Extremely incompent ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Extremely compent

26. Before my experience with Luxury Hotel X, I expected that its ability to meet my personal needs would be… (E3)   Not at all satisfactory ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Extremely satisfactory

Thank you for completing the questionnaire

¯In the survey, "Luxury Hotel X" is replaced to the luxury visited by the respondents.
¯CROI= Consumer return on investment; SE= Service excellence; A= Aesthetics; ES= Escapism; S= Satisfaction; SB= Sense of belonging; BI= Behavioral intentions