



How negative factors influence youth hostel stay aftermath COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The bookings and revenues of youth hostels have significantly decreased because of the multiple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is necessary to investigate young consumers' perceptions of visiting youth hostels aftermath this pandemic. The current study examines the relationship between multi-dimensions of perceived risk, three types of images, willingness to pay and visit intention. A convenience sampling was developed where 534 questionnaires were received, followed by subsequent empirical testing of the proposed hypotheses using SPSS and AMOS-SEM. Results showed that perceived risk negatively influenced cognitive and affective image, respectively. Cognitive and affective image positively influenced overall image and finally influenced willingness to pay and visit intention separately. In addition, cognitive image positively influenced affective image. The theoretical framework satisfactorily accounted for willingness to pay and intention, and our results help youth hostels practitioners invent efficient strategies to boost young consumers' willingness to pay and intention to visit youth hostels.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a serious threat to human life (Wang, Wong, & Zhang, 2021) because it is life event associated with uncertainty, ambiguity and loss of control (Delhom et al., 2023), which is more prevalent and uncontrollable than the stress that comes with daily living (Yu, Park, & Hyun, 2021). Similar to the reactive psychological impacts of biological and other terrorism threats (Teer-oovengadum et al., 2021), unknown harmful pandemics typically instill a significant level of dread and risk in society (Aziz et al., 2021). As a result, rather than being limited to a medical concern, the new epidemic (e.g., COVID-19) is beginning to emerge as a multifaceted issue that affects society as a whole (Yu, Seo, & Hyun, 2021). Hospitality and tourism industry impacts accounted for 10.3 % of global GDP (Liberalesso et al., 2020) and 10.6 % of global jobs in 2019 (Kiat, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on international tourism marketing, resulting in a significant demand reduction (Wang, Wong, & Zhang, 2021) although long after the epidemic has gone (Assaf & Scuderi, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020) because countries around the world have implemented travel restrictions (e.g., countrywide lockdown, quarantine all

arriving travellers) (Kiat, 2022). For example, domestic tourist revenue in China declined to 20.6 % in 2020 as a result of weak travel demand; from early to mid-January, total hotel room occupancy in China fell by 89 %, and total yield per available room decreased by >85 % annually (Chan et al., 2021). Individuals' activities become more passive in this circumstance, external access is reduced (Lu et al., 2020), and potential travellers' attitudes and behaviours towards the destination have also changed (Yu, Lee, & Hyun, 2021).

Youth hostels are alternative lodgings that have grown rapidly in recent years and become an important economic activity in the tourism industry (Liberalesso et al., 2020) because they are less expensive than conventional hotels (Sun et al., 2014). Besides, the majority of young travellers' decision to stay at youth hostels has symbolic significance, much as the majority of consumption behaviours that take place while on a leisure holiday (Sun et al., 2014). For example, loving the youthful exuberance while travelling with young people (Cró & Martins, 2017). However, sudden change (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic) is inevitable in many aspects of life, and perceived risk and danger have heightened negative emotional concerns (Hotle et al., 2020; Quan et al., 2022) resulting in a lot of detrimental effects on the number of reservations and

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revenue at youth hostels (Barry & Iaquinto, 2023). The youth hostel has been particularly affected by the pandemic because of its wide open spaces, including shared kitchens and restrooms (Kiat, 2022). In particular, numerous local sites now offer a place for travellers to unwind and recuperate as a result of COVID-19's impact on outbound tourist activities (Prevention, 2020). Compared to other lodging types, youth hostels' recovery from the pandemic has been somewhat delayed because travellers typically opt for traditional hotels that offer private rooms during the pandemic (Kiat, 2022). Hence, investigating how the youth hostel sector should prepare for major emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic is necessary (Yu, Seo, & Hyun, 2021).

Predicting the real impact of COVID-19 on the youth hostel industry worldwide remains highly uncertain, and the effects will be determined over a long time (Liberalesso et al., 2020). This raised many questions regarding risk factors in the general population and other settings (Diaconu, 2020). In general, most previous studies seemed to focus on the effects of positive travellers' values, beliefs, attitudes, images, and motivations on demonstrating a behaviour by employing different psychological characteristics (Gong et al., 2024; Haq et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). However, few studies focus on the effects of negative expressions on an individual's behaviour or the negative behavioural intention framework (Wang et al., 2022a). In particular, not much is known about prospective travellers' risk-taking tendencies and their travel intentions and behaviours in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Teeroovengadum et al., 2021). For example, little research has investigated how travellers' perceptions of danger may have influenced their selection of youth hostels following the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, synthesis with other psychological disciplines or perspectives enables the researchers to expand and differentiate the scope of research objectives (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020; Wang & Wong, 2021).

Perceived risk significantly affects how tourists make decisions about where to stay (Fuchs & Reichel, 2006) in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Yi et al., 2020). This includes factors like sharing lodging and saving money (Lee, 2020), being price-conscious (Arabadzhyan et al., 2021), safety (Duarte et al., 2022), health consciousness (Samarasinghe et al., 2021; Shin & Kang, 2020), travel intention (Wang et al., 2022a), and revisit intention (Yu, Lee, & Hyun, 2021). Given the significance of emotional perceptions while thinking about risky places (Alvarez & Campo, 2014), assessing perceived risk alongside perceived image may help researchers better understand the impact of destination perception on future travel behaviour (Becken et al., 2016). This is in line with Ulker-Demirel and Ciftci (2020) advice that more research be conducted to determine how unfavourable remarks affect travellers' choices.

Furthermore, focusing on the youth hostel market in China, several researchers have shown that travellers' perceptions of themselves and the brands they choose have a direct impact on their tendency to stay at youth hostels (Sun et al., 2014). The lack of a uniform definition and cogent underlying principles is due to the low amount of research on youth hostel visits in China (Chen et al., 2020; Hu, 2019). Meanwhile, a negative perception of hotels was produced as a result of various social media outlets publishing false information about the Chinese youth hostel industry (e.g., washing linens with caustic soda, failing to change sheets, leaking guests' personal information) (Ying et al., 2021). Therefore, maintaining market development necessitates understanding the relationships between perceived risk, image, and desire to stay at youth hostels (Azami & Real, 2019; Sun et al., 2014). This understanding provides youth hostel marketers with information they may use to promote products or services more successfully (Flavián et al., 2001). Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the multidimensional concepts of perceived risk, image, willingness to pay, and intention to patronise youth hostels in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results and insights gained are expected to be useful not only for youth hostel practitioners and other key stakeholders in the COVID-19 crisis but also for any future pandemics.

2. Literature review

2.1. Youth hostel

Youth hostels were developed as part of the hostel movement, which had its beginnings in Germany in the early years of the 20th century (Nagy, 2018). Youth hostels are a common kind of lodging that offer accommodation services at a lower cost while maintaining a welcoming environment for young people (Brochado et al., 2015; Cró & Martins, 2017). This market segment has grown rapidly in recent years and now plays a significant role in the tourist sector's economy (Liberalesso et al., 2020). Several research that examined the birth and development of youth hostels, hiking facilitated their growth and development (Kiat, 2022; Nagy, 2018). Because pricing, location, participation in youth hostels businesses, cleanliness of rooms, accessibility to basic amenities, and functional values were the most crucial considerations for young travellers and backpackers when selecting a hotel (Nash et al., 2006). Furthermore, installing green infrastructure in youth hostels (such as a green roof or green walls) might increase neighbourhood beauty and individual pleasure (Liberalesso et al., 2020). Young travellers and backpackers are more likely to stay at youth hostels as a result (Nagy, 2018), and the hostel industry was evaluated at \$5.2 billion in bed revenue in 2018 (Veríssimo & Costa, 2018), mostly depending on the millennial travellers (Tavares et al., 2021).

The damage from COVID-19 is acute in the whole tourism industry (Senevirathne et al., 2022), including hostels (Kiat, 2022). For example, the American Hotel and Lodging Association reported that hotels in the United States had lost more than \$15 billion in room revenues since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and that they anticipated occupancy rates of 20 % or less in the upcoming months and The French international hospitality group Accor reported that more than half of its hotel brand locations had ceased to operate worldwide in 2020 (Yu, Seo, & Hyun, 2021). In the hostel industry, Wyse Travel Confederation reported that, on average, 52 % of the hostels' capacities and a decrease of 66 % in the revenue of youth travel accommodation providers in 2020 (Tavares et al., 2021). The unique features of touristic products and services cause consumers to have limited scope for prediction; this situation could increase their perceived risk since the standardisation of services is more difficult than for products and services and consumers cannot know the exact result of their purchasing behaviours (Küpeli & Özer, 2020). The uncertain nature of COVID-19 may trigger risk perceptions in consumers that have an important role in the perceived product and service quality-value for money relationship and the pre-purchase, post-purchase, and usage stages (Song & Yoo, 2016). Thus, the fact that perceived risk occurs in conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic makes it an important term that is necessary to examine in the hostel industry (Limna et al., 2022).

2.2. Perceived risk

Perceived risk refers to how an individual interprets diverse external dangers (Yongchang et al., 2018) which is an individual's perception of risk of negative outcomes associated with a particular action or event (Lim et al., 2023). It emphasises the influence of prior personal experience on intuitions and intangible feelings. Thus, perceived risk is also generally considered has an emotional dimension, including fear and worry (Karlsson et al., 2021). In order to affect people's decision-making, formation, and behaviour (Quintal et al., 2010), the effect of a loss and the prospect of unfavourable outcomes work together (Quan et al., 2022). In the context of tourism marketing, perceived risk is typically defined as what travellers believe and encounter while they pay for and use tourism services (Tsaour et al., 1997). The imagined threats that travellers feel may be caused by uncertainties that could have undesirable effects while travelling. Travellers may develop negative cognitive beliefs and unpleasant emotional states when they believe a particular region is harmful (Loureiro & Jesus, 2019).

Perceived risk can be split into several dimensions and assessed by a number of indicators (Zhang & Yu, 2020), because visitors encounter diverse types of threats when visiting various sites (Hasan et al., 2017). Many characteristics of perceived risk are also referred to as objective factors impacting risky perceptions in tourism (Carballo et al., 2017; Cui et al., 2016). In general, travellers' perceived risk towards a place can be conceived of as including financial, social, satisfaction, psychological, time, equipment, political, crime, health, natural disaster, and variety of other concerns (Rather et al., 2022). According to Chang (2008), there are two ways to categorise the perceived risk associated with hotel services: 1) the perceived risk of uncertainty and 2) the perceived risk of consequence, which includes financial, functional, physical, social, psychological, and temporal risk. Stone and Grønhaug (1993) contended that perceived risk is comprised of economic, physical, functional, psychological, and social risks. Quintal et al. (2010) claimed that perceived risk includes performance, financial, convenience, psychological, and physical risk, whereas Han et al. (2019) classified perceived risk into functional/performance, physical, psychological, and financial risks. Due to the widespread use of youth hostels in prior studies, the current study examined psychological, functional, financial, and time risks to predict consumer perceptions of and intentions to visit youth hostels. Because consumers' decision-making processes for hotels started to take the influence of health risks during COVID-19, the health risk was also used in this study (Shin & Kang, 2020).

2.2.1. Psychological risk

Psychological risk is the likelihood that the purchase will not reflect one's self-image and may affect how they perceive the consumers (Chew & Jahari, 2014). When choosing a destination, tourists often choose one whose psychological features and sense of self match their own (Sirgy, 2018). Tourists frequently have a negative opinion of the qualities of the destination (Lin & Hsu, 2013) because service experiences and individual travel experiences can contribute to travellers' psychological discomfort characteristics (e.g., regret and worry) (Chew & Jahari, 2014). Many studies have concluded on psychological perception caused by the risks of infectious diseases (Duong, 2023; Oh et al., 2017). For example, individuals stay at hotels, but hotel employees can be exposed to a new epidemic at any time through contracts with other customers, the perception that they cannot be protected from the hostels is very likely to cause psychological concerns (Yu, Park, & Hyun, 2021). The link between cognitive and emotional image was found to be strongly influenced by psychological risk (Najar & Rather, 2022). As a result of potential visitors' impressions of specific risks, which have a major negative impact on the image of the destination and intention to stay, psychological risk has reportedly been viewed as a characteristic of destination images (Chew & Jahari, 2014). Therefore, the following hypotheses are established:

H1a. : Psychological risk negatively affect cognitive image.

H2a. : Psychological risk negatively affect affective image.

2.2.2. Functional risk

Functional risk is the possibility that the destination will have organisational or infrastructure problems (Cavlek, 2000). It refers to the cost of harm incurred when a product or service falls short of customers' expectations (Chang, 2008). From both the markets' and the consumers' viewpoints, product or service functions are crucial to marketing, and they have long been acknowledged as a means for marketers to set their brands apart from those of their competitors (Rajendran & Jayakrishnan, 2018). Consumers value qualities because they provide the foundation for evaluating a product or service and because they offer the benefits that buyers seek when making a purchase (Nilsson-Witell & Fundin, 2005). Due to the fact that consumers compare similar items based on a variety of functions, marketers employ these functions to set their products and services apart from the competition (Rajendran & Jayakrishnan, 2018). For example, facilities and services of youth

hostels are considered determinant factors that influence travellers' satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Limna et al., 2022). Han et al. (2019) shown that functional risk negatively affects one's attitude, while Rather (2020) demonstrated that functional risk negatively affects visitors' cognition, which then negatively affects effective evaluation. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1b. : Functional risk negatively affect cognitive image.

H2b. : Functional risk negatively affect affective image.

2.2.3. Financial risk

Financial risk is the probability that a journey may not be worth the money spent (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992). The financial risk of hotel stays during the pandemic (Quan et al., 2022) is a crucial factor in predicting how travellers will behave (Olya & Al-ansi, 2018). Because if a destination contains a high level of infectious disease, tourists will normally delay or cancel their travelling (Teeroovengadum et al., 2021) since a product or service fails or does not work properly (Matzler et al., 2019). In particular, for long-distance travellers, vacation travel has been regarded as a premium buy service requiring a large financial investment (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). Travellers must consider the potential financial loss that the service may have to be replaced, fixed (DeFranco & Morosan, 2017), or compensated due to factors like physical infrastructure damage, transportation inaccessibility, and trip cancellation (Chew & Jahari, 2014). Empirical studies showed that travellers were very worried about financial danger (Najar & Rather, 2022). For example, Cahyanto et al. (2016) revealed that financial risk indicators are substantially connected with willingness to pay, whereas Loureiro and Jesus (2019) observed that financial risk has a negative association with the cognitive and affective image. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed for testing:

H1c. : Financial risk negatively affect cognitive image.

H2c. : Financial risk negatively affect affective image.

2.2.4. Time risk

Time risk is the likelihood that the time spent looking for a product or service will be wasted if it fails to meet with one's expectations (Rajendran & Jayakrishnan, 2018). The length of time needed to search, purchase, use, and discard a product or service is not certain (Rajendran & Jayakrishnan, 2018). Time risk, as used in the marketing of tourism, is the possibility that a trip might be time-consuming or ineffective (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992). Due to a challenging information search, a negative experience when they were there (Hong, et al., 2018), or because the activities they participated in there were thought to be worthless (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992), potential customers may feel like their time was wasted. It might happen as a result of lost or wasted time brought on by poor judgements or unforeseen circumstances. For example, searching and purchasing how to visit a particular youth hostel as well as replacing the booking if this hostel does not work as expected (Küpelı & Özer, 2020) during the pandemic. According to certain studies, time risk has a negative relationship with tourist behaviours. For example, Çetinsöz and Ege (2013) revealed that time risk is the most important predictor of visitors' intention to return, while Hamouda and Yacoub (2018) observed that time risk has a negative impact on tourists' cognitive and affective image. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1d. : Time risk negatively affect cognitive image.

H2d. : Time risk negatively affect affective image.

2.2.5. Health risk

As a result of consumers concern that travelling to a specific destination will make them feel unwell (Samarasinghe et al., 2021), they have recently started to worry more about their health issues (Wei & Onder, 2022). Because even the slightest threat to public health or safety

could harm a holiday destination's reputation, the tourism sector is very sensitive (Lee & Chen, 2011). When assessing a destination, travellers typically perceive such infectious diseases to be a health concern (Stefen et al., 2003). Tourist decision-making is significantly influenced by the likelihood of being sick or catching specific diseases while on vacation (Michalkó, 2003). Hence, travellers will frequently be less likely to travel to destinations where infectious diseases are prevalent (Teeroovengadum et al., 2021). For example, consumers perceived hygiene attributes of hotels have a positive effect on their cognitive and affective image (Yu, Seo, & Hyun, 2021). Liang and Xue (2021) also indicated that the cognitive and affective perception of a destination is significantly influenced by the traveller's experience, accessibility, and health. Especially, considering the feature of youth hostels is providing large-scale communal spaces such as shared rooms, bathrooms, kitchens, and many others (Limna et al., 2022). Travellers generally prefer to choose general hotels that provide separate rooms compared with youth hostels during the pandemic (Kiat, 2022) to avoid contact with various people (Yu, Park, & Hyun, 2021). Thus, the following hypotheses are established:

H1e. : Health risk negatively affect cognitive image.

H2e. : Health risk negatively affect affective image.

2.3. Cognitive image and affective image

The concept of an overall concept of image is composed of an emotional component that expresses feelings towards a place and a perception-cognitive component which preserves knowledge and beliefs regarding its features (Wang et al., 2022b). Accordingly, cognitive image represents an assessment of the destination's observed attributes either before or after a visit (Papadimitriou et al., 2018), whereas affective image refers to travellers' feelings and emotional reactions to a place (Woosnam et al., 2020). In hospitality marketing, the formation of images by consumers about the products and services of a hotel is based on the perception or knowledge formed based on their experience, which forms the overall value of the hotel, whether positive or negative (Yu, Seo, & Hyun, 2021). Indeed, the formation of overall image is influenced by the cognitive and affective aspects of hotel attributes (e.g., products, services) (Wang et al., 2022b). This can be explained as a process of judgement of products and services which are created by comparing the memories, feelings, and experiences perceived by consumers with their previous information and knowledge (Gracia et al., 2011) as well as based on differences in feelings and emotions that manifest before and after utilising the products and services (Kim, Lehto, & Kandampully, 2019; Kim, Stylidis, & Oh, 2019). Therefore, it is appropriate to integrate cognitive and affective images when predicting the overall image of a hotel (Stylidis et al., 2020). Chiu et al. (2016) discovered that both cognitive and affective evaluations have a direct image on the overall image. According to Papadimitriou (2015), cognitive and affective aspects might influence how residents perceive themselves overall, which in turn affects how they engage in rural tourism activities and Chapuis et al. (2015) also indicated a strong correlation between affective image and overall image.

In addition, according to Wang et al. (2022b), the affective aspect of an image acts as a mediator between the cognitive image and the final, overall destination image, while the cognitive aspect of an image directly affects the latter. Cognitive appraisal of objects comes first because emotional responses are produced as a result of cognitive reactions (San Martín Gutiérrez & Rodríguez-del-Bosque, 2008). The results of Baloglu and McCleary (1999) suggested a partial mediating effect of affective images on the overall image and, ultimately, tourist behaviours. Lin et al. (2007) found that cognitive image influences affective image perceptions much more strongly than overall image. Additionally, Llodrà-Riera et al. (2015) highlighted that there is a considerable relationship between affective and cognitive images. Prameswari et al. (2020) investigated how tourist motivation affected

cognition, affect, and distinctive image. They showed how cognition positively influenced affective image development as well as how unique images could influence affective image development. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3a. : Cognitive image positively related to affective image.

H3b. : Cognitive image positively related to overall image.

H3c. : Affective image positively related to overall image.

2.4. Overall image, willingness to pay and visit intention

An overall image is one of the most important variables in vacation destination selection (Pereira et al., 2021). An overall image of a location is formed as a result of both perceptual/cognitive and emotional appraisals of that place (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Based on this concept, Wang et al. (2022b) proposed that evaluations of an item could result in the formation of an overall image in addition to cognitive and affective representations. According to Woosnam et al. (2020), cognitive images are dependent on the other two behavioural components and are linked to future intentions and behaviours. Consequently, cognitive and affective images are regarded as important components of the overall image, positively influencing tourists' post-travel behaviour (Chew & Jahari, 2014).

Studies have shown a positive relationship between travel intention, willingness to pay, and the overall image of a destination. For example, Chapuis et al. (2015) discovered that people's choice of a location is highly influenced by that location's image; the more willing they are to visit, the stronger that perception is. Overall image has a positive effect on willingness to pay (Huang & Liu, 2017), whereas Tran Pham Khanh (2022) observed that overall image has a substantial impact on willingness to pay for green hotels, and the overall image was discovered to be a mediator between cognitive, affective image, and visitor's intention (Fig. 1). Furthermore, Stylos et al. (2017) showed that overall image mediates the connection between cognitive image, affective image, and willingness to revisit the destination. Additionally, Mercadé Melé et al. (2020) reported a direct positive correlation between the overall image and revisit intention. Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed:

H4a. : Overall image positively affects willingness to pay.

H4b. : Overall image positively affects visit intention.

3. Method

3.1. Data collection

The non-probability sampling is generally used as an alternative technique to select samples due to researchers often cannot easily acquire an accurate sampling frame from organisations or select appropriate respondents to answer research questions (Saunders et al., 2011). In order to collect samples, a convenience sampling method was used because it had many benefits, including easy accessibility, lack of geographic restrictions, and availability at a specific time (Dörnyei, 2007). According to studies on youth hostels, a hostel is distinguished by an informal atmosphere that caters to young people, students, and backpackers and the average age of hotel customers ranges between 18 and 35 years old (Limna et al., 2022; Tavares et al., 2021). Meanwhile, youth constitute the largest proportion of the population in the world (Pradeep et al., 2023). Thus, university students were the target sampling group because of 1) their prevalence in youth hostels (Sun et al., 2014); their potential to influence future tourism initiatives (Bahl & Kumar, 2019); they have a higher willingness to purchase novel products or services in future (Wang et al., 2023); and they can provide more accurate and meaningful insights into marketing studies (Varah et al., 2021).

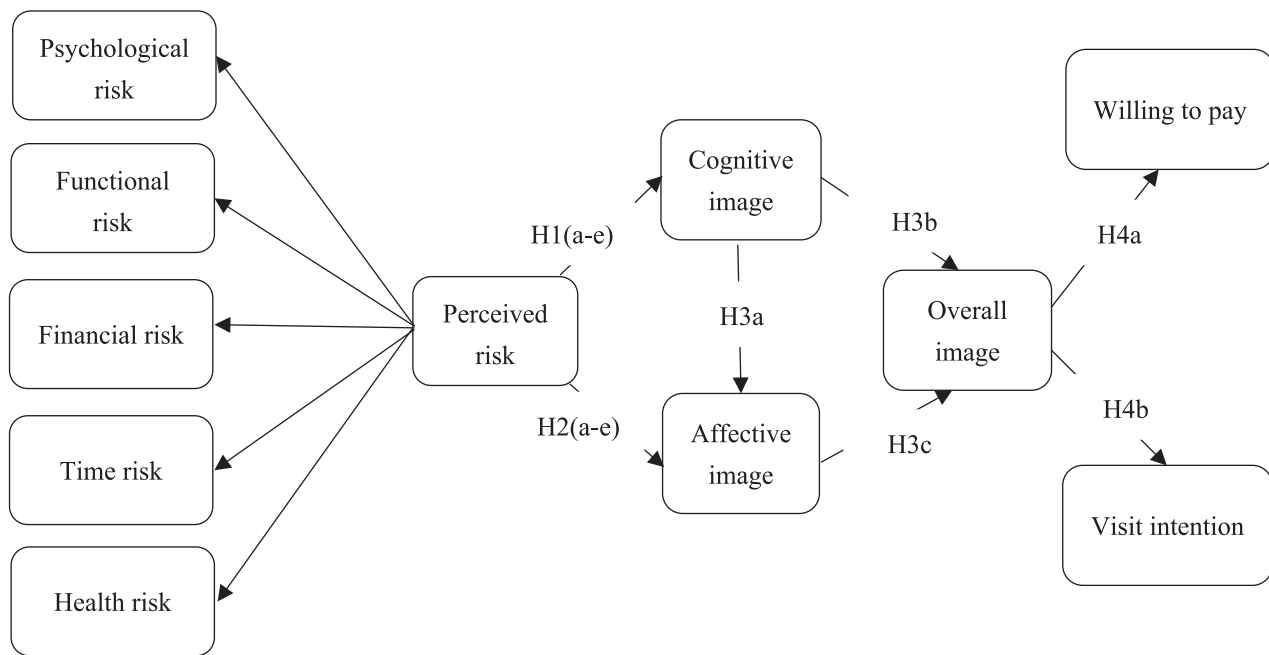


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

The questionnaires were distributed and returned by a network of contracts (lecturers, assistant professors, and associate professors) at universities throughout Xuzhou City, Jiangsu Province, and Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province. Students who visited the website (www.wenjuan.com) between the 1st of March and the 31st of May received questionnaires, which they completed in the classroom and their participation was entirely voluntary. 534 completed questionnaires in all, which was more than Hair et al. (2010) suggested that a sample size of >200 can offer a reasonable margin of error, while structural equation modelling requires 10 to 20 samples per parameter (Kline, 2015). To further ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test with 40 participants was conducted. Of the total 534 respondents, 56.6 % were female, and 36.5 % were aged 19 years. The majority were fresh candidates (35.2 %), and 74.2 % monthly living expense were between 1000 and 2000 yuan (See Table 1).

Table 1
Sample characteristics (N = 534).

Item	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	232	43.4
	Female	302	56.6
Age	Below 18	8	1.5
	18	108	20.2
	19	195	36.5
	20	117	21.9
	21	43	8.1
	22	35	6.6
	23	21	3.9
	Above 23	7	1.3
Educational level	Fresh	188	35.2
	Sophomore	131	24.5
	Junior	178	33.3
	Senior	31	5.8
	Master	1	0.2
Monthly living expense	PhD	5	1
	Below 1000	35	6.6
	1000–2000	396	74.2
	2001–3000	79	14.8
	3001–4000	10	1.9
	Above 4001	14	2.6

3.2. Operationalism of questionnaire

A closed-ended questionnaire format used in current study and all questionnaire items were adapted from prior evidenced studies. First section includes perceived risk items: three items belong to psychological risk were adapted from Quintal et al. (2010), Küpeli and Özer (2020) and Han et al. (2019); three items belong to functional risk were adapted from Park et al. (2022) and Han et al. (2019); three items belong to financial risk were adapted from Küpeli and Özer (2020) and Abror et al. (2022); four items belong to time risk were adapted from Zhang et al. (2021) and Küpeli and Özer (2020); three items belong to health risk were adapted from Shin and Kang (2020). Second section includes image items, three items belong to cognitive image, affective image, and overall image separately were adapted from Rather et al. (2022) and Wang et al. (2022b). Third section includes behavioural aspects in which three items belong to willingness to pay were adapted from Han et al. (2009) and three items belong to visit intention were adapted from Han et al. (2009) and Yin et al. (2020). Last section includes demographical characteristics. A seven-point Likert scale was adopted for all items.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive analysis

Normality of data can be measured when skewness ranges from +2 to -2 and kurtosis ranges from +7 to -7 (Byrne, 2016). The results showed that the normality of data was achieved as the skewness values were between +0.234 to -0.689 and kurtosis values were between +1.701 to 0.102. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showed that sampling adequacy with 0.919 with p -value <0.001. Besides, the multicollinearity was checked by variation inflation factor (VIF) test and the results showed that VIF values range from 2.448 to 3.637 which below the threshold of 10 (Hair et al., 2010), and thus indicate the absence of multicollinearity. For accessing internal reliability, a reliability value of above 0.7 should be considered (Hair et al., 2010), and the results showed that all Cronbach's Alpha values were >0.7 (See Table 2). In addition, non-response bias is a major concern that exists in survey studies (Michie & Marteau, 1999). Armstrong and Overton (1977) suggest that analysing the known

Table 2
Convergent validity of the measurement model.

Construct (Cronbach's Alpha)	Items	Factor loadings	CR	AVE	S.D.
Psychological risk ($\alpha = 0.892$)	1. Uneasy about staying at a youth hostel.	0.789	0.897	0.744	1.327
	2. Feeling uncomfortable when meeting strangers in youth hostels.	0.916			1.327
	3. Youth hostels are at risk of illegal activities such as candid photography and pinhole cameras.	0.878			1.386
Functional risk ($\alpha = 0.947$)	1. Youth hostels are at risk of problems with the quality of accommodation facilities.	0.940	0.946	0.855	1.286
	2. Compared with other traditional hotels, youth hostels have the risk of low quality and function.	0.921			1.325
	3. There is a risk of low service in youth hostels.	0.913			1.347
Financial risk ($\alpha = 0.85$)	1. Rooms in youth hostels are very expensive.	0.842	0.859	0.672	1.317
	2. Youth hostels may run the risk of incurring additional charges.	0.883			1.198
	3. Youth hostels are at risk of money being stolen.	0.726			1.260
Time risk ($\alpha = 0.945$)	1. Choosing to stay at a youth hostel is not efficient.	0.935	0.945	0.851	1.265
	2. Choosing a youth hostel can take a lot of time (Delete).				
	3. Choosing to stay at a youth hostel was a waste of my personal time.	0.917			1.226
	4. Choosing to stay at a youth hostel can put time pressure on me.	0.915			1.264
Health risk ($\alpha = 0.949$)	1. Stay at youth hostels can lead to health problems.	0.916	0.949	0.861	1.291
	2. Youth hostels are at risk of contracting infectious diseases such as Covid-19.	0.933			1.281
	3. Staying at a youth hostel was a risky decision for my health.	0.934			1.304
Cognitive image ($\alpha = 0.925$)	1. Youth hostels are attractive.	0.916	0.926	0.807	1.112
	2. The quality of the youth hostel experience is satisfactory.	0.871			1.061
	3. The youth hostel offers a unique atmosphere.	0.907			1.144
Affective image ($\alpha = 0.957$)	1. Staying at a youth hostel is relaxing.	0.925	0.957	0.882	1.202
	2. Staying at a youth hostel is fun.	0.935			1.202

Table 2 (continued)

Construct (Cronbach's Alpha)	Items	Factor loadings	CR	AVE	S.D.
Overall image ($\alpha = 0.943$)	3. Staying at a youth hostel is exciting.	0.957	0.944	0.848	1.209
	1. Youth hostels are charming.	0.917			1.086
	2. The youth hostel is impressive.	0.908			1.024
Willing to pay ($\alpha = 0.935$)	3. I have a soft spot for youth hostels.	0.938	0.936	0.829	1.064
	1. I would choose a youth hostel even if the price of a youth hostel room went up.	0.925			1.268
	2. I am willing to pay a higher price for youth hostels.	0.914			1.329
Visit intention ($\alpha = 0.878$)	3. Compared with a traditional hotel, I would choose to pay for a youth hostel.	0.892	0.908	0.768	1.285
	1. I would prefer a youth hostel when I travel.	0.927			1.208
	2. I plan to stay at a youth hostel during my trip.	0.908			1.220
	3. I would not hesitate to choose a youth hostel even during an epidemic such as Covid-19.	0.787			1.471

sample's demographic characteristics can ensure whether there is a meaningful difference between groups of people who responded and those who did not to the survey. Hence, *t*-test and ANOVA were performed to compare key variables of the study (i.e., psychological risk, functional risk, financial risk, time risk, health risk, perceived risk, cognitive image, affective image, overall image, willingness to pay, visit intention) show there are significant differences between the groups. Thus, an independent sample *t*-test and one-way ANOVA were conducted to test the influence of various gender, age, educational level, and monthly living expense groups on the different constructs under study.

4.2. Measurement model

The standardised factor loadings should be >0.5 and ideally higher than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). After dropping off low factor loading (i.e., time risk2), rest of factor loadings were higher than 0.7. For the convergent validity of the measurement model, the composite reliability (CR) should be >0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) should be >0.5. For discriminate validity, the AVE should be higher than both maximum shared variance (MSV) and the average shared variance (ASV) and the Maximum H Reliability (MaxR(H)) value is larger than CR. Meanwhile, the relevant degree between each construct should be <0.9 (Meyers et al., 2006). Thus, convergent validity and discriminate validity of the measurement model were achieved (See Tables 2 and 3). In addition, the model fit of the measurement model showed that CMIN = 1736.912, DF = 354, CMIN/DF = 4.907 < 5, *p* < 0.001, SRMR = 0.0476 < 0.08, PGFI = 0.611 > 0.5, NFI = 0.907 > 0.9, IFI = 0.925 > 0.9, TLI = 0.907 > 0.9, CFI = 0.924 > 0.9, PNFI = 0.738 > 0.5, PCFI = 0.752 > 0.5, RMSEA = 0.086 < 0.1.

Table 3
Discriminate validity of the measurement model.

Item	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	MaxR(H)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. PR	0.897	0.744	0.710	0.270	0.911	0.863^a									
2. FR	0.946	0.855	0.710	0.272	0.948	0.842	0.925								
3. FiR	0.859	0.672	0.633	0.300	0.876	0.763	0.796	0.820							
4. TR	0.945	0.851	0.605	0.250	0.946	0.644	0.620	0.778	0.923						
5. HR	0.949	0.861	0.629	0.258	0.950	0.748	0.793	0.777	0.641	0.928					
6. CI	0.926	0.807	0.602	0.189	0.929	-0.235	-0.204	-0.287	-0.248	-0.232	0.898				
7. AI	0.957	0.882	0.072	0.054	0.960	-0.243	-0.187	-0.261	-0.222	-0.213	0.200	0.939			
8. OI	0.944	0.849	0.635	0.216	0.945	-0.134	-0.087	-0.198	-0.242	-0.077	0.776	0.268	0.921		
9. WtP	0.936	0.829	0.752	0.206	0.937	-0.144	-0.083	-0.189	-0.399	-0.096	0.560	0.235	0.711	0.910	
10. IV	0.908	0.768	0.752	0.230	0.926	-0.114	-0.041	-0.217	-0.322	-0.049	0.671	0.248	0.797	0.867	0.876

Note: a denotes square root of AVE. Psychological risk (PR). Functional risk (FR). Financial risk (FiR). Time risk (TR). Health risk (HR). Cognitive image (CI). Affective image (AI). Overall image (OI). Willing to pay (WtP). Intention (IV).

4.3. Structural model

The results of the overall goodness-of-fit indices of the structural model showed that CMIN = 2148.233, DF = 354, CMIN/DF = 5.565, $p < 0.001$, SRMR = 0.081 \approx 0.08, PGFI = 0.635 $>$ 0.5, IFI = 0.904 $>$ 0.9, CFI = 0.904 $>$ 0.9, PNFI = 0.785 $>$ 0.5, PCFI = 0.802 $>$ 0.5, RMSEA = 0.093 $<$ 0.1, and the outcomes are shown in Table 4 and Fig. 2 accordingly.

4.4. Analysis of variance

The independent sample T-test results showed that the influence of gender on financial risk, cognitive image, affective image, and overall image were significantly different. The average financial risk value for males was 0.194 higher than females ($t_{191.76} = 1.586, p < 0.05$), the average cognitive image value for males was 0.003 higher than females ($t_{189.276} = 0.023, p < 0.05$), the average affective image value for males was 0.052 higher than females ($t_{194.572} = 0.429, p < 0.05$), and the average overall image value for males was -0.073 lower than females ($t_{191.486} = -0.654, p < 0.05$).

The ANOVA with a Scheffe post hoc test results showed that the educational group of junior had a higher level of psychological risk compared with fresh students with a mean difference (I-J) of 0.721, $p < 0.05$; junior students and senior students had a higher level of functional risk compared with fresh students with a mean difference (I-J) of 0.815 and 0.824, $p < 0.05$ respectively; junior students and senior students had a higher level of health risk compared with fresh students with a mean difference (I-J) of 0.611 and 0.816, $p < 0.05$ respectively; and junior students had a higher level of perceived risk compared with fresh students groups with a mean difference (I-J) of 0.632, $p < 0.05$. In addition, concerning the monthly living expense groups, the monthly living expense group of 2001–3000 RMB had a higher level of health risk compared with 1000–2000 RMB groups with a mean difference (I-J) of 0.469, $p < 0.05$.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Any tourism destination's success is largely based on how visitors perceive it, and this perception has been studied in two major literature

Table 4
Results of study.

Hypothesis	Parameter	Estimate	p-value	C.R.	S.E.	Decision
H1(a-e)	Perceived risk→cognitive image	-0.252	***	-5.435	0.046	Supported
H2(a-e)	Perceived risk→affective image	-0.210	***	-4.501	0.051	Supported
H3a	Cognitive image→affective image	0.147	0.001	3.194	0.051	Supported
H3b	Cognitive image→overall image	0.757	***	20.615	0.036	Supported
H3c	Affective image→overall image	0.122	***	3.918	0.028	Supported
H4a	Overall image→willing to pay	0.744	***	20.22	0.044	Supported
H4b	Overall image→visit intention	0.826	***	24.741	0.038	Supported

streams: risk perception and destination image (Chew & Jahari, 2014; Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2017). The literature review, pertinent theories, and studies used in this study to build a framework for risk perception, image, and behaviour. First, this study investigates the influence of students' risk perception on cognitive and affective image of staying at youth hostels aftermath COVID-19 pandemic. As exhibited in Fig. 2 and Table 2, results showed that all five first-order risks (i.e., psychological risk, functional risk, financial risk, time risk, and health risk) were positively and significantly associated with the second-order variable which is perceived risk. The standard coefficients for these relationships were 0.893 (psychological risk), 0.921 (Functional risk), financial risk (0.873), 0.709 (time risk), and 0.862 (health risk) at $p < 0.001$ level. About 79.8 %, 84.9 %, 76.2 %, 50.3 % and 74.3 % of the total variance in psychological risk, functional risk, financial risk, time risk, and health risk were accounted for perceived risk. Thus, all first-order dimensions significantly belong to the higher-order construct of perceived risk.

Our results demonstrated that perceived risk negatively influenced cognitive image ($\beta = -0.252, p < 0.001$) and affective image ($\beta = -0.21, p < 0.001$). Indeed, our results showed that psychological risk negatively influenced cognitive and affective image, which shows that travellers still feel uncomfortable meeting strangers in hostels after the COVID-19 pandemic, and they are afraid that illegal activities exist in hostels such as candid photography and pinhole cameras. These findings in line with previous studies showed that psychological risk negatively influenced tourists' cognitive and affective image of hotels (Najar & Rather, 2022). Hence, H1a and H2a were accepted.

Results from this study showed that functional risk negatively influenced cognitive and affective image. This means that travellers who intend to patronise hostels are concerned about the low quality of accommodation facilities, functions and services compared with traditional hotels. These findings are consistent with previous studies that demonstrated that functional value significantly influenced consumers' attitudes, cognition and evaluation processes of hotels (Han et al., 2019; Rather, 2020). Thus, H1b and H2b were accepted.

Previous studies indicated that financial risk was a negative indicator associated with the cognitive and affective image of a particular journey, hotel or destination (Matzler et al., 2019; Olya et al., 2019), especially during the pandemic or for long-distance travelling (Quan et al., 2022;

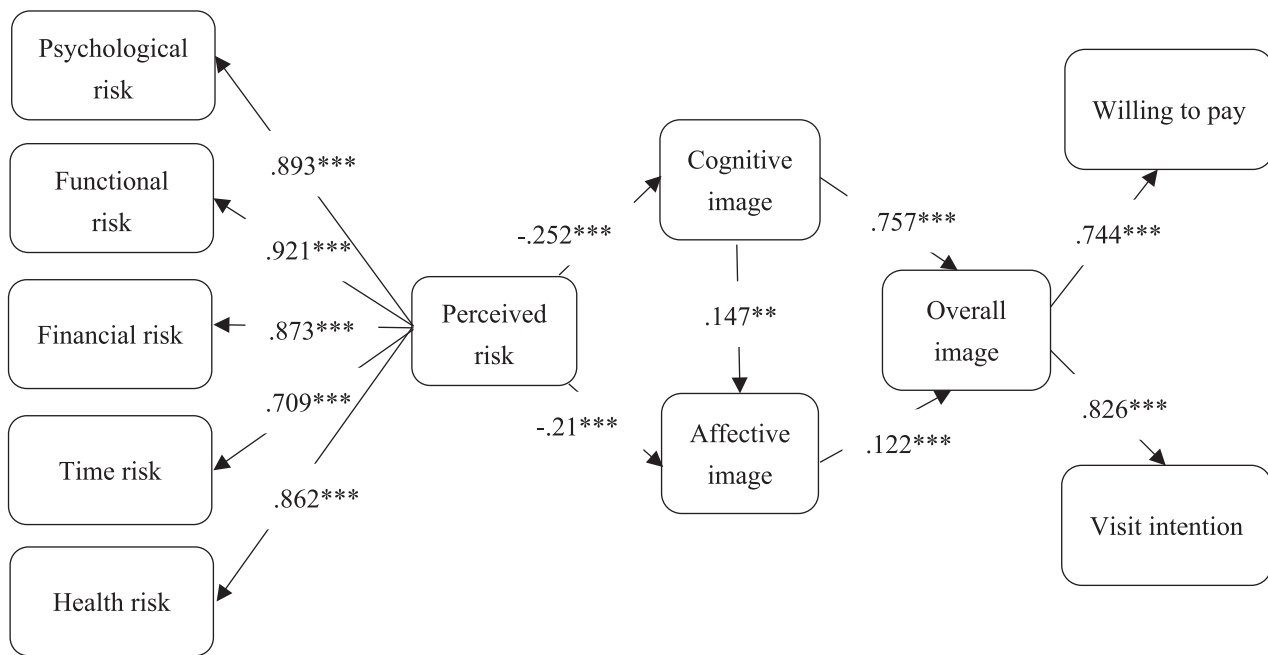


Fig. 2. Results of study.

Note: Total variance explained (R^2) for willing to pay is 0.553, for intention is 0.683.

Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). This study's results showed that financial risk negatively influenced one's cognitive and affective image towards visiting youth hostels, which demonstrates that travellers are concerned about their money being stolen, incurring additional charges or high prices of youth hostels. Thus, H1c and H2c were accepted.

Our results showed that time risk negatively influenced consumers' cognitive and affective image towards visiting youth hostels. This means that travellers perceived that visiting youth hostels may waste their time due to inefficient or intentionally choosing youth hostels can put time pressure on themselves. These findings in line with previous studies showed that time risk was a negative predictor of tourists' behaviours (Çetinsöz & Ege, 2013) such as cognitive and affective image of a destination (Hamouda & Yacoub, 2018). Thus, H1d and H2d were accepted.

Certain studies confirmed the negative relationship between health risk and cognitive and affective image towards choosing a destination (Wei & Onder, 2022), in particular during the pandemic (Teeroovengadum et al., 2021). Results from this study showed that health risk negatively influenced travellers' cognitive and affective image towards patronising youth hostels. These findings indicated that consumers perceived that staying at youth hostels may cause health problems, and contract infectious diseases with others such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, H1e and H2e were accepted.

This study focuses on the interrelationships among cognitive image, affective image, and overall image. The results showed that cognitive image ($\beta = 0.757, p < 0.001$) and affective image ($\beta = 0.122, p < 0.001$) positively influenced the overall image respectively. This indicates that a cognitive evaluation of youth hostels and feelings or emotional response to visit youth hostels significantly results in their overall evaluation of youth hostels' tangible attributes and feelings about youth hostels. These findings supported previous research that found that cognitive and affective images had a significant influence on the overall image of a specific destination (Králíková et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022b). Therefore, H3b and H3c were supported.

Many past studies' results showed cognitive image significantly influenced affective image towards a particular destination (Stylydis et al., 2020). Our results indicated that cognitive image positively influenced affective image ($\beta = 0.147, p < 0.01$) which means that

consumers' perceived youth hostels are attractive and may provide unique travel experiences and the atmosphere significantly influenced their feelings and emotional responses towards visiting youth hostels. Thus, H3a was accepted.

Lastly, this study investigated whether consumers' willingness to pay and visit intention may be influenced by the overall image. The results demonstrated that overall image positively influenced willingness to pay ($\beta = 0.744, p < 0.001$), and visit intention ($\beta = 0.826, p < 0.001$). This shows that consumers' overall assessments, experiences, and perceptions of the benefits of youth hostels boost their propensity to spend more for hostels than traditional hotels and to visit in future. These findings are in line with earlier research that found that a specific tourism destination's overall image has a beneficial impact on tourists' willingness to pay and visit intention (Prameswari et al., 2020; Stylos et al., 2017). Therefore, H4a and H4b were supported.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

Although some studies aimed to understand the psychological characteristics of travellers by employing various variables on demonstrating a visit behaviour towards hostels (Carvajal et al., 2023; Nagy, 2018), little attention has been paid to negative behavioural intention framework (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020). Perceived risk is acknowledged as a key predictor of behaviour (Fuchs & Reichel, 2006), but few studies have examined the effects of perceived risk on a tourist's behaviour in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in the hospitality industry (Teeroovengadum et al., 2021). To the author's knowledge, few studies have investigated how tourists' perceptions of risk affected their expressions towards and behaviour in youth hostels. This study's results demonstrated that perceived risk negatively influenced consumers' cognitive and affective image towards visiting youth hostels in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study findings offer an alternative perspective on the youth hostel selection among young consumers and valuable insights on the significance of the negative influence of perceived risk in assessing its influence on travellers' hostel selection.

Travellers may perceive different forms of danger when they travel to different tourist sites (Hasan et al., 2017). Thus, perceived risk can be

considered as a multi-dimensional concept and accessed by various indicators in past studies (Zhang & Yu, 2020). This study has effectively developed the hypothesis that the first-order aspects of perceived risk – psychological, functional, financial, time, and health risks directly predict cognitive and affective image. The results of this study can considerably contribute to establishing a theoretical framework for recruiting young consumers after infectious diseases, and they gave a beneficial insight into how to persuade youth hostel visitors to patronise youth hostels when travelling.

A traveller's overall image towards a specific tourism destination is significantly shaped by external information resources and perceived knowledge and experience (Casali et al., 2020). In other words, cognitive and affective images are two important predictors of overall image (Wang et al., 2022b). However, few studies have investigated the effects of cognitive, affective and overall image on tourists' willingness to pay and intention to visit youth hostels (Sun et al., 2014). Specifically, most previous studies largely focused on the impacts of the cognitive image on tourists' actions (Ragab et al., 2019). The current study found that both cognitive and affective images positively influenced overall image, with the cognitive image having stronger predictive power than the affective image in describing a tourist's overall image towards a specific site. Hence, future studies should consider the current study findings using both cognitive and affective images to predict consumers' overall image towards a behaviour.

In addition, the link between cognitive and affective image were mostly overlooked in previous studies (Alcocer & Raúl Lopez, 2019; Wang et al., 2022b). Our findings revealed that one's cognitive image influenced one's affective image towards visiting youth hostels. These are echoed by Kim, Lehto, and Kandampully (2019) and Kim, Styliadis, and Oh (2019) pointed out that cognitive image serves as a foundation for overall image towards a certain tourism site, and it should be seen as a precursor that influences the development of affective image.

Furthermore, as youth hostels were first popularised in Western nations, they are still a novel notion for consumers in developing nations like young Chinese customers. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe negative impact on customer confidence, bookings, and revenues for the youth hostels (Barry & Iaquinto, 2023). Investigating consumer behaviour, specifically their willingness to pay and intent to visit youth hostels is therefore important. This study's results showed that the multidimensional concept of perceived risk (i.e., psychological risk, functional risk, financial risk, time risk, and health risk) had a substantial impact on young customers' perceptions of youth hostels. Subsequently, cognitive, and affective images positively influence the overall image and finally affect one's willingness to pay and visit intention towards youth hostels. Because of this, these factors should be accounted for in academic research on youth hotel selection in future.

5.2. Practical implications

This research can lead to practical and operational recommendations for youth hostel marketing strategy. It is critical to recognise the significance of perceived risk based on the multidimensional model. According to our findings, psychological risk has a detrimental impact on young consumers' cognitive and affective image. Youth hostel managers should classify customers into various segments based on their characteristics, for example, welcoming backpackers to live with backpackers in one shared room, thus increasing consumers' comfortable feelings when meeting similar groups. Such implementations may boost psychological comfort and mental well-being by assisting one another when they are in trouble, whether they are staying at youth hostels or travelling to places because they can form “transient” friendships by remaining in the same place.

Our results showed that functional risk negatively influenced one's cognitive and affective image. The most common operational strategy of today's youth hostels is the use of the “share economic” concept, such as sharing rooms, a kitchen, and an activity area since the target market for

youth hostels is youthful generations. Operators of youth hostels should emphasise, nonetheless, that quality is not sacrificed for share economics. The primary rationale behind this is that all-day self-service food and beverage, laundry, and other basic services can offer consumers the same quality of service while simultaneously reducing carbon emissions.

Our results showed that financial risk negatively influenced consumers' cognitive and affective image. Hostel managers should provide a competitive or even lower price for their rooms, and facilities compared with traditional hotels when they are located in the same places. Meanwhile, youth hostel managers need to promise that there will not be additional charges during consumers' stay at hostels. More importantly, youth hostel managers should declare that they can offer the same level of safety quality as traditional hotels in order to avoid potential customers' financial concerns. Hence, a transparent and competitive price and, safe environment could attract more potential consumers to visit youth hostels.

Results from this study showed that time risk has a detrimental effect on the cognitive and affective image. The marketing of youth hostels should underline that meeting new acquaintances at youth hostels is a new and effective approach for them to exchange knowledge and perceptions about a specific tourism destination. Hence, to reduce consumers' time risks, youth hostel operators should emphasise that visiting youth hostels is a worthwhile decision because they can join a specific social group for certain activities (e.g., social activities, parties, tourism activities) at youth hostels to learn about different region's cultures and customs. Youth hostel managers should highlight the unique characteristics of hotels such as “social interaction or knowledge exchange” in their operation. This advertising may increase consumers' satisfaction because hostels can not only provide a place for their stay but also satisfy their demand for knowledge, thus leading to people believe that choosing youth hostels is not a waste of time.

The results of this study showed that health risk negatively influenced consumers' cognitive and affective image. Because of hostels' unique characteristics, such as shared rooms, bathrooms, kitchens, dormitories etc., consumers are highly concerned about the health conditions of hostels. Thus, youth hostels' managers need to highlight how frequency they perform sterilisation for the rooms, facilities, products, and many others. Meanwhile, hostel managers also can exhibit what product and food qualification certifications, and health qualification certifications staff possess to reduce consumers' health risk perception.

Furthermore, young generations have never lived without the internet (Wang, Wang, et al., 2021) and utilise existing web-based technologies to acquire the product or service they want (Wiratno et al., 2020). Because our findings demonstrated a favourable relationship between cognitive image, affective image, overall image, and eventually willingness to pay and visit intention. Therefore, youth hostels should prioritise using internet tools (e.g., new blogs, online newspapers, social media posts, and user-generated content) to advertise their establishments rather than relying on those who have access to traditional marketing resources. An important primary objective for such businesses will be to emphasise the differences between the characteristics of youth hostels and traditional hotels. Meanwhile, advertising should be used as a useful tool to provide important information to potential customers, such as the fact that youth hostels offer comparable services and goods to traditional hotels and offer a more distinctive and hospitable environment than hotels. The perception that youth hostels are endearing and amusing will improve the likelihood that young consumers would be willing to pay and visit.

5.3. Limitations

There were some limitations in the current study. First, although young people constitute the majority of youth hostels' guests, there are other populations that obtain them attractive. As a result, it is important

to be cautious when generalising findings. Second, this study used a variety of risk dimensions, including psychological, functional, financial, time, and health risks. Physical, social, and privacy risks are just a few of other perceived risks that may have an impact on how individuals make decisions. Future research should take into account the impact of such a potential perceived risk component on consumer behaviour in youth hostels. Finally, although intention is acknowledged as the single most significant predictor of behaviour, actual behaviour did not always correspond to one's stated behavioural intention aspects (Wang, Wong, & Zhang, 2021). Therefore, more research on the impact of young travellers' actual behaviours towards adopting youth hostels is needed.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Yue Gong: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Writing – original draft. **Qian Gong:** Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Writing – original draft. **Jongsik Yu:** Conceptualization, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization. **Philip Pong Weng Wong:** Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Lei Wang:** Conceptualization, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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