Original Researcher Article

The Role Of Brand Experience On Brand Loyalty At China's Smart Hotels

Yu Jun 1, Mrutyunjay Sisugoswami 2, Debasish Das 3

Lincoln University College, Petaling jaya Selangor Malaysia [1,2,3]

Corresponding Author
Yu Jun

ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry in China is experiencing a swift and remarkable transformation with the rise of smart hotels. These innovative establishments seamlessly integrate cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, mobile applications, and robotics, to craft unique and personalised experiences for their guests. As the competition heats up, hotels are increasingly embracing brand experience as a vital strategic tool to bolster customer loyalty and elevate their performance. This study investigates the significance of brand experience in influencing brand loyalty within the realm of China's smart hotels, underscoring its effects on guest satisfaction, repeat visits, and long-term profitability. Data was gathered from 649 people all around China utilising a quantitative research approach. Using SPSS 25, the researcher performed both descriptive and inferential statistics such as ANOVA and factor analysis. Guests exhibit a much higher incidence of loyalty towards smart hotels, especially when the technology used not only serves the user but also provides the maximum level of privacy while providing personalisation of service customised precisely for their personal requirements and preferences. The study also emphasises the overriding importance that successful smart hotels need to place on achieving a seamless confluence of advanced technology, excellent levels of service and a real human element that the hotel guest connects. The effective use of customer voice, as well as a willingness for ongoing innovation and the seamless incorporation of smart aspects into the general hotel guest experience holds paramount importance for obtaining the continued satisfaction of the hotel guest over the long term..

Keywords: *Smart Hotels; Brand Experience; Artificial Intelligence (AI); Brand Loyalty; Internet of Things (IoT)..*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Hotels are adjusting by integrating smart technology to varying degrees into their operations in response to its exponential rise. With the help of modern technology, "smart hotels" aim to achieve more than just improved service quality. They want to accomplish this by combining the hotel and information technology sectors. Innovative and complicated approaches are being used by smart hotels to influence the feelings and ideas of their visitors. Customer preferences are impacted by the hotel's features, which in turn affect the services offered by the establishment. Essentially, the concept of "smart hotels" is predicated on the assumption that people can better meet their needs when they multitask. Smart hotels make the service easier and more profitable by meeting customers' wants at predetermined times (Gupta et al., 2022). Furthermore, their excellent automated service, non-contact areas, and extra personal hygiene and sanitation precautions reduce the likelihood of viruses spreading by restricting human-to-human contact. Future smart hotels may succeed by using data collection and analysis to understand the habits and tastes of their customers, which would enable them to customise their offerings for each person. Preparing food, designing themed rooms, organising events, and other related activities may be included in this category. Smart hotels may also benefit from the way things are built and designed to be more user-friendly. This will make visitors feel more comfortable, at home, and have a more satisfying stay. Smart hotels use a variety of technologies to improve the effectiveness, comfort, and personalisation of their guests' stays, including chatbots, facial recognition, delivery robots, voice-activated instructions, and data-driven automation. However, excessive technological usage without corresponding advances in service quality or privacy safeguards may lead to ethical issues and unhappy consumers. Technologies for smart hotels have the power to either totally transform or ruin the visitor experience. Therefore, it is critical to evaluate them for both their presence and how well they align with the objectives of human-centric services (Chen et al., 2022). A feature of contemporary hotels is the use of more and more technological appliances in the culinary arts. Smart tableside ordering systems, robot food delivery systems, and systems that propose meals to consumers are all examples of

technologies that might lead to such interactions. Hence, diners may picture an AI system recommending their meal or a robot serving them in a digitally adorned and smartly lit dining room.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The hospitality industry has been more competitive in recent years, and hotels are trying to stand out from the competition by progressively increasing the amount of money they spend in their current service models. With technical advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), such as service robots, client relationships are fundamentally changing. In the context of smart hotels, past feelings and experiences are crucial. Client happiness and brand loyalty are significantly influenced by these key attributes. With its varied and flexible technologies, a hotel with modern facilities that can sense its visitors' emotions has the power to turn a pleasant stay into an unforgettable experience. Five-star hotels should recognise and cater to their customers' emotional needs to establish an environment where they feel connected and pleased. Advertising through word-of-mouth and repeat business may follow from this (Lok et al., 2025). A brief introduction of the smart hotel customer experience is analysed by a thorough examination of the most well liked brand experience terms. Although customers recognise the benefits of a technologically advanced setting, they nevertheless put the highest importance on the human aspect and the quality of service provided to ensure their pleasure. The hotel sector is also accountable for resolving the problems with smart gadgets and making sure that these innovative solutions not only satisfy but also surpass the high standards of customers (Çeltek, 2023). Determining if brand experience, astute hotel management, and customer loyalty are related in any way is the main goal of this study.

3. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This research aimed to investigate the relationship between smart hotels in China and brand experience with brand loyalty acting as a mediator. Given how rapidly these developments are influencing the hotel industry, it is essential to comprehend how automated service innovations, AI and the Internet of Things (IoT) affect human behaviour and cognition. The purpose of this research was to investigate how customers' brand experiences and degree of brand loyalty are impacted by technology advancements, tailored offerings, and simplified interactions. Additionally, it looks for the potential for excellent brand experiences brought about by customer loyalty to result in financial outcomes like giving consumers an advantage over rivals and improving hotel operations. This study deviates from other studies conducted in the hospitality industry, which mostly focused on technology use, client satisfaction and service quality. Until far, the psychological and social impacts of dining in smart hotels have not been thoroughly examined. To demonstrate how modern hospitality services provide unique experiences that contribute to the development of enduring connections, this study attempts

to analyse the problem from the standpoint of the brand experience. This information will be useful to hotel managers in China as they create customer-focused experiences while using technology. Consequently, smart hotels will be able to sustain their steady development and increase the amount of repeat customers they have.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The degree to which smart services may boost hotels' functional efficiency and the degree of enjoyment that visitors will experience because of these improvements are the two main areas of research on smart hotels and its potential to enhance guests' stays. Scholars have already identified the most fundamental characteristics of smart hotels. Researchers have documented these factors by analysing smart hotel footage with consumer behaviour and experience expectations. Nevertheless, over this time, there have been substantial shifts in the expectations and standards held by potential guests of smart hotels. The importance of the psychological effects of guest interactions is crucial to hotel adaptive development. The amenities of a smart hotel should be flexible enough to accommodate each guest's particular needs (de Kervenoael et al., 2020). Hotels develop thorough profiles of every visitor in order to better understand their individual preferences and utilise that information to provide facilities and services that are suited to their requirements. The degree of satisfaction that guests have after their stay at a smart hotel may be used to gauge its performance. Smart hotel rooms are far more convenient due to a variety of additional benefits built into their design. By focusing on the consumer's sensory perception, it examines methods to improve their overall experience. Researchers agree that hotels may enhance the quality of life for their customers by integrating smart service amenities into every aspect of their stay (Jiang & Wen, 2020). Alibaba's FlyZoo Hotel was a groundbreaking example of a completely automated establishment when it made its debut in 2018. Intelligent robotic technology and AI power the hotel's main functions, which include everything from room service and meal preparation and delivery to guest check-in and assistance (Wu et al., 2023). Furthermore, according to a poll of 2022 consumers who used FlyZoo Hotel's intelligent services via a variety of channels, almost 25% of them were unhappy with their experience, which may have an impact on their choice to come back. This case study demonstrates the need to comprehend the nuanced impacts of AI on customer service. In addition, research examined the development of smart hotels in detail, highlighting issues including an inadequate use of smart amenities and a lack of cognitive execution. In addition, he offers some insight into the next generation of smart hotels and stresses that creative tourism and smart hotels still have yet to collaborate together to have a big influence (Chen et al., 2024).

5. RESEARCH QUESTION

- What is the impact of brand experience on China's smart hotels, considering the brand loyalty?

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

This study aims to clarify the impact of brand experience on the brand loyalty of smart hotels in China using a quantitative research approach. After gathering all of the necessary data, the researcher conducted the analyses using SPSS 25. In this study, demographic and projectassociated information were integrated using descriptive statistics. Researchers better understood the relationships and their severity using inferential statistics such as probability ratios with 95% confidence intervals. Statistical significance is established when the p-value is less than 0.05. Data validation and meaningful statistical categorisation were accomplished with multiple ANOVA and component analyses.

6.2 Sampling

Researchers used a random sampling technique. This particular sample consisted of 587 individuals, as determined by the Rao-soft program. 780 questionnaires were sent out to participants in the study. There were 673 complete sets of questionnaires received, where 24 sets were rejected because they were missing fields. Because of this, 649 people made up the final sample.

6.3 Data and Measurement:

The majority of the data was gathered through the distribution of paper survey forms. The researcher asked for participants' names, addresses and occupations in the first part of the survey. In the second part of the survey, the researcher had participants rate their opinions on different research-related topics using a five-point Likert scale. A large range of projects and activities was able to be included due to the random sample method. Scholarly articles, corporate records and internet databases provided the bulk of the study's secondary data.

6.4 Statistical Software:
For statistical analysis, the researcher relied on SPSS 25 and Microsoft Excel. **6.5 Statistical Tools:** The numerous projects' demographic and level-specific characteristics have been better understood thanks to descriptive research. Analytical methods used in inductive statistical studies include factor analysis for assessing validity and theoretical reliability, 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) for group comparisons.

7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
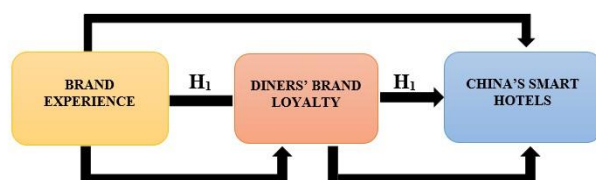
8. RESULT • Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis (FA) can be employed with publicly available data to reveal latent variables. Regression results are commonly used in assessments when there are no clear psychological or visual indicators. Potential weak spots, obvious connections, and holes can be uncovered with simulations. Results from multiple regression analyses are evaluated using Kaiser-

MeyerOlkin (KMO) tests. The statistical model and its dependent variables generate estimates of the dependent variable with a high degree of accuracy. There may be observable instances of duplicate data. Lessening proportions makes data easier to read. KMO can provide investigators with any integer between zero and one. With a KMO score between 0.8 and 1, the sample population is deemed large enough. As per Kaiser's statement, certification is contingent upon meeting the following criteria: Compared to the typical range of 0.60 to 0.69, this one is incredibly low, hovering around 0.050 to 0.059. Scores in the range of 0.70 to 0.79 are considered typical for middle school. On a scale from 0 to 1, this is of very high quality. This number, astonishingly, ranges from 0.90 to 1.00. Table1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Testing for KMO and Bartlett's
Sampling Adequacy Measured by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin .897

The results of Bartlett's test of Sphericity are as follows: Approx. chi-square = 3252.968 df = 190 sig =.000

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.897
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3252.968
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

This enables statements regarding sampling to be made. To check for statistical significance, the researcher used Bartlett's Test of Sphericity on the correlation matrices. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistic indicates that the sample size is suitable with a value of 0.897. According to Bartlett's Sphericity test, the p-value is 0.00. If Bartlett's Sphericity test returns a positive result, it means the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

✞ INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

• **Brand Experience:**

A customer's "brand experience" is the sum of their enduring perceptions of a brand because of their first interaction with it. Each of these constitutes the brand experience. A person's brand experience encompasses every association with a brand. In China's smart hotels, the brand experience extends beyond the food service. It incorporates technology, personalisation and psychological connections that influence how consumers perceive and remember the brand. As the smart hotel industry becomes more competitive, hotels must offer a memorable brand experience to stay fiercely competitive. As digital infrastructure continues to expand at an exponential rate, more and more hotels are providing their guests with services driven by the IoT and AI (Hwang et al., 2021). One distinguishing factor between brands is how these technological features are developed and applied to provide customers with a happy and fulfilled experience. The real difference would be the

additional benefits that go beyond efficiency, even though both hotels could use AI waiters. Examples of these would be customised greetings, customised meal suggestions and interactive dining entertainment. This leads to an increase in intake. The result is that people are happier. Target customers are more likely to think of modern wonder and uniqueness when they think of a smart hotel (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021).

✟ MEDIATING VARIABLE

• Brand Loyalty:

Diners' brand loyalty is a combination of their emotional, mental, and physical dedication to a specific hotel chain as well as their numerous interactions with it. One method to understand relationships is to observe how people interact with one another. One technique for gathering information that might clarify this link is activity analysis. Along with the great service they receive, technological innovations like AI-powered service robots, robotic booking platforms and IoT restaurant systems are making consumers more devoted to brands in China's smart hotels (Bernarto et al., 2020). There are many more factors to take into account, in addition to the degree of satisfaction with the service. These new technologies are speeding up changes in people's eating habits. It is insufficient to show dedication by only going to a certain hotel. Loyalty is vital because of this relationship. Visitors at smart hotels often think that the technology improves their experience in a number of ways. Consumers are more likely to remain loyal to a company if they believe their interactions are quicker, more meaningful, more satisfying and unique. The ability to utilise smartphones to make reservations, get personalised menu recommendations based on their preferences, and then have a robot wait for them increases the likelihood that people will have a memorable experience. However, when these encounters are seen as consistent, reliable, and engaging in general, true commitment thrives (Ismail et al., 2022).

✟ DEPENDENT VARIABLE

• China's Smart Hotels:

In China's hospitality sector, the concept of a "smart hotel" is relatively new. Due to their unique and exciting approaches to management, these hotels stand out from the crowd. Several factors have contributed to the current state of affairs but rising customer expectations and China's dizzying rate of technological advancement are the most relevant. The current arrangement is the result of the combined effects of both of these factors. A smart environment that prioritises convenience, profitability, and customisation defines modern hospitality. The hospitality industry now considers this intelligent environment to be the norm. This ecosystem is now capable of self-regulation because of the incorporation of AI. Smart technologies like AI, face recognition (FR), mobile applications (MA), the IoT and big data analytics are to blame for this change (Yan et al., 2024). Monitoring the shift's development was made feasible by these technological advancements. Chinese smart hotels extend beyond what is usually offered in Chinese restaurants by utilising technology to improve the dining

experience. The recent opening of Alibaba's first fully automated FlyZoo Hotel in Hangzhou serves as evidence of both the swift advancement of technology and the widespread appeal of smart hotels in China. The hotel industry is making ever-greater investments in smart technology to satisfy the needs of contemporary visitors and provide them with better experiences (Poulaki et al., 2023).

• **Relationship between brand experience and China's smart hotels, considering brand loyalty:** Behavioural responses demonstrate the moderating effect of diners' loyalty. Customers who have a great experience with a brand at a smart hotel often do more than just dine there. People may use social media to promote this smart hotel's restaurant, post positive online reviews and urge others to follow suit. Since people are loyal to the brand, these actions are not isolated incidents but rather are a part of a long-term pattern. To succeed in China's fierce hospitality market, where digital platforms have a significant impact on consumer purchasing, smart hotels must consider the behavioural component of customer loyalty. Brand loyalty also shows how hotel experiences change and become better over time. Restaurant and hotel equipment is always changing (Guan et al., 2021). A smart hotel is one that is always looking to improve its operations, add new technology, and find new ways to improve the experience of its guests. It is more likely that frequent visitors will approve of these changes than not. New technology is simpler to install in smart hotels since they are more adaptable and customers are less likely to oppose them. Compared to first-time visits, returning customers could be more open to augmented reality meals or AI-powered diet suggestions. As a result, committed individuals will adopt and utilise new technologies for a long time after their first experience. Smart hotels ultimately provide this value (Soonsan, 2022).

Based on the preceding discussion, the researcher developed the following hypothesis to examine the influence of brand experience on the smart hotels in China, considering the mediating effect of brand loyalty.

• *"H01: There is no significant relationship between brand experience and smart hotels in China, considering brand loyalty."*

• *"H1: There is a significant relationship between brand experience and smart hotels in China, considering brand loyalty."*

Table 2: H1 ANOVA Test

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	45213.267	256	2238.584	933.910	.000
Within Groups	841.698	392	2.397		
Total	46054.965	648			

Several important findings have been derived from the study. The p-value is considered statistically significant if it is less than the .05 alpha threshold, which is when the F value is 933.910. This indicates that the *"H1: There is a significant relationship between brand experience and*

smart hotels in China, considering brand loyalty" is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

9. DISCUSSION

The research results provide some critical and significant information about how China's smart hotels can improve and maximise financial returns from brand experience. It is critical that modern technology be blended with personalisation of service for the purposes of presenting the business with a consistent, cohesive, and memorable image that speaks to the guest. A better understanding of visitors' likes, complemented by the capacity for the provision of customised services by means of fastidious data analysis may result in heightened levels of guest pleasure and the establishment of closer emotional bonds between the hotels and the customers. Additionally, it may behove these hotels to place investments in userfriendly platforms while also taking the steps necessary to ensure the current level of privacy protection is rendered evident and overt to generate incentive for the use of advanced technology. Another effective approach for the purposes of generating consumers' confidence and general level of pleasure is the provision of staff training to facilitate staff members in the assistive use of the smart features by the guests. The research results decisively underscore the profound importance of a receptive mind with respect to the forces of innovation and change. Hotels would need to pursue customer opinion as well as regular practice for the purposes of upgrading the smart technologies as a means of remaining one-step ahead of the competition as well as appearing trendy. This

.

dynamic development process forms a necessary part of the approach for the purposes of delivering consistently first-class support as well as a substantially heightened level of experience for the benefit of all visitors.

.. REFERENCES

1. Bernarto, I., Berlianto, M., Meilani, Y., Masman, R., & Suryawan, I. (2020). The influence of brand awareness, brand image, and brand trust on brand loyalty. *Jurnal Manajemen*, 412-426.
2. Çeltek, E. (2023). Analysis of Smart Technologies Used in Smart Hotels,. *şletme Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2880-2892.
3. Chen, J., Wang, Q., & Faiz Izwan, A. (2024). Evaluating customer satisfaction, emotion and experience of smart hotels in Zhejiang, China: An analysis of online reviews. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts*, 571-584.
4. Chen, M., Jiang, Z., Xu, Z., Shi, A., Gu, M., & Li, Y. (2022). Overviews of internet of things applications in China's hospitality industry. *Processes*, 1256.
5. de Kervenoael, R., Hasan, R., Schwob, A., & Goh, E. (2020). Leveraging human-robot interaction in hospitality services: Incorporating the role of perceived value, empathy, and information sharing into visitors' intentions to use social robots. *Tourism Management*.

10. CONCLUSION

The Chinese hospitality sector has witnessed a phenomenal change because of the rise of smart properties, also commonly known as smart hotels. Smart hotel establishments focus on delivering their customers an experience that not only challenges but also redefines traditional hospitality concepts. This is accomplished by integrating advanced technology with new and novel forms of customer servicing into a seamless package. Smart hotels actually took advantage of this change process and made it simpler for the businesses as well as customers to adapt. The concept of the evolution of brand experience due to the continued change-taking place in the industry holds significant importance and serves as a vital factor. The customer interacts with a hotel's brand by utilising four core avenues: behaviour, thoughts, emotions, and perception. Taking this view, the multifarious range of media that the modern-day customer has access to be interlinked with the larger concept of the experience of the brand. One may meet delivery systems for food by means of a robot, the provision for a personal computer-based assistant, a computer-assisted check-in procedure, and even food that is operated by the power of advanced AI. The kind of technological infusion not only makes the entirety of the experience for the customers simpler but also imparts the brand a sense of uniqueness, generates interaction, and creates a more personal relationship that ends up changing the perception of how the public views the brand. Further, this modern development makes it

simpler for the customers as well, thereby enhancing the experience for them as well as making it all the simpler..

6. Guan, J., Wang, W., Guo, Z., Chan, J., & Qi, X. (2021). Customer experience and brand loyalty in the full-service hotel sector: the role of brand affect. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 1620-1645.
7. Gupta, S., Modgil, S., Lee, C.-K., Cho, M., & Park, Y. (2022). Artificial intelligence enabled robots for stay experience in the hospitality industry in a smart city. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 2331-2350.
8. Hwang, J., Choe, J., Kim, H., & Kim, J. (2021). Human baristas and robot baristas: How does brand experience affect brand satisfaction, brand attitude, brand attachment, and brand loyalty? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 103050.
9. Ismail, T., Zahari, M., Hanafiah, M., & Balasubramanian, K. (2022). Customer brand personality, dining experience, and satisfaction at luxury hotel restaurants. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 26-42.
10. Jiang, Y., & Wen, J. (2020). Effects of COVID19 on hotel marketing and management: a perspective

article. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25632573.

11. Lok, C., Lee, B., & Lei, U. (2025). Enhancing Guest Experiences Through Smart Hotel Systems in theHotel Industry in China: A System Integration Approach. *Proceedings of the 11th World Congress on Electrical Engineering and Computer Systems and Sciences (EECSS'25).*

12. Mostafa, R. B., & Kasamani, T. (2021). Brand experience and brand loyalty: is it a matter of emotions? *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 1033-1051.

13. Poulaki, P., Kritikos, A., & Vasilakis, N. (2023). The contribution of artificial intelligence in the Chinese tourism industry. In *Tourism Innovation in the Digital Era: Big Data, AI and Technological Transformation* (pp. 25-35). Emerald Publishing Limited.

14. Soonsan, N. (2022). Examining antecedents on Chinese customer loyalty in the boutique hotel business. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 1430-1450.

15. Wu, Y., Bao, W., & Wang, M. (2023). Exploring The Characteristics of Artificial Intelligent Hotel Consumers and Consumers' Choice Intention.

16. Yan, Z., Balasubramanian, K., Konar, R., Chen, L., & Wei, Y. (2024). Smart hotel in the eyes of the silver: developing and testing the silver tourists' behavioural intention scale. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 1-20..
.
.