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The Moderating Impact of Customer Demographics on the Customer attitude and the Intention to Stay at Luxury Hotels

¹Tara Ahmed Mohammed; ²Albattat, Ahmad; ³Jacqueline Tham

^{1,2,3} Post Graduate Centre, Management and Science University, University Drive, Off Persiaran
Olahraga, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: ¹instatara84@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The presence of Luxurious Branded Hotels in Asia has been significant in the past few decades fueled by the growing upper middle and high class in the societies including Malaysia. Along with these factors, many scholars argue that different factors are associated with consumer attitude towards luxury. In this research it has been found that consumer attitude is affected by factors such as perceived luxury consumption value, social influence, general life values, self-identity, experiential value, brand consciousness and brand love. Moderation effect of consumer demographics was also examined as an objective of the research and found that age, gender, and education were moderating the relationship between consumer attitude and the intention to stay while occupation not. The managerial implications of the study suggest that the Luxurious Branded Hotel manufacturers need to segment the markets based on demographic, behavioural and psychographic variables. The findings could be further used to develop marketing communication messages which are specific for a particular cultural setting. Rather than having general communication messages, more specific ones could be developed to suit customer segments introduced as aspirants' characteristics in local markets. Consumer demographics such as age, gender and education could be used to develop integrated marketing communication strategies to impress the aspirants for a new lifestyle.

1. Introduction

Over the previous years and decades, the luxury brands that are developed are picking up notoriety on the planet. The market for luxury brands is expanding extraordinarily, and shopper conduct is influenced fundamentally. As indicated by Weidman et al. (2009), luxury is comprised of four principle measurements. These measurements are recognized as financial-related, individual, social, and

utility. The financial related esteem or the perspective is the monetary measurement of the luxury brands. It is essentially the relative value of the concerned brand. The central advantage of the brands is distinguished as the useful measurement while the shopper's close to home perspective is recognized as the individual measurement. The social measurement expresses that the consumers' apparent esteem related to luxury preference inside a social gathering. Luxury brands have started to flow into the Asian market with the rapid economic gains by the major countries in the region, and they have influenced the neighbouring countries too to get into the fast track of economic development. At the beginning of the 21st Century, eighty-five per cent of the world's international luxury brands gained their presence in Asia and China dominated the luxury brand market in the continent (Koch & Mkhitarian, 2015).

The luxury hotel market has shown considerable growth due to an increase in the number of global millionaires as well as the growing discretionary income of mass consumers democrats (Barnier & Rodina, 2006; Husic & Cicic, 2008; Wiedmann, Hennigs & Siebels, 2007). Even though there is a growth in the sector, the number of studies which are related to luxury hotels is minimal. At the same time, prestige hotel businesses have extended their product lines and/or developed brand extensions to appeal to majority middle-class consumers by emphasizing the macro economic impact of the industry. Not only that, with the growth of consumerism, many consumers who could not traditionally afford luxury products expressed the idea that everyone had a "right" to access this market (Dubois & Laurent, 1996). The importance of the management of the customer's perceptions and valuation of a hotel brand to assist customers in their ability to differentiate one luxury hotel brand from another luxury hotel brand has significantly increased. Also, as compared to non-prestige hotel brands, consumer attitudes play a critical role in shaping desire for prestige hotel brands (Vicker & Renand, 2003), with the focus of consumer's desire for intangible and psychological benefits as a hotel brand represents an inherent symbolic value. Status preference seems to be the most influential factor for the impact on bandwagon of luxury brand preference (Shaikh et al., 2017). Different implications just as the attributes of luxury reinforce the clients to inspire their symbolic image (Kapferer & Florence, 2016).

Even though there is a growth in the sector, the number of studies which are related to luxury hotels is minimal. At the same time, prestige hotel brand businesses have extended their product lines and/or developed brand extensions to appeal to majority middle-class consumers by emphasizing the macro economic impact of the industry. Further, the luxury hotel companies who are handling those prestige luxury hotel brands face continuous challenges when managing brand equity. On one hand, there is a continuous battle between one consumer segment when luxury hotel owners desire to be very much exclusive than the other segment. Study of the luxury branding companies in the luxury segments will give insights to identify the battle in the long run. Eventually the study model provides a comprehensive structure to evaluate the Antecedents of

Consumer's Attitude towards Global Luxurious Branded Hotel Intention to stay, A Malaysian Perspective. The aim of this research is to examine the factors affecting the consumer attitudes towards intention to stay at global Luxurious Branded Hotel of those who aspire to stay at global Luxurious Branded Hotels.

2. Literature Review

In the contexts of behavioural dispositions, the Theory of Reasoned Action explained by (Fishbein, 1967; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) is known as one of the most important theories discussed in the literature of predicting the human behaviour. According to this theory, the behaviour is affected by the intention to behave and in turn, it is affected by the attitude towards the action and by the subjective norms. Therefore, the attitude towards the act can be identified as a function of perceived outcomes that customers associate with the behaviour.

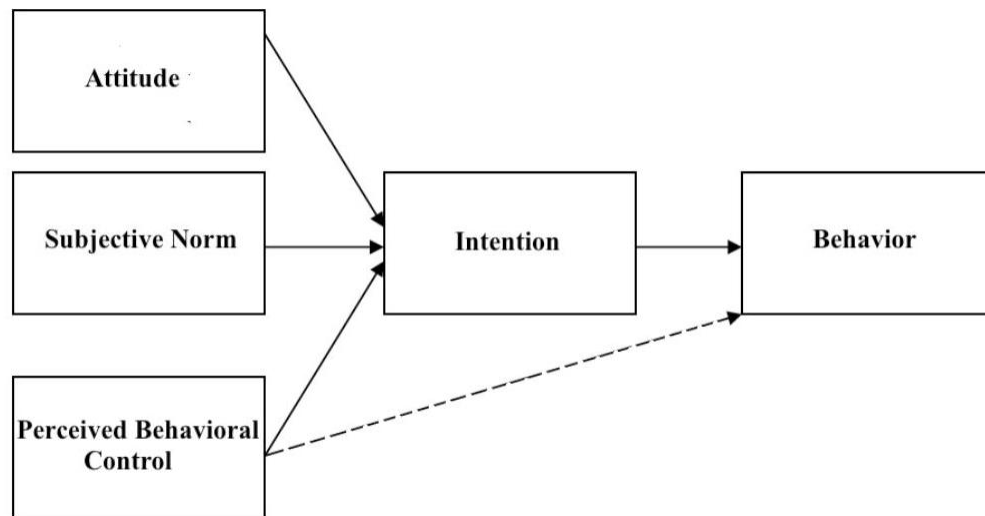


Figure 1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

Customer behaviour is comparatively a new field of study that has been evolving after the since few decades especially with the emergence of technology. Marketing concepts have been ever evolving from the production concept to customer-oriented marketing and it is now in the holistic marketing era. Kotler (2015) discussed on the Marketing 3.0 and emphasized Marketing 4.0 along with the growth of digital marketing. Customer behaviour is a field of study that analyses how people make decisions with their limited available resources to fulfil their needs and wants. (Berman and Evens, 2010). Thus, marketers in the technology era as it is today, must make decisions within the framework of available resources such as money, time which is highly competitive to decide what to buy, how much to buy, and when to buy etc. The customer behaviour as a subject discipline has been fostered by different fields such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology. This has involved with areas such as learning, remembering, thinking, perception, beliefs, attitudes,

motivation, and emotions (Britt, 1970). These factors have been identified as critical for customer decision making.

Perceived Unique Value

Uniqueness alludes to an individual's yearning to separate themselves from others (Prendergast and Wong, 2003). Individuals look for uniqueness in an offer to improve their self and social picture by attesting their own taste or keeping away from the utilization of things like others (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). As indicated by hypothesis (Brock, 1968), the image or attractive quality of an item increases as it turns out to be rare. Lynn (1991) tried this hypothesis and found that shortage of an item emphatically influenced image. Shortage increases perceived uniqueness as being uncommon (Giacalone, 2006). Past analysts additionally found that uniqueness is a centre segment of distinction brands inspiring their utilization (Leibenstein, 1950). Customers are desired to have an esteem brand which is seen to be novel (Groth & McDaniel, 1993; Verhallen & Robben, 1994). Perceived uniqueness depends on the belief that when the products are made in smaller quantities and the interest from the customer towards the item increases. They may attempt to utilize the item with the desire for improving their economic wellbeing and social character separating from others (Prendergast and Wong, 2003). Uniqueness infers an individual's desire to segregate themselves from others (Prendergast and Wong, 2003). Individuals who search for uniqueness in an idea to improve their self and social image by confirming their own taste or keeping away from the utilization of things like others (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Further, uniqueness to be brilliant it is one-of-a ruler or remarkable (Giacalone, 2006).

Perceived Hedonism

Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) clarified about the customer's preference experience that includes multisensory and passionate action which is constantly cantered around what is more to be picked up. For instance, Berry (1994) proposed that luxury goods please individuals as opposed to just lighten a condition of distress as is the situation of necessities. Kapferer, (1997) referenced excitement as a part of luxury items. Dubois and Czellar (2002) uncovered the comfort and greatness as the characteristics of luxury things. Dhar and Wertenbroch, (2000) called attention to luxury utilization as brimming with feeling just as well as tangible snazzy experience or an action that stimulates delight. Perceived hedonism clarifies the passionate estimation of buyers towards the items. It tends to be the customer's joy or delight with the experience they get from the utilization. In this way, the luxury items could be related to hedonism as the items give the customers an emotional experience, the estimations of fun, style, and joy. The luxury brands give an enthusiastic advantage to the buyers. The enthusiastic advantages could be distinguished as fun, satisfaction, energy, and joy. Weidman (2009) states that there are some libertine qualities that could emerge from extravagance utilization. They are recognized as 'Joy', 'satisfaction', 'life advancement', self-

fulfilling' and 'craziness'. Dubois and Czellar (2002) indicated comfort and brilliance are characteristics of luxury.

Experiential Value

There has been a growing importance on the concept of experiential value, and it appears fragmented in the academic literature (Verhoef et al., 2009; Wu & Liang, 2009). Mathwick et al. (2001) conceptualized as the value that customers derive experience through several interactions that involve direct usage, or an appreciation made in distance, which is indirect observation, with respect to goods or services. Luxury brand preference is characterized by three worlds of customer experience (Berthon et al., 2009). Accordingly, the world one is identified as the functional value, in which the customer exhibits the actual quality perceived with respect to luxury goods and services. The quality is identified as an important variable as it can indicate what and how these goods could perform (Berthon et al., 2009; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). When the customers preferences on luxurious goods or services is concerned, the experiential value includes the thoughts of the individual and the feelings regarding the luxury goods as something usually perceived subjectively that they are unique, precious, and rare. Further, this could be identified as hedonism and uniqueness seeking customer motivation in the purchase.

Conceptual Framework

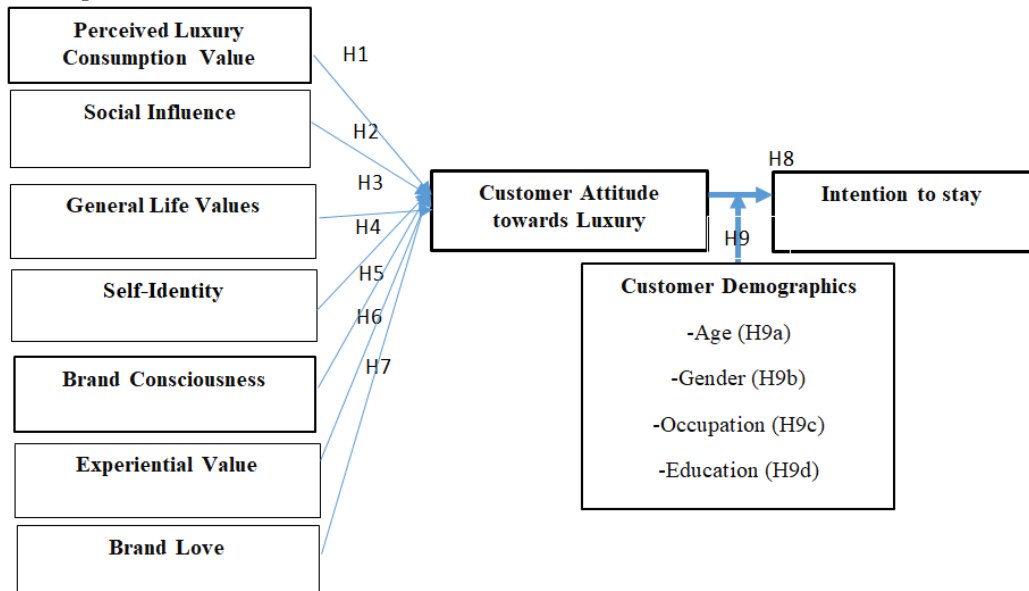


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

This quantitative research used the convenience sampling and the role of thumb regarding the unknown population as mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) and Hair et al., (2010) the items in the questionnaire was 48 therefore the sample size was determined as 240. Accordingly, the researcher gathered data

from 523 respondents and 456 respondents were valid for analysis. A Google questionnaire was developed and forwarded to 40 identified aspirants and a focus group discussion was conducted in the pilot survey too. The data analysis was done with the SPSS 19 package.

4. Results And Discussion

Reliability Analysis

Table 1 shows the Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis.

Table 1 Reliability Analysis

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived Luxury Preference Value (PLCV)	10	0.832
Social Influence (SI)	04	0.854
General Life Values (GLV)	05	0.871
Self-Identity (SI)	04	0.920
Experiential Value (EV)	04	0.742
Brand Consciousness (BC)	04	0.764
Brand Love (BL)	04	0.802
Customer Attitude Towards Luxury (CATL)	09	0.856
Intention to stay (PI)	04	0.768

Customer demographics of the aspirants and their behavioural characteristics are presented below. Table 2 Demographics Characteristics of the Aspirants who are Planning to stay at a Luxurious Branded Hotel.

Table 2 Descriptive Characteristics of the Aspirants' Profile

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	249	54.6
	Female	207	45.4
Age	18-35	233	51
	36-45	174	38.2
	46-55	46	10
	56<	3	0.7
Occupation	Professional Executive	281	61.6
	Entrepreneur	111	24.3
	Consultant	37	8
	Government official	27	6
Monthly Income (RM)	5,001-10,000	136	29.8
	10,001-15,000	131	28.7
	15,001-20,000	111	24.3
	20,001-25,000	18	3.9
	Over 25,000	60	13.2
Education	Vocational degree	24	5.3
	Bachelor's Degree	153	33.6

	Master's Degree	173	37.9
	Doctoral Degree	28	6.1
	Other	78	17.1
Living Area	Rural Area	147	32
	Semi-Urban Area	160	35
	Urban Area	149	33

The largest group in the sample was Males which accounted 54.6% (249) and female accounted 45.6% (207) of the survey. The age group 18-35 years of age was 51% (233) and followed by the 36-45 years of age which accounted 38.2% (174). 10% (46) of the sample was in the age group of 46-55 and only 0.7% (3) was above 56 years of age. 61.6% (281) of the sample were the professional executives and it was followed by the entrepreneurs in the segment with 24.3% (111). While 8% (37) of the sample were consultants and 6% (27) were the government officials. Most of the sample in the indicated average monthly income was RM5,000 to RM10,000 (29.8%) (136) and 28.7% (131) of the sample were in the income group of RM10,001 to RM15,000. 24.3% (111) of the sample were in the income group of RM15,001 to RM20,000 and 3.9% (18) respondents of the sample were in the group RM20,001 to RM25,000. 13.2% (60) of the respondents in the sample were in the income over RM25,000. While 38% (173) of the respondents in the sample were having master's degree 33.6% (153) were having bachelor's degree. In the sample, 6% (28) of the respondents were having Doctoral degree. 5.3% (24) of the respondents in the sample was having vocational degree. When the living area is concerned, 35% (160) of the sample live in Semi-urban area and 33% (149) represented the urban areas. 32% (147) of the sample live in the rural areas.

Direct Relationships

The results from Multiple linear regression procedure on the association between the antecedents and the customer attitude towards luxury is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Multiple linear regression

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	.111	.160		.691	.490	
Brand Consciousness	.062	.029	.042	2.168	.031	1.011
Self-Identity	.087	.031	.109	2.844	.005	3.919
Perceived Luxury Preference Value	.939	.033	.938	28.323	.000	2.936
Experiential Value	.093	.023	.109	4.102	.000	1.884
General Life Value	.063	.021	.087	3.040	.003	2.169
Social Influence	-.044	.014	-.070	-3.100	.002	1.364
Brand Love	.078	.029	.092	2.708	.007	3.061

Moderation Relationships

The objectives related to the moderation relationship was to determine the moderation effect of customer demographics in the relationship between customer attitude towards luxury and the intention to stay, and to identify whether the intention to stay differs among different demographic categories. Age Moderates the Relationship Between Customer Attitude and the Customer Intention to stay of Global Luxurious Branded Hotels

Table 4 Effect of Age in the Relationship Between Customer Attitude and the Customer Intention to stay of Global Luxurious Branded Hotels

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.929	.173		11.180	.000
CATL	.399	.044	.398	9.047	.000
CATL_Age	.028	.009	.140	3.174	.002
Age years	-.772	.147	-.900	-5.244	.000

Dependent Variable: Intention to stay

The p-value for age is 0.000, which is <0.05. The p-value for Gender is 0.016, which is <0.05. therefore, age and gender moderates the relationship.

Table 5 Effect of Gender in the Relationship Between Customer Attitude and the Customer Intention to stay of Global Luxurious Branded Hotels

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.755	.533		1.416	.157
CATL	.739	.129	.737	5.728	.000
Your Gender	.814	.349	.682	2.332	.020
CATL_Gender	-.205	.085	-.765	-2.422	.016

Occupation Moderates the Relationship Between Customer Attitude and the Customer Intention to stay of Global Luxurious Branded Hotels

Table 6 Effect of Occupation in the Relationship Between Customer Attitude and the Customer Intention to stay of Global Luxurious Branded Hotels.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.964	.190		10.343	.000
CATL	.438	.044	.437	9.954	.000
Your Gender	-.022	.050	-.018	-.427	.669
CATL_Occupation	.003	.007	.018	.414	.679

The p-value for Customer Attitude Towards Luxury (CATL)_Occupation is 0.679, which is >0.05 . therefore, occupation does not moderate the relationship between Customer Attitude Towards Luxury (CATL) and Intention to stay. Education Moderates the Relationship Between Customer Attitude and the Customer Intention to stay of Global Luxurious Branded Hotels

Table 7 Effect of Education in the Relationship Between Customer Attitude and the Customer Intention to stay of Global Luxurious Branded Hotels

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.791	.462		1.714	.087
CATL	.708	.112	.706	6.320	.000
Education	.396	.149	.757	2.667	.008
CATL_Education	-.092	.036	-.780	-2.555	.011

The p-value for Customer Attitude Towards Luxury (CATL)_Education is 0.011, which is <0.05 . therefore, the association between Customer Attitude Towards Luxury (CATL) and Intention to stay is moderated by occupation.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to study the antecedents of customer attitudes towards the Luxurious Branded Hotel intention to stay across Malaysia. The research identified the factors associated with the customer attitude towards global luxurious branded hotels and explored the association between the key antecedents and the attitude of the customers towards luxurious branded hotels. Further, it investigates the mediating effect of customer attitude towards the intention to stay. This research attempted to investigate the moderating effect of customer attitude towards the relationship between the customer attitude and the intention to stay. The results of this study elucidate the aspirants' motivation behind the intention to stay at luxury hotels in Malaysia. Academia could use this model to develop survey instruments that could be given in a particular emerging market to understand that market's propensity to purchase or consume luxury brands. the research contributed to academia on a framework of consumer perceived luxuriousness of luxury hotel brand usage behaviour. The policy makers could encourage the policies to target right customers both locally and globally. Ultimately, it could create employment opportunities and contribute to the national GDP by developing entrepreneurships.

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