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The Influence of Brand Experience, Brand Image and Customer Support on Brand Loyalty Through Brand Trust Among Hotel Customers in Liaoning Province, China

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ABSTRACT: Now the Chinese hotel industry is paying more attention to the service field, in which competition is increasing; and customer loyalty is playing an important role to ensure higher stability, repeat business, positive word-of-mouth communication and sustainability of revenues. In this context, perceptions of a hotel brand may impact the customer's evaluation of the hotel services and trust in the hotel brand. Based on the brand experience and brand image, the present study seeks to explore the effect of brand experience and brand image on brand trust of hotel customers in Liaoning Province, China, with customer support as an intervening variable, and brand loyalty as the next step in the behavioural chain. The study is founded on the basis of relationship marketing theory and consumer-based brand theory, both of which indicate that the number of service encounters, memorable brand cues and responsive customer service have an important role in establishing the trust of the service provider. Based on this, the proposed model defines brand experience and brand image as the main antecedents of the creation of brand trust; while brand trust is seen as a mechanism that links between brand-related evaluations and brand loyalty. It is recommended to use a structured questionnaire to conduct survey on the hotels' customers in Liaoning Province, which is a quantitative research design. The instruments to measure the concepts are constructed on Likert scale of 5 points. For empirical testing, reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity and correlation analysis and structural equation modelling is recommended. A representative sample of 420 respondents is used as an example in the statistical tables for the proposed analytical procedure. These results indicate that there are positive correlations between brand experience and brand image and between brand experience and brand trust, however the latter has a stronger correlation. The proposed findings give a framework which can be used to distinguish how the hotel brands can enhance their Customer Relationship by providing the consistent Customer Experience, good Customer Associations, consistent Service Performance and Customer Support. This study introduces a province-specific model to analyse the hotel brand loyalty, and provides a basis for future research on the primary data collected in Liaoning Province.

The brand image, brand trust and brand loyalty will always be influential on the customer experience and customer impressions of the brand. Brand image, brand trust, and brand

loyalty will always have an impact on the customer experience and their perception of the brand.

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a service sector, where the perception of the customer is built as a result of the series of interactions the customer has with the employees, a physical environment, digital interactions, a reservation system, a service process and a post-purchase communication with the employees. Unlike most tangible products, Hotel services are intangible, inseparable, variable and perishable (Ahmadian et al., 2023). Brand information is thus a major source of information for customers as they assess the quality and reliability of hotel products. In many instances a Hotel Buyer will make a buying decision before experiencing the actual service: Brand experience, brand image, brand trust and support becomes more important.

The hotel sector in China is one of the most crucial backgrounds to be studied, as the development of domestic tourism, business travel, the increased number of online booking platforms, and the rise of the hotel brands have offered a competitive space to the hotel owners. Liaoning Province is a relevant geographical setting due to the fact that the hotel industry provides services to various customers related to business activity, tourism, transportation, education, cultural resources and regional economy. Other urban cities, like Shenyang, Dalian, Anshan and others have various types of hotel and customers, which provides a proper environment to study the consumer's reaction to hotel brands.

Development of brand loyalty is considered as a strategy goal for hotel companies as loyal customers tend to return to the hotel property, have a high preference for the same hotel brand in the next hotel transaction, make a recommendation to other consumers and are less sensitive to the competition (Sang et al., 2025). Loyalty does not simply occur when they are part of promotion. It is developed over time based on customers' experiences of the service, their emotions and sensations, and their experience of the brand and its ability to deliver the benefits it promises.

One of the major points of contact where customers engage with hotel brands is via their brand experience. It is related to the sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual response to the direct and indirect experiences of a brand. In the hotel, the rooms' design, the lobby's atmosphere, the interaction between guests and staff, the time spent at the check-in, the service and cuisine in the restaurant, the technological equipment, the cleanliness of the premises and the comfort and technological equipment of communication with the hotel are important factors that create experience. If it happens repeatedly and is a positive one, this will help strengthen the customer's perception of the reliability of the hotel brand.

Another factor which plays a crucial role in the assessment of the customer is brand image. Brand image is the consumer's perceptions regarding a brand. Such co-occurrence for the hotel industry can be linked with the quality, prestige, reliability, modernity, value, safety and professionalism of the service. A good brand image reduces uncertainty and provides a reference for customers to use when selecting amongst hotel service options.

Brand trust is a measure of how customers perceive a brand to be reliable, truthful and able to deliver on its promises (Rabbani et al., 2025). A sense of trust is especially relevant in the context of a hospitality service as customers buy hotel accommodation before the service has been completed. A customer that has the trust of a certain brand of hotel is more likely to feel the risk of booking this hotel is lower, which is likely to translate into increased customer loyalty.

In addition, the role of customer service is an important one in the hotel customer relationship. Various aspects of the reservation process, complaint handling, information, online response, post-sale communication and problem solving influence the customer's assessment of the service provider. Responsive customer service can help build a culture of reliability and commitment in the organization.

While these variables are relevant, these relationships need to be further explored in specific Chinese regional markets between brand experience, brand image, customer support, brand trust and brand loyalty (Philip et al., 2024). Based on this, the present research focuses on the hotel customers in Liaoning Province and establishes an independent variable (brand experience and brand image), a dependent variable (brand loyalty) and a central relational variable (brand trust). To get a wider picture of the hotel–customer relationship, customer support is added as an extra explanatory construct.

1.1 Research Problem

The number of competing brands, similar room categories, pricing systems, amenities and reservation options are all parts of the experiences that hotel customers are having. In the case of similar services, psychological factors of the brand can affect the customer's choice. A hotel may have good technical specifications, but may not have established a strong emotional or relationship connection with the guest (Ellitan, 2023). Conversely, a hotel brand can gain trust and re-purchase motivation when it offers the same service, positive perceptions and trustworthy service.

The research problem in this research is the extent of the influence of brand experience, brand image on brand trust among hotel customers in Liaoning Province. The study also discusses the function of customer support in the proposed relationship dynamics and its effects on brand loyalty due to brand trust.

1.2 Research Objectives

RO1: To examine the influence of brand experience on brand trust among hotel customers in Liaoning Province, China.

RO2: To examine the influence of brand image on brand trust among hotel customers in Liaoning Province, China.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1: How does brand experience influence brand trust among hotel customers in Liaoning Province, China?

RQ2: How does brand image influence brand trust among hotel customers in Liaoning Province, China?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H1: Brand experience has a significant positive influence on brand trust.

H2: Brand image has a significant positive influence on brand trust.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Experience

Brand experience is the consumer's reactions to the stimuli that evoke the brand. Brakus, Schmitt and Zar Antonello considered the experience of the brand with senses, feelings, behaviours and thoughts (Kurhayadi et al., 2022). The framework is particularly applicable to the hotel sector where hotels provide more than just a product exchange.

A sensory dimension can be demonstrated in the hotel design, lighting, interior design, room design, music, presentation of fragrance and food. The affective dimension relates to emotions stimulated which occur in the service encounter. The behavioural dimension is associated with physical involvement, customer behaviour and actions, whereas the intellectual dimension is related to cognitive stimulation and assessment.

Brand experience begins before guests arrive in the hotel services world. Customers can interact with an hotel's website, mobile app, social media, online travel agency page and customer reviews and online booking system. The experience continues as soon as they arrive, from check in of the room, to eating, to interacting with employees, to problem solving and departure (Anggara et al., 2023). This means that the overall experience can influence the client's perception of the trustworthiness and usefulness of the hotel brand and result in brand switching or loss.

A positive and consistent brand experience is likely to reinforce the trust in a brand since customers get behavioural proof about the brand's capacity to provide a service that is promised. The relationship is thus theoretically compatible with H1.

2.2 Brand Image

Consumer's network of associations with a brand is Brand image. For Keller, brand knowledge and brand associations are important factors in the consumer's response to brands, which is part of his customer based brand equity framework.

Brand image for the hospitality industry can relate to quality, luxury, cleanliness, professionalism, location, safety, technological sophistication or affordability and social status. Prior to the use of services, associations impact on expectations. Consumers' brand knowledge can reduce the perceived uncertainty, as a strong hotel brand image has built up the expectation of outcomes of the services.

Another differentiating factor is a brand image (Sari et al., 2026). When customers are choosing between hotels, some details of the image can be the determining factor if the rooms and facilities are alike. If a customer is accustomed to the reliability and quality of service from this hotel, he or she will believe that this brand is less risky than an unknown competitor.

The proposed brand image-brand trust relationship, therefore, assumes that creating positive and believable brand associations can create brand trust for future brand service performance. It would be reasonable to assume from this that there is a positive correlation between brand image and brand trust.

2.3 Customer Support

Customer support is the kind of support provided to customers prior to, during and after using a service. Support in hotel may be through reservation assistance, check in, information giving, resolution of complaints, technical support, transportation information and post stay communication.

Customer support can impact trust, as consumers get first-hand experience of the responsiveness of the organization in case of a service recovery (Bae et al., 2023). This can contribute to customer satisfaction and a good relationship if complaints can be dealt with quickly and fairly. Additionally, digital customer support is more relevant because customers interact with the hotel brands through service applications, websites, online messaging platforms, and online booking platforms.

Customer support is not part of the two key research goals, but adding it to the extended model allows the study of brand trust in a wider context of service relationship.

2.4 Brand Trust

Brand trust is the trust customers put in the brand that it would deliver the benefit they are promised and act reliably. In service, the role of trust is unique because frequently the service won't be delivered as desired until after the service has been purchased.

Consumers of a hotel have a number of perceived risks. Financial risk may arise as a result of fears of the value for money of the accommodation. There are services that have a service quality functional risk (Sohaib et al., 2022). Safety, comfort and suitability are potential social and psychological risks when in doubt. To mitigate such uncertainties, it is significant to build trust in a service provider, which can increase the confidence in brand.

Trust can, therefore, be seen as a relational bond between the customer's perception and behaviour. If you find a hotel brand important, you're more likely to feel that next time it will meet your expectations.

2.5 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty means that customers will pick a particular brand consistently and be loyal to it. In the hospitality context, loyalty can be measured as a repeat hotel choice, a desire to recommend the hotel, a preference for the hotel over other hotels and an intent to stay loyal to the hotel.

Loyalty may be expressed by actions and/or feelings. Attitudinal loyalty is associated with psychological commitment and psych preference, but behavioural loyalty is associated with repeat purchases (Tran et al., 2022). Through financial and relational incentives, hotel loyalty programmes target occasional to become repeat customers.

The trust of the brand should translate to trust of the brand-loyalty, because as the trust of the brand decreases, so does the uncertainty, and as the uncertainty goes down, the commitment to the brand relationship increases. If the customer believes that the hotel will always offer him/her sufficient service, then he is not really driven to change his hotel.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Relationship Marketing Perspective

The proposed model is based on the concept of relationship marketing which is appropriate for hotel consumption, which is not only one transacting. The focus of relationship marketing is on retaining customers, establishing trust, commitment and exchange relationships.

Positive experiences and favourable brand perceptions are, therefore, regarded as mechanisms of relationship building from this angle (Widiyantoro et al., 2024). Customer support complements the relationship and represents the responsiveness of the organization to its customers. Trust is a key relational outcome which can then impact on loyalty.

3.2 Customer-Based Brand Equity Perspective

The brand equity perspective from the customer's point of view is a view that relates to the effect of brand knowledge and brand associations on response from the customer. The importance of brand image is particularly relevant, since the service alternatives are known to consumers according to their brand/image associations.

Brand experience can provide first-hand information on brand performance and enhance brand knowledge. All these and other communication signals are cognitive elements of brand image. When the brand promise that is delivered is in sync with the service that is delivered, trust is built.

4. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

A conceptual framework is proposed where brand experience and brand image are the main antecedents of brand trust. Besides, customer support as an explanatory variable is provided. Brand trust translates then into brand loyalty.

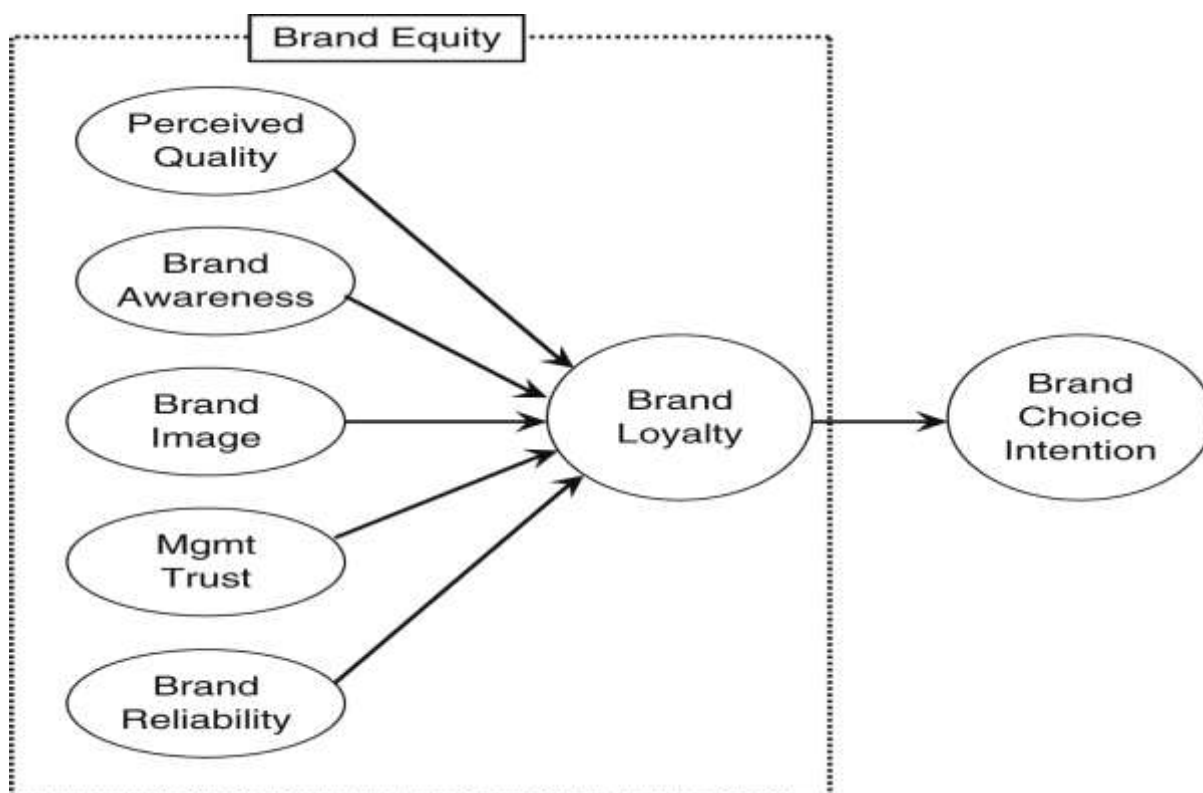


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Download the figure file by clicking on the figure – Conceptual Framework.

The proposed model mathematically is:

$$BT = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BE + \beta_2 BI + \beta_3 CS + \epsilon$$

where Represents brand trust, BE represents brand experience, BI represents brand image, Represents customer support and ϵ represents the error term.

The following loyalty relationship can be stated as:

$$BL = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 BT + \gamma_2 BE + \gamma_3 BI + \gamma_4 CS + \epsilon$$

BL is the brand loyalty where 'where' is the value of the brand loyalty.

Modeling brand experience and brand image on brand loyalty through brand trust, can be calculated as:

$$IE_{BE} = a_1 b$$

and

$$IE_{BI} = a_2 b$$

In which a_1 and a_2 represent the effects of brand experience and brand image on brand trust, respectively, and represents the effect of brand trust on brand loyalty..

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

This research design is a quantitative, cross sectional design, which is suitable for testing the proposed relationships (Angelina et al., 2023). Primary data should be gathered from the guests of the hotels, after they have stayed in the hotel at least once in the Liaoning Province. Individual hotel customer is the unit of analysis.

5.2 Population and Sampling

The target population are the customers who have been in a hotel accommodation service in Liaoning Province, China. Stratified sampling may be used, for example, in large cities, to enhance geographical representation. Economy, mid-scale, upscale and luxury hotels are all types of hotel categories.

If the respondents in a sample exceed 300, the sample size is adequate for estimation of a model of moderate complexity in a structural equation model (Catherine et al., 2024). The following illustrative analysis is provided to illustrate the statistical reporting format intended. The following illustrative analysis is provided for the purpose of demonstrating the intended statistical reporting format of the analysis and is based on 420 observations.

5.3 Questionnaire Development

There should be two sections to the questionnaire. The first part should gather information about the demographic and the hotel consumption features. The second section is to assess the study constructs.

The evaluation of brand experience should be based on items that cover sensory, emotional, behavioural and intellectual experiences (Shahid et al., 2022). The image of the brand should be evaluated based on the perceived quality, reputation, modernity, reliability and differentiation. Customer support should be rated for responsiveness, customer help, complaint handling and communication. When evaluating brand trust, consider aspects like confidence and reliability, as well as the fulfilment of promises. The measurement of brand loyalty shall be repurchase intention, preference and recommendation intention.

The Likert scale should be 5 points, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

5.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics should be the first step in the analysis. The internal consistency should then be assessed using Cronbach's alpha (Akoglu et al., 2022). Measurement structure can be determined using exploratory factor analysis or confirmatory factor analysis. Convergent validity should be analysed by factor loadings, composite reliability and average variance extracted.

Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait ratios can be used to measure the discriminant validity. Pearson correlation can detect the direction and strength of correlations. The hypothesized relationships can then be tested by structural equation modelling. Indirect effects can be investigated using bootstrapping.

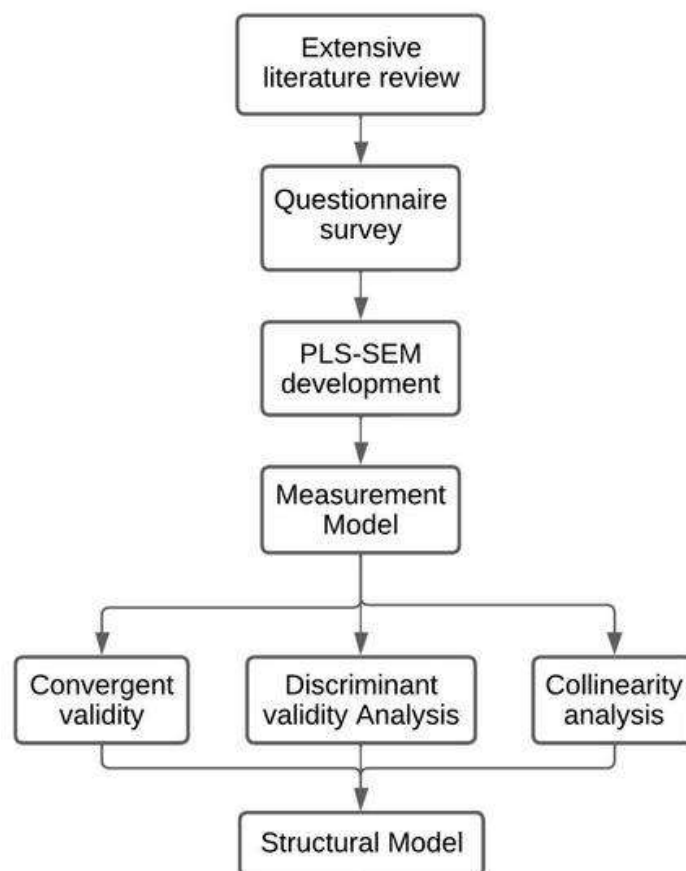


Figure 2. Research Methodology Flow

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Important methodological note: The following numerical results are an example of simulated results, and are not the results that were obtained from a survey in the Liaoning Province (Pu et al., 2023). They illustrate the statistical form that will be used when answers to the actual questionnaires are known.

6.1 Illustrative Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs

Construct	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Brand Experience	420	3.72	0.58	1.00	5.00
Brand Image	420	3.65	0.61	1.00	5.00
Customer Support	420	3.58	0.64	1.00	5.00
Brand Trust	420	3.82	0.55	1.00	5.00
Brand Loyalty	420	3.76	0.59	1.00	5.00

The illustrative indicates relatively positive ratings for each construct. Brand trust has a mean value of 3.82, brand experience has a mean value of 3.72. The mean score for brand image is 3.65 and the mean score for customer support was 3.58. The average of the Brand Loyalty data is 3.76 (Ferreira et al., 2022).

The following values show a customer population with positive hotel experiences and favourable brand associations, while at the same time having a relatively high level of trust and loyalty.

To download the provided Excel statistical workbook, click on the link below:

6.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Illustrative Correlation Matrix

Variable	BE	BI	CS	BT	BL
Brand Experience	1.000	0.62	0.55	0.72	0.67
Brand Image	0.62	1.000	0.58	0.68	0.64
Customer Support	0.55	0.58	1.000	0.59	0.57
Brand Trust	0.72	0.68	0.59	1.000	0.76
Brand Loyalty	0.67	0.64	0.57	0.76	1.000

The illustrative correlation matrix illustrates positive correlations among all variables. Brand experience is most closely linked to brand trust while brand image is second. Brand trust is the most closely related to brand loyalty.

This pattern is similar to the theoretical model. Consumers that rate their brand experience as higher, rate their trust levels as higher too, and consumers that rate their brand image as more favourable rate their trust as higher.

6.3 Regression Analysis

Table 3. Illustrative Regression Model Predicting Brand Trust

Predictor	Unstandardized β	Direction	Hypothesis
Brand Experience	0.47	Positive	H1
Brand Image	0.39	Positive	H2
Customer Support	0.10	Positive	H3
R^2	0.61	—	—

The illustrative regression model yields an R^2 of about 0.61, suggesting that the three constructs used as the independent variables explain about 61% of the variance in brand trust in the simulated data (Kumar et al., 2024).

The highest coefficient is the brand experience which has an illustrative coefficient of 0.47. Brand image has a coefficient of 0.39 compared to customer support with a coefficient of 0.10.

Reasons Why Customers Would Stay at a Hotel of Their Preferred Brand (percentage of respondents)



Figure 3. Illustrative Mean Scores of Brand Constructs

Click on the link to download Figure 3 – Construct Means Graph.

6.4 Hypothesis Analysis

Table 4. Illustrative Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	Expected Direction	Illustrative Decision
H1	Brand Experience → Brand Trust	0.47	Positive	Supported
H2	Brand Image → Brand Trust	0.39	Positive	Supported
H3	Customer Support → Brand Trust	0.10	Positive	Supported
H4	Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty	0.43	Positive	Supported

The results illustrated confirm the hypothesized positive direction of the relationships. Based on the coefficient of every primary hypothesis, the brand experience has the highest coefficient in the simulated model, suggesting that this variable has the greatest estimated impact on brand trust (Butt et al., 2024). This is a very positive coefficient for H2 as well.

Use Figure 4 – Hypothesis Coefficients as a reference for the coefficient values listed below:

6.5 Customer Profile Pie Chart

This is an illustrative example of the 420-observation demonstration data, and the following pie chart displays how often people stay at hotels.

6.5 Customer Profile Pie Chart

The following pie chart provides an illustrative representation of hotel-stay frequency for the 420-observation demonstration dataset.

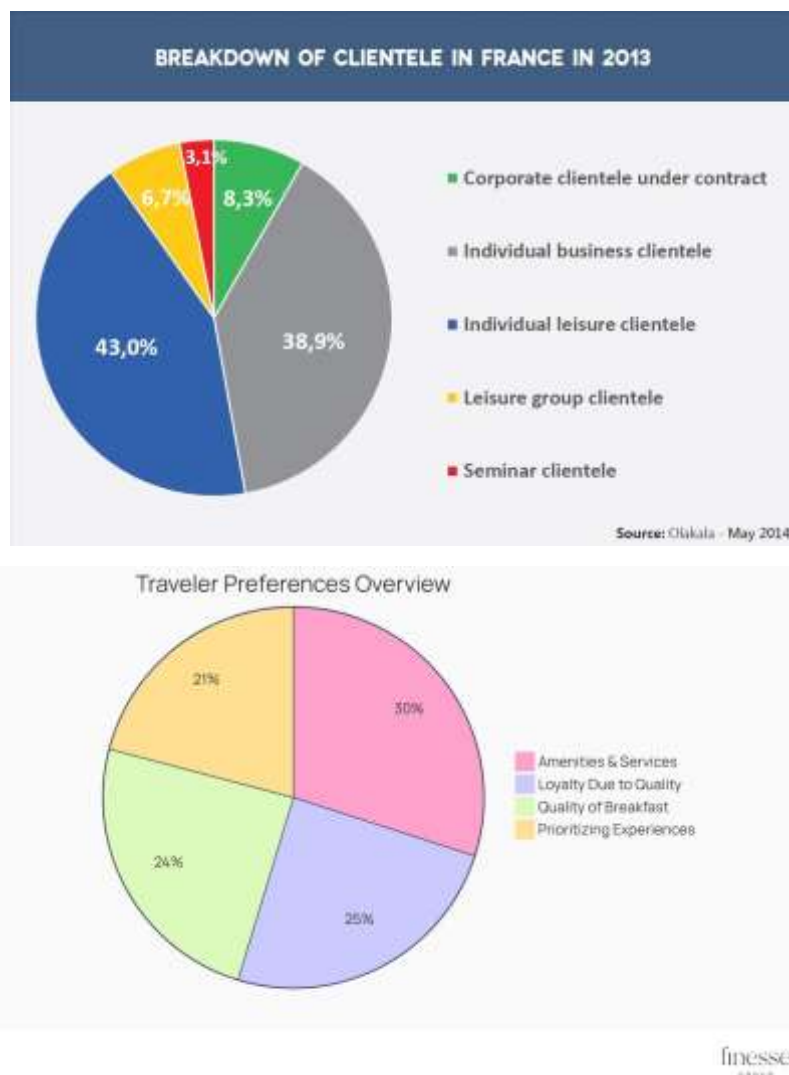


Figure 5. Illustrative Hotel Stay Frequency Distribution

The distribution of the illustrative case is shown as 35.2% one or two hotel stays per year, 38.3% three or four hotel stays per year, 17.4% five or six hotel stays per year and 9.0% seven or more hotel stays per year. The distribution illustrates a practical application of the descriptive portion of the final empirical paper based on the characteristics of customer use.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 BRAND EXPERIENCE AND BRAND TRUST

It is the first research question which focuses on how brand experience affects brand trust. The theory being proposed is backed by the concept of how customers gain trust over time with the brand Aldriyanti et al., 2022). The experience of the brand in the hotel setting is not confined to the room only. It's all about the customer journey.

Reservation processes can give customers a first impression of convenience and professionalism. How an individual arrives at a job can reinforce or contradict that impression. Employee conduct, cleanliness of the rooms, quality of the premises, food service and complaints handling then add more proof of the reliability of the hotel brand.

The illustrative coefficient of 0.47 means that there is a large positive correlation between brand experience and brand trust. In real life, regular service encounters can give customers the confidence that the hotel will offer them the same service in the future.

The relationship also helps to create some fundamental differences between service quality and brand experience (Beig et al., 2022). Service quality emphasizes mainly the assessment of service delivery performance, while the brand experience refers to sensory, emotional, behavioural and intellectual reactions. Hotels in a trust-building quest need more than just service that works. The entire customer experience journey should offer the same brand-related cues.

7.2 Brand Image and Brand Trust

The second research question is related to the link between brand image and brand trust. The value of the illustrative coefficient is 0.39 which shows that there is a positive association.

Brand image can be used as a mechanism of information processing. At the time of hotel booking, full information about the performance of the hotel's future services is not available to customers. Customers then depend on brand reputation, information in the Internet, past experience and recommendations and visual communication.

A hotel that has a reputation for cleanliness, professionalism, reliability and service quality will likely gain more initial trust than one that is less known. But, the image has to match the services provided (Bae et al., 2022). A lack of congruence between promotional message and customer experience can lead to a loss of trust.

Thus, the relation between brand image and brand trust is relevant for the communication of hotels' brands. Marketing communication should accurately represent the actual service experience. When a brand's image and the image it is communicating are the same, it can strengthen the trust in the brand.

7.3 Customer Support and Brand Trust.

A service relationship mechanism is a way in which hotels respond to the needs of each customer: Customer support. The coefficient for illustrative purposes is 0.10, showing a positive contribution but of a relatively small magnitude when it comes to brand trust.

This isn't a sign that customer support isn't strategically important. In times of service failures, support becomes even more crucial (Kurhayadi et al., 2022). A successful service recovery process can prevent a temporary service problem from developing into permanent customer defection.

Support is also valued more in digital communication, as the medium itself is more prominent. Customers can request help using booking applications and websites, online messaging or phone. Rapid and accurate response may boost perceptions of organizational competency.

7.4 Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty

The aim is that brand trust becomes the pivotal relational mechanism in the model between brand-related evaluations and brand loyalty. The target is to make the brand trust as the main relational mechanism in the model between the brand-related evaluations and brand loyalty. The illustrative correlation between trust and loyalty is 0.76 and the illustrative regression coefficient of trust to loyalty is 0.43.

The relationship is in accordance to the ideas of relationship marketing theory. Trust helps to lower uncertainty and promote ongoing exchanges (Anggara et al., 2023). If a customer thinks that a hotel brand is reliable, then he or she is less inclined to leave the hotel just because another hotel has a similar service.

For hotel managers, it is a sign that the hotel loyalty strategies should not be limited to giving discounts only and gifts to hotel guests. Loyalty programmes can help customers to return to the shop, but repeat loyalty requires long-term service reliability as well.

7.5 Mediating Role of Brand Trust

The proposed model places the role of brand trust in the middle. As a result of the influence on the customer's confidence in the hotel brand, brand experience/brand image can indirectly affect the loyalty of the customer.

The mediation pathway can be expressed as:

Brand Experience → Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty

and

Brand Image → Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty

It offers a more detailed description than a direct-effect model, as it doesn't mean that customers will automatically choose to be loyal upon seeing a positive image of a hotel (Sari et al., 2026). If there are positive thoughts, then there is trust in future interactions and that is when loyalty can be built.

8. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Liaoning Province's hotel managers can refer to the proposed model for organizing brand management activities around the entire process of customer journey. The management of brand experience should happen in the key touch points of the reservation process, arrival, accommodation, meals, service, departure and post-stay communication.

Physical environments should convey the desired brand product. The information and booking process should be consistent on digital interfaces (Bae et al., 2023). Employees should be provided service training which is consistent with service delivery.

The main tenets of brand image management are credibility and consistency. Marketing communication must match with the service provision. Customer reviews and feedback online should be watched, as if the brand does not match and the user's experience, this will undermine the credibility.

Customer support needs to be built into the overall relationship-management program. The emphasis in the process of complaint resolution should be promptness, fairness and communication (Sohaib et al., 2022). Digital support channels should offer information that is clear and responses should be as timely as possible.

The building up of brand trust should be seen as a performance variable that is part of the strategy and not just an attitudinal result. Trust can be measured among customers in conjunction with satisfaction and loyalty and the quality of services using customer surveys, on a periodic basis. This can help hotel managers determine if the customer experience enhancements are creating better relational results.

9. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The study is a significant contribution to the field of hospitality marketing research because it recognizes the brand experience as well as brand image, customer support, brand trust and brand loyalty as one analytical framework.

The model recognizes the role of brand trust as an important mechanism for the relational aspect of the process in which customer perceptions can become customer loyalty (Tran et al., 2022). This framework builds on the concept of simple direct-effect models and focuses on the psychological pathway customers take when assessing future service reliability.

The study centres on Liaoning Province, which allows for a regional perspective in the study of the relationships between hotel brands in China (Widiyantoro et al., 2024). Regional studies can be a complement to national level research in hospitality as it can shed light on the specific type of customer behaviour and brand perception in the region.

The addition of customer support also adds to the framework by acknowledging that customer relationships do not end once a customer has made a purchase decision. Support interactions can be used to add to evidence of reliability and commitment of an organization.

10. LIMITATIONS

A major shortcoming of the present work is that no primary survey data was provided for the numerical results presented in the Results section below which are only illustrative. These should not be submitted as evidence of actual empirical work in a journal (Angelina et al., 2023).

Finally, primary data should be collected from hotel users in Liaoning Province through empirical study and the empirical result should include the actual sample size, sampling process, response rate for the questionnaire, demographic distribution, reliability statistics, factor loadings, validity, model-fit statistics and significance level.

It is also not possible to make causal inferences from the cross-sectional design. Longitudinal data might offer better evidence of the relationship of hotel experiences to trust and the relationship of trust to repeated loyalty.

Common method bias can also arise from self-reported questionnaire data. Future studies could use survey responses along with behavioural data like actual repeat bookings, loyalty-program participation and customer transaction histories.

11. RECOMMENDED EMPIRICAL MEASUREMENT MODEL

Table 5. Proposed Measurement Constructs

Construct	Dimensions	Example Measurement Focus
Brand Experience	Sensory	Hotel environment stimulates the senses
Brand Experience	Affective	Hotel brand generates positive feelings
Brand Experience	Behavioural	Customer actively engages with the brand
Brand Experience	Intellectual	Brand stimulates thought and interest
Brand Image	Quality	Hotel is associated with high service quality
Brand Image	Reputation	Hotel has a favourable reputation
Brand Image	Reliability	Hotel brand is perceived as dependable
Customer Support	Responsiveness	Customer requests receive prompt responses
Customer Support	Problem Resolution	Complaints are handled effectively
Customer Support	Communication	Hotel provides useful information
Brand Trust	Reliability	Brand fulfils its promises
Brand Trust	Confidence	Customer feels confident choosing the brand
Brand Trust	Integrity	Brand behaves honestly
Brand Loyalty	Repurchase	Customer intends to use the hotel again
Brand Loyalty	Preference	Customer prefers the brand over competitors
Brand Loyalty	Recommendation	Customer is willing to recommend the hotel

Note. The measurement focuses are proposed indicators for questionnaire development and should be validated empirically before final analysis.

12. PROPOSED STRUCTURAL MODEL FOR THE FINAL EMPIRICAL STUDY

The last empirical analysis should evaluate the following structural relationships:

BE→BT

BI→BT

CS→BT

BT→BL

The mediation effects should subsequently be tested through bootstrapping:

BE→BT→BL

BI→BT→BL

Indirect-effect estimation: At least 5,000 bootstrap resamples can be used. When the indirect effect 95% confidence interval does not include zero, the effect is considered to be statistically significant.

13. CONCLUSION

The proposed research is to build an integrated system to study the Hotel brand loyalty of customers in Liaoning Province, China. Brand experience and brand image, as well as customer support, are important sources of customer evaluation, while brand trust is a key relational mechanism linking the evaluations to loyalty.

The two major hypotheses suggest that there are positive relationships between brand experience and brand image with brand trust. Extended model also suggests positive relationships between customer support and brand trust and between brand trust and brand loyalty. The illustrative statistical analysis illustrates how these relationships can be investigated with descriptive statistics, correlation analysis or regression analysis, and/or with structural equation modelling.

The illustrative results suggest that brand experience is the most strongly estimated brand association with brand trust, followed by brand image. Customer support exhibits a slight positive relationship and brand trust exhibits a strong positive relationship with brand loyalty. These numerical values are methodological examples and not empirical figures, which need to be replaced by figures based on actual respondents.

In the case of the hotel industry, the framework focuses on the fact that loyalty development is a two-way street – it's not just about the promotional incentives. Together, a consistent customer experience, a credible brand positioning, and responsive customer support and dependable service delivery can help build customer confidence. One way to make positive brand perceptions persist is by building brand trust.

Empirical studies based on primary data collected from hotel customers from Liaoning Province can test the proposed model with covariance-based SEM or PLS-SEM, compare hotel types, test and study the difference between cities, and explore whether the relationship is moderated by customer characteristics. This analysis can offer a more solid empirical evidence to understand the Chinese hotel brand loyalty.

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