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## Understanding Customer Engagement in Hospitality: A Semantic Analysis of User-Generated Reviews from the World's Largest OTA Platform

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### Abstract

This study analyzed the reviews of guests at the four major theme park hotels in Hong Kong and found that family travelers are the core customer group, and consumers highly value "impression experience" and "sense of belonging experience". The four hotels have different focus areas for the guest experience: The Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel stands out for its service; The Explorer's Lodge emphasizes value; the Courtyard by Marriott Hong Kong Ocean Park often appears in comparisons; and the Furama Hotel Hong Kong Ocean Park excels in its scenery. The study points out that differentiated experiences shape the uniqueness of the brand, and improving service and the management of the sense of belonging are the keys to optimizing word-of-mouth.

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### 1. Introduction

According to the full - year 2022 performance released by Hong Kong Disneyland, even though affected by the pandemic, with the support of local Hong Kong tourists, the total number of park visitors recorded a 22% increase to about 3.4 million (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2022) <sup>[15]</sup>. According to the financial performance of Ocean Park Hong Kong from 2021 to 2022, also affected by the pandemic, with the support of its water park, it still received about 1.4 million visitors (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2022) <sup>[15]</sup>. Since Hong Kong is small in area and has a well - developed transportation system, the affiliated hotels that offer theme park tickets along with hotel stays are more convenient and relatively cheaper.

When tourists plan their trips and book accommodation, they often search for hotels they've never visited before. Obtaining hotel information can reduce the risk of making inappropriate choices. Traditionally, word - of - mouth (WOM) from friends has been used to reduce risks. With the popularization of the Internet, electronic word - of - mouth (eWOM) has become increasingly important as consumers start to trust the word - of - mouth spread through the Internet (Rosario *et al.*, 2020; Cheung and Lee, 2012) <sup>[33, 6]</sup>. Usually, consumers hope to express or share their opinions digitally and seek information (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Filieri and McLeay (2014) <sup>[10]</sup> found that 96.4% (7,000 people) of their respondents used the Internet as an information source during the trip - planning stage, and 90% would refer to other customers' reviews.

Due to the characteristics of the service sector, unlike tangible products, it is difficult to determine the actual situation of a hotel before the customer experience (Boo and Busser, 2018) <sup>[5]</sup>. Consumers share, comment, and communicate on the Internet, and a large amount of information is quickly transmitted, thus forming eWOM. Therefore, consumers' online word - of - mouth may become the driving factor for their final purchase (Lin Shiping, Ruan Hongyu, Zhang Hongyi, 2022; Abrar *et al.*, 2019) <sup>[2]</sup>. E - commerce is of strategic importance to both businesses and consumers because traditional face - to - face WOM is transforming into eWOM as consumers can obtain information about products or services online before making a purchase decision (Aakashl *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[1]</sup>. When purchasing intangible products or services, consumers tend to rely more on online word - of - mouth to buy products or services they haven't used or experienced before. This helps customers obtain specific information affected by customer - selected attributes as well as shared personal experiences, opinions, photos, hotel reviews, and vacation suggestions

(Xiang *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[41, 17]</sup>. E - WOM provides rich data reflecting consumers' characteristics and perceived service satisfaction. The service experiences mentioned in online word - of - mouth also imply the main attributes and quality levels of the products or services considered by customers. Online word - of - mouth can significantly affect tourists' purchase decisions and hotel business performance (Nie *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[30]</sup>.

Online review websites such as Tripadvisor are important platforms for consumers to share their purchase experiences and express their opinions about products and services. The reviews exchanged among consumers contain information about users' experiences and how they perceive those experiences (De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008) <sup>[8]</sup>. Therefore, compared with the information provided by sellers, customers are more likely to trust online word - of - mouth (Xiang *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[41]</sup>. By reading others' reviews, potential consumers can better construct their understanding of products and be more aware of the risks of their transactions. Stringam *et al.*, (2010) <sup>[37]</sup> analyzed the reviews on the online travel agency platform Expedia.com and found that the overall satisfaction rating was highly correlated with the intention to recommend. Ban and Kim (2019) <sup>[4]</sup> analyzed the online reviews on Skytrax.com and quantitatively determined the relationships among six evaluation factors (seat comfort, staff, catering, entertainment, ground service, and value for money), customer satisfaction, and recommendation. Therefore, this study investigates customer experiences through text mining and analysis of hotel product reviews.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Marketing Experience

Resort hotels are typically situated in scenic yet relatively remote locations, requiring guests to travel long distances to reach the properties and usually accommodating longer stays, with most offering comprehensive high-quality recreational facilities and diverse dining options ranging from casual eateries to fine dining restaurants. Pine II and Gilmore (1998) <sup>[32]</sup> posit that only experiential marketing centered on consumer experience can generate economic value exceeding that of products or services themselves. Tourist experience research spans approximately 50 years, marked by four key evolutionary turning points (Uriely, 2005): the initial conceptualization of tourist experience as a distinct phenomenon separate from daily life was followed by a first paradigm shift recognizing tourism experiences as an extension of everyday experience, and a subsequent turning point emphasizing the pluralistic nature of experience, wherein different tourists derive unique personal experiences from the same context. The third turning point, termed the role of subjectivity, highlighted how tourists' active interpretation of situational factors shapes their experience, while the most recent conceptual shift, referred to as relative interpretations, frames experience as the outcome of individuals' interpretation of visited contexts against broader cultural and historical backgrounds, aligning with the interactive experience model proposed by Falk and Dierking (1992) <sup>[9]</sup>.

Larsen and Mossberg (2007) <sup>[20]</sup> and O'Dell (2007) <sup>[31]</sup> believe that experience is a rather subjective and personalized process, related to an individual's social, cultural, and various institutional systems. The connotation of tourist experience has also changed and diversified: tourists are no longer just simple receivers, observers or interpreters, but active

experiencers, and even creators and actors of meaning.

Customer experience, which refers to an individual's experience of a company's products or services as a consumer, was first conceptualized by Schmitt (1999) <sup>[35]</sup> as consisting of sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and relational experiences. Meyer and Schwager (2007) <sup>[29]</sup> defined customer experience as the individual/subjective response of customers to any form of direct/indirect contact with a company. Customers will remember the experience as positive or negative according to their own situations, and customers who positively evaluate the experience are considered satisfied. In the hotel industry, customer satisfaction is a complex experience, and evaluating customer experience is also complex (Kim and Noh, 2019) <sup>[16]</sup>. As the market has shifted from a producer-driven market to a buyer-driven market, attention to customer experience and satisfaction has inevitably increased (Aakash *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[11]</sup>. Customer preferences and consideration of hotel selection attributes play a key role in the processes of information search and alternative selection, and thus are the core targets for evaluating hotel satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Kotler *et al.*, 1996) <sup>[19]</sup>. Identifying customers' hotel selection attributes is crucial for improving service quality, enhancing customer satisfaction, and gaining competitive advantage. The most core concept in consumption is "experience". Holbrook (2000) <sup>[13]</sup> divided the connotation of consumption experience into fantasies, feelings, and fun, collectively known as 3Fs. Shaw and Ivens (2002) <sup>[36]</sup> believe that experience contains various components, and is a mixed feeling that coexists in emotional, physiological, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. Based on the above two viewpoints, experience is essentially a feeling generated by consumers after being stimulated by products, services or situational arrangements during consumption, integrating consumers' original physical and mental states and personal imagination. The process of providing consumers with the expected experience to attract them is defined as experiential marketing. Based on the theoretical foundations of consumer psychology and social psychology, Schmitt (1999) <sup>[35]</sup> proposed a two-level integrated framework for experiential marketing: the first level is the strategic experiential module, which is the strategic basis of experiential marketing; the second level is experiential providers, which refer to the tactical tools of experiential marketing. The strategic experiential module divides consumer experience into the following five forms:

1. **Sensory experience:** Mainly derived from stimulation of the five senses.
2. **Emotional experience:** Mainly refers to the influence of events, people, venues, brands or products in the consumption context on consumers during the consumption process.
3. **Thinking experience:** Refers to the experience obtained when consumers think about different information stimuli.
4. **Action experience:** Refers to the feeling generated by consumers' personal physical changes during and even after consumption.
5. **Relational experience:** Derived from the connection between an individual and others, a certain community or a social entity through consumption (such as brand purchase), and the resulting sense of social recognition and belonging.

Schmitt (1999) <sup>[35]</sup> believes that among the five forms of experience above, sensory, emotional and thinking experiences are more immediate, short-term and personal; while action and relational experiences require more time to accumulate or develop, and can only be generated after a period of interaction with others. Regarding how to provide consumers with these five forms of experience, Schmitt put forward instructions for experiential providers covering different types of media, as follows: (1). Communication; (2). Visual media; (3). Product presentation; (4). Co-building brands; (5). Spatial environment; (6). Electronic media; (7). People.

## 2.2. Online Reviews

Besides being related to the technological paradigm of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Big Data (BD) itself is defined as "a large amount of unstructured and structured data generated by technological development and exponential adoption, allowing automation and devices connected to the Internet" (Mariani *et al.*, 2018). BD features the classic 3V characteristics: volume (large-scale data that can reach the PB level), velocity (the speed of data creation, transmission and modification) and variety (diverse data forms including images, videos, sounds and texts). Later definitions of BD added more core dimensions: veracity (the integrity and reliability of data) and value (the process of extracting valuable insights through BD analysis) (Bello-Orgaz *et al.*, 2016).

Many economic participants and researchers have confirmed that deploying BD analysis can help identify data patterns and obtain competitive business intelligence (Davenport, 2014; Mariani and Fosso Wamba, 2020) <sup>[7, 25]</sup> and scientific knowledge (Lycett, 2013) <sup>[22]</sup>, and the tourism and hotel industries are no exception (Mariani *et al.*, 2018). A growing number of industry practitioners and researchers in these fields leverage BD from three main sources: (a) user-generated content (UGC) from users; (b) device data from connected devices; (c) transaction data from business operations, among which UGC is the most widely adopted. For example, online reviews (OR) have been extensively used to explore customer satisfaction, experience and engagement in tourism and hotel services (Guo *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[11]</sup>. OR contains both structured data (numeric review ratings) and unstructured data (written review text), and hotel and tourism scholars have applied text analysis to better understand tourist reviews (e.g., Xiang *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[41]</sup>.

OR allows current, former and potential consumers to share their views on products, services and brands online (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[12]</sup>, and it forms a core part of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in marketing research. More and more scholars from marketing, information management and computer science have studied the antecedents and consequences of eWOM (Rosario *et al.*, 2016) <sup>[34]</sup>. In the tourism and hotel fields, consumers continuously generate eWOM by posting OR on major travel review platforms (e.g., Tripadvisor, CTrip) and online travel agencies (OTA, e.g., Booking.com, Expedia.com). Studies have proven that OR drives consumers' purchase and booking intentions (Ghosh, 2018), and ultimately promotes corporate sales (Ye *et al.*, 2009) <sup>[42]</sup> and financial performance (Mariani and Borghi, 2021) <sup>[27]</sup>. Travelers rely on eWOM from OR as a key information source for purchase decisions, because the quality of tourism and accommodation services is usually uncertain and difficult to evaluate before consumption (Fileri

and McLeay, 2014; Litvin *et al.*, 2014) <sup>[10, 21]</sup>, and OR can effectively reflect other customers' actual satisfaction with the service (Mariani and Borghi, 2018; Mariani *et al.*, 2019) <sup>[24, 28]</sup>.

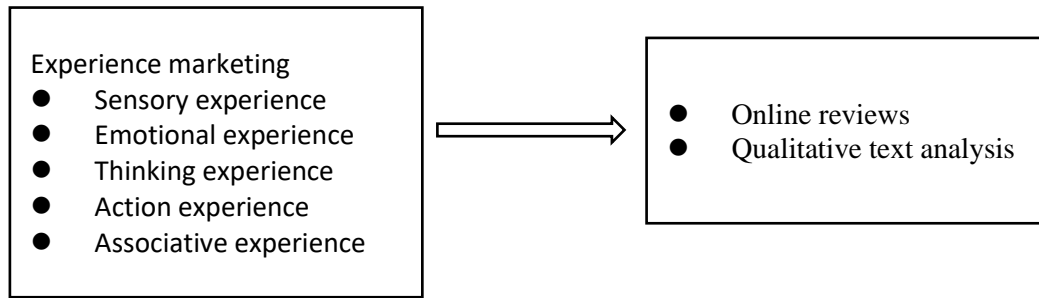
Numerous studies in the tourism and hospitality field have carried out big data analytics based on online reviews (OR) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) related to the sector (Mariani, 2019). Representative works include Xiang *et al.* (2015) <sup>[41]</sup>, who used big data and text analysis on Expedia online reviews to identify text-derived factors associated with hotel service customer experiences and examined the correlation between these factors and customer satisfaction measured by OR; Xiang *et al.* (2017) <sup>[40]</sup>, who collected online reviews from three major platforms Tripadvisor, Expedia and Yelp and applied text analysis to explore the content presentation characteristics of all hotels in Manhattan, New York City on these third-party platforms; and Guo *et al.* (2017) <sup>[11]</sup>, who conducted latent Dirichlet analysis on online reviews of 266,544 hotels and ultimately extracted 19 key customer service dimensions mentioned by reviewers.

In summary, UGC and OR are critical for in-depth understanding of tourists' opinions, attitudes and behaviors in the travel, tourism and hotel industries. In recent years, text mining in the hotel industry has become an active research topic, which provides insights for online review response and forms the basis of hotel evaluation criteria (Boo and Busser, 2018) <sup>[5]</sup>, and representative early research includes Stepchenkova and Morrison (2008), who analyzed Russia-related text on 212 websites, measured the image of Russia as a tourist destination, and identified the differences in image presentation between US and Russian websites, as well as He, Zha and Li (2013), who conducted an in-depth case study applying text mining to analyze content on the Facebook and Twitter accounts of three representative industry franchise brands: Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza and Papa John's Pizza, and whose results verified the value of social media competitive analysis and the effectiveness of text mining as a technology for extracting business value from massive social media data. With the development of Social Networking Service (SNS), social topics generated through SNS are growing rapidly in various fields, and network analysis has become crucial for extracting inherent meanings and concepts from text-based messages and understanding their relational characteristics (Esposito *et al.*, 2012).

## 3. Research Methods

In this study, customer reviews of Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel, Disney Explorers Lodge, Hong Kong Marriott Hotel at Ocean Park, and Fullerton Ocean Park Hong Kong will be selected from Booking.com as the sampling objects. The review data for this study will start to be collected in January 2024, and the reviews posted by consumers from January to March 2024 will be chosen. Meanwhile, when sampling, consumers from all over the world will also be selected to increase the sample size, and reviews with sufficient content will be selected to improve the credibility of the research.

This study is based on Schmitt's (1999) <sup>[35]</sup> experiential marketing theory. Qualitative text analysis of online reviews will be conducted from the aspects of "sensory experience", "emotional experience", "thinking experience", "action experience", and "related experience". The research framework is shown in Figure 1.



**Fig 1:** Research Framework

Predicting consumer behavior and psychology via big data analysis of online-generated data is an emerging research topic in the hotel industry (Ban and Kim, 2019) <sup>[4]</sup>. Prior to analysis, online review data must be extracted and transformed, and text mining and semantic network analysis play core roles in this process due to the large-scale, unstructured nature of consumer-generated data. This study uses text analysis to deconstruct a large set of customer reviews collected from Booking.com, then applies semantic network analysis to examine associations among the extracted keywords (Ban and Kim, 2019; Xiang *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[4, 41]</sup>. Text mining knowledge discovery from text databases was first proposed by Feldman and Dagan (2001), which applies information retrieval, extraction, and natural language processing (NLP) techniques to uncover valuable previously unknown patterns in text data (Hotho, Nürnberger and Paaß, 2005). The full text mining process covers data collection, data refinement, data analysis, management information systems, and knowledge generation (Fan *et al.*, 2006). During data collection, researchers need to clarify target information types, define relevant concepts, bound the collection scope, and understand keyword characteristics; data refinement and preprocessing convert unstructured text data into a structured format, and complex preprocessing is essential to ensure analytical accuracy. After applying core text analysis techniques including information extraction, document summarization, and clustering, researchers analyze the processed text-based data and adopt analytical methods suited to the research purpose to support workplace information system management and knowledge accumulation (Ban and Kim, 2019; Feldman and Sanger,

2007) <sup>[4]</sup>. Per this study's research design framework, online review data was collected in January 2025. Booking.com was selected as the data source because it hosts the largest volume of certified hotel reviews globally, and according to 2022 OTA statistics published by Apptopia in January 2023, Booking.com ranked first globally with 80 million downloads (Apptopia, 2023) <sup>[3]</sup>. Collected data was analyzed via content analysis, and based on the principle of intersubjectivity, coder reliability was calculated through inter-coder agreement, with coding results compared and discussed (Neuendorf, 2002). This study first generated a total of 9192 stems, then classified the stems by similarity to form and name 12 categories. After initial stem classification, three academic experts were invited to assist with coding per the intersubjectivity principle, and were asked to evaluate whether each stem was appropriately assigned to its target category. Post-coding calculations yielded an inter-coder agreement of 0.92 and an overall coder reliability of 0.88, indicating high consistency among the three coders in stem classification.

## 4. Research and Analysis

### 4.1. Sample Analysis

In this study, data texts were collected and analyzed from four hotels: Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel, Disney Explorers Lodge, Marriott Hotel at Hong Kong Ocean Park, and Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel Hong Kong. A total of 969 samples were obtained in this study. Among them, family travelers accounted for the highest proportion, followed by couples and groups (as shown in Table 1).

**Table 1:** Summary Table of Sample Backgrounds

	Family	Group	Couple	Solo traveler	Total
1-day stay	222 (22.91%)	33 (3.41%)	105 (10.84%)	15 (1.55%)	375 (38.70%)
2-day stay	303 (31.27%)	30 (3.10%)	42 (4.33%)	9 (0.93%)	384 (39.63%)
3-day stay or more	153 (15.79%)	6 (0.62%)	30 (3.10%)	21 (2.17%)	210 (21.67%)
Total	678 (69.97%)	69 (7.12%)	177 (18.27%)	45 (4.64%)	969 (100.00%)

### 4.2. Stem Extraction

This study collected a total of 9192 stems, as shown in Table 2. The highest - rated experience among the guests of the four hotels is the related experience, but the second - highest experiences vary. For the Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel, the

second - highest is the action experience; for the Disney Explorers Lodge and the Marriott Hotel at Hong Kong Ocean Park, the second - highest is the thinking experience; for the Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel Hong Kong, the second - highest is the sensory experience.

Table 2: Summary Table of Stems

Item	Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel	Disney Explorers Lodge	Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel	Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel Hong Kong	Summary
Sensory experience	348 (14.01%)	408 (16.27%)	288 (14.55%)	588 (26.49%)	1632
Emotional experience	396 (15.94%)	228 (9.09%)	96 (4.85%)	108 (4.86%)	828
Thinking experience	528 (21.26%)	672 (26.79%)	312 (15.76%)	396 (17.84%)	1908
Action experience	540 (21.74%)	444 (17.70%)	468 (23.64%)	492 (22.16%)	1944
Associative experience	612 (24.64%)	744 (29.67%)	768 (38.79%)	624 (28.11%)	2748
Other	60 (2.42%)	12 (0.48%)	48 (2.42%)	12 (0.54%)	132
Summary	2484 (100%)	2508 (100%)	1980 (100%)	2220 (100%)	9192

### 4.3. Category Analysis

Category analysis of sensory experiences, this study divides it into the following:

1. **External landscape experience:** It refers to the decoration and landscapes inside and outside the hotel. For example, the hotel rooms are very much in line with the theme, the view of Hong Kong and the sea from the balcony is very beautiful, the combination of modern/rural styles, and the theme of Disneyland.
2. **Personal sensory experience:** It refers to the sensory feelings of the guests themselves. For example, the room has good sound insulation and one can't hear the outside noise; the air - conditioning is a bit difficult to control and it's quite hot; the sound insulation is poor and there is a large echo when the neighboring room uses water.
3. **Hotel equipment experience:** It refers to the sensory experience brought by the facilities in the hotel. For example, the water pressure is not enough when taking a shower, the pillows are too soft, and the hotel swimming pool doesn't have a constant temperature.

Category analysis of emotional experiences, this study divides it into the following:

1. **Personal emotional experience:** It refers to the emotional changes brought about by the guests' personal preferences and emotions. For example, unfortunately, this is purely a family - oriented hotel; our daughter likes to wake up every morning and watch the boats pass by.
2. **External - given emotional experience:** It refers to the emotional changes caused by external people, the environment, and the atmosphere. For example, the room service is poor and the staff are unfriendly; its decoration has good taste, and before entering, it will take you back to the era of explorers; generally speaking, it's okay, except for the rather ordinary food choices.

Category analysis of thinking experiences, this study divides it into the following:

1. **Sense of belonging experience:** It refers to the experience that guests have regarding which category the hotel should belong to. For example, the breakfast is served in two time slots and there are a large number of people, so it is a complete parent - child hotel; the price of the Disneyland hotel is not expensive.

2. **Value experience:** It refers to the sense of value that guests feel. For example, we booked at a certain amount, but finally received a very high bill; try hard to understand the unusually high price per night.

Category analysis of action experiences, this study divides it into the following:

1. **Service experience:** It refers to the experience that guests have after receiving the services provided by the hotel. For example, the staff have a polite and friendly attitude; the staff are really helpful.
2. **Comparison experience:** It refers to the comparison that guests make between themselves, other guests, or other hotels. For example, the shuttle bus drivers treat domestic and foreign customers differently; there are too few staff in the hotel who can speak Japanese.

Category analysis of associated experiences, this study divides it into the following:

1. **Activity experience:** It refers to the sense of association that guests have through the hotel's activities. For example, there is a Tai Chi activity to experience; when coming back to the room at night, there is a cake on the table to celebrate a birthday; it's hard to understand why the children's playground still charges the guests.
2. **Atmosphere experience:** It refers to the atmosphere created by the hotel to bring different experiences to guests. For example, this building reminds me of Aulani, the rooms are spacious and have a natural atmosphere; the hotel has a holiday - like atmosphere.
3. **Impression experience:** It refers to the expected services or facilities of the hotel. For example, the facilities and the hotel are very child - friendly; the breakfast area is very crowded, I think it's because space is very precious in Hong Kong.

### 4.4. Cross analysis

Table 3 shows the cross - analysis of the 12 experiences obtained from the category analysis and the four hotels. From the cross - analysis, it can be seen that the impression experience and the sense of belonging experience are among the top three in the consumer evaluations of the four hotels. This shows that consumers' expectations for the services or facilities that a hotel should have and the positioning of the

hotel in consumers' minds are one of the main items in consumer evaluation texts. However, in addition, the experiences that each hotel provides to consumers still vary.

1. **Experience analysis of Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel:** In the text evaluations of consumers, the service experience has the highest score, followed by the sense of belonging experience and the impression experience. Therefore, compared with other hotels, the service experience is its most prominent item.
2. **Experience analysis of Disney Explorers Lodge:** In the text evaluations of consumers, the value experience and the impression experience have the highest scores, followed by the sense of belonging experience. Therefore, compared with other hotels, the value

experience is its most prominent item.

3. **Experience analysis of Hong Kong Marriott Hotel at Ocean Park:** In the text evaluations of consumers, the impression experience has the highest score, followed by the sense of belonging experience and the comparison experience. Therefore, compared with other hotels, the comparison experience is its most prominent item.
4. **Experience analysis of Hong Kong Marriott Hotel at Ocean Park:** In the text evaluations of consumers, the external landscape experience has the highest score, followed by the sense of belonging experience and the comparison experience. Therefore, compared with other hotels, the external landscape experience is its most prominent item.

**Table 3:** Summary Table of Stem Categories

	Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel	Disney Explorers Lodge	Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel	Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel Hong Kong
External landscape experience	7.96%	5.77%	4.97%	19.57%
Personal sensory experience	2.99%	6.73%	3.11%	2.72%
Hotel equipment experience	3.48%	3.85%	6.83%	4.35%
Personal emotional experience	5.97%	6.25%	3.11%	2.72%
External emotional experience	10.45%	2.88%	1.86%	2.17%
Belonging experience	13.93%	12.50%	12.42%	15.76%
Value experience	7.96%	14.42%	3.73%	2.17%
Service experience	14.93%	9.13%	11.80%	14.67%
Comparison experience	7.46%	8.65%	12.42%	7.61%
Activity experience	8.96%	8.17%	8.70%	8.70%
Atmosphere experience	4.98%	7.21%	8.70%	4.35%
Impression experience	10.95%	14.42%	22.36%	15.22%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

## 5. Conclusions and Suggestions

### 5.1. Research Conclusions

This study analyzes 969 online reviews of four Hong Kong theme park hotels based on Schmitt's (1999) <sup>[35]</sup> experiential marketing framework, revealing consumer experience characteristics in themed accommodation contexts. Our finding that family travelers constitute 69.97% of the customer base aligns with Hong Kong Tourism Board's (2022) survey showing family tourism accounts for over 60% of theme park visitors, confirming the family-oriented positioning of theme park hotels as leisure destinations. The significant differences in length of stay across hotels extend existing research on resort hotel positioning (Boo and Busser, 2018) <sup>[5]</sup>, demonstrating that property location and functional attributes directly shape guest travel behavior patterns.

Two universally important experience dimensions emerge across all hotels: impression experience and sense of belonging experience. The prominence of impression experience provides empirical support for expectation-disconfirmation theory, extending its application to the online booking context where consumers form service quality mental prototypes from official descriptions, third-party reviews, and brand images before arrival. This finding complements previous eWOM research (Rosario *et al.*, 2016) <sup>[34]</sup> by revealing that expectation-reality discrepancy is the core trigger for review content generation. The high ranking of sense of belonging experience confirms Pine and Gilmore's (1998) <sup>[32]</sup> argument that hotel services have transcended basic accommodation functions to become part of consumers' life experience construction. Consistent with Schmitt's (1999) <sup>[35]</sup> relational experience dimension, we find that belonging is constructed through personalized services,

thematic atmosphere, and employee interaction, indicating that "home-like warmth" has shifted from a differentiator to a basic threshold requirement for mid-to-high-end hotels, a finding not explicitly identified in prior hospitality research.

Each hotel exhibits distinct competitive advantages: Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel excels in service experience through Disney's strict emotional labor standards, directly verifying Hochschild's emotional labor theory in the themed hospitality context and supporting Schmitt's (1999) <sup>[35]</sup> view that employees are the most powerful experiential media. Disney Explorers Lodge stands out for value experience, supplementing tourism consumer decision-making research (Kim *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[17]</sup> by confirming that price perception remains critical even in high-involvement experiential consumption scenarios. Ocean Park Marriott Hotel's frequent multi-reference point comparisons contribute to positioning theory research, showing that ambiguously positioned hotels face complex evaluation dynamics that present both challenges and opportunities for competitive strategy. Fullerton Ocean Park Hotel's leadership in external landscape experience aligns with sensory marketing research, confirming that scarce natural resources create sustainable competitive barriers for high-end resort hotels.

The pluralistic distribution of experience dimensions (with no single dimension exceeding 22.36%) extends previous hotel attribute evaluation frameworks, indicating that hotels should adopt systematic experience management approaches rather than focusing on individual service links. The differentiated experience patterns confirm that building targeted competitive advantages through product positioning and resource allocation is an effective strategy to avoid

homogenization competition, providing practical guidance for themed accommodation operators in mature tourism markets like Hong Kong.

## 5.2. Research Recommendations

This study finds that Hong Kong theme park hotels primarily target family travelers, while the smaller segments of couples and group travelers represent significant untapped market potential. Across all hotel types, service experience emerges as a key priority for tourists after impression and belonging experiences, with most reviews focusing on employee performance, highlighting the critical need to enhance staff service attitudes and service delivery capabilities.

The 12 experience dimensions identified in this study, grounded in experiential marketing theory, provide a valuable reference framework for future academic research and industry practice. However, the study has notable limitations: data was only collected from a single travel booking platform over a three-month period, constrained by pandemic impacts and research time constraints. Future research should expand data collection to include longer timeframes and multiple booking platforms to improve sample representativeness. Additionally, given the challenges of data collection for the unique Hong Kong market context, future studies could include more internationally renowned themed hotels as research subjects to enhance data collection efficiency and improve the generalizability of research findings.

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