

**THE INFLUENCE OF HOTEL CHAIN LOGISTICS ON CUSTOMER
LOYALTY: A CASE STUDY IN THE CHINESE HOSPITALITY SECTOR**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the factors influencing customer loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector, employing a convenience sampling method with 385 hotel guests. Data are collected through surveys using questionnaires as research instruments. Key factors such as brand image, service quality, logistics communication channels, sustainability practice, and transportation accessibility are analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings suggest a significant positive influence of brand image, logistics communication channel, sustainability practices, transportation accessibility on customer loyalty. However, the influence of service quality on customer loyalty is not fully supported by the analysis. Moreover, the overall R-squared value of 0.849 indicates that 84.9% of the variance in customer loyalty can be explained by the examined factors. These insights offer valuable implications for hotel management and marketing strategies, emphasizing the significance of brand image, logistics communication channels, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility in fostering customer loyalty within the hospitality industry.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The hospitality industry is undergoing a paradigm shift, propelled by evolving consumer expectations and the integration of advanced technologies. In this dynamic landscape, hotel chains are increasingly recognizing the pivotal role of logistics in shaping customer experiences and fostering loyalty (Christopher & Peck, 2004).

As the Chinese hospitality sector continues to expand and diversify, understanding the intricate relationship between hotel chain logistics and customer loyalty becomes paramount. Customer loyalty, a cornerstone of sustainable business growth, is influenced by a myriad of factors, among which the operational efficiency of logistics systems plays a pivotal role (Oliver, 1999).

Despite the recognized importance of logistics in the hospitality sector, there exists a notable gap in understanding the nuanced ways in which logistics practices influence customer loyalty in Chinese hotel chains (Gao & Fang, 2020). Previous studies have explored various dimensions of customer loyalty and logistics individually, but a comprehensive examination of their interconnected dynamics within the unique context of the Chinese hospitality sector remains scarce. This research seeks to bridge this gap by delving into the intricacies of logistics operations and their subsequent impact on guest loyalty.

This research is motivated by the need to fill the identified research gap and provide a holistic understanding of the relationship between hotel chain logistics and customer loyalty in the Chinese context (Zeithaml, 1988). Insights garnered from this study are anticipated to offer a roadmap for hoteliers, logistics professionals, and industry stakeholders to enhance operational efficiency and, by extension, cultivate enduring customer loyalty.

The exponential growth of the Chinese hospitality sector has elevated customer expectations, necessitating a strategic reevaluation of the operational aspects that underpin guest satisfaction and loyalty (Li & Han, 2010). The logistics framework of hotel chains, encompassing procurement, storage, and distribution of goods and services, holds immense potential in shaping the overall guest experience (Wu, 2010). From the timely delivery of room amenities to the efficiency of backend processes, each logistical facet contributes to the perceived value offered by a hotel, consequently impacting customer loyalty. This research embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the influence of hotel chain logistics on customer loyalty, with a specific focus on the Chinese hospitality context.

1.2 Research Question

1. What is the current level and nature of customer loyalty in the Chinese hospitality sector?
2. How does hotel chain logistics influence customer loyalty in the Chinese hospitality sector?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research is designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the current state of customer loyalty in the Chinese hospitality sector.
2. To study the influence of hotel chain logistics on customer loyalty in the Chinese hospitality sector.

1.4 Scope of Research Study

1.4.1 Scope of Population

The population for this research comprises customers within the Chinese hospitality sector. Specifically, it includes individuals who have experienced services offered by hotels operating under a chain model in various regions of China.

1.4.2 Scope of Variable

The scope of variables in this research encompasses several critical dimensions that contribute to the comprehensive examination of the factors influencing customer loyalty in the context of the Chinese hospitality sector. These variables are categorized into independent and dependent variables, each playing a distinct role in the research framework.

Independent Variables:

1. Brand Image: This variable encompasses the overall perception and recognition of the hotel chain's brand. It includes aspects such as brand uniformity, recognition, positive visual elements, and the influence of the hotel chain's commitment to social responsibility on brand image.
2. Service Quality: Operationalized by the promptness, reliability, and consistency of services provided by the hotel. It includes staff responsiveness, understanding, and empathy, as well as competence, courtesy, credibility, and the accuracy of information.
3. Logistics Communication Channels: This variable evaluates the clarity, comprehensibility, accessibility, and effectiveness of information related to logistics provided through various channels like the website, app, and in-room systems.
4. Sustainable Practice: Refers to the hotel's commitment to environmentally conscious measures in waste management, energy conservation, and the use of eco-friendly amenities.

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5. **Transportation Accessibility:** Focuses on the ease and convenience with which guests can reach their desired destinations using the hotel's transportation services or nearby public transit options.

Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty: This variable represents the extent of guests' lasting and favorable commitment to the hotel. It is measured through indicators such as personal preference, willingness to recommend, public promotion, intention to choose the hotel for the next trip, and loyalty even in the presence of alternative options.

1.4.3 Scope of Area

The scope of this study encompasses the Chinese hospitality sector, focusing on hotel chains operating within the country. The research examines customer loyalty within this specific industry, considering diverse geographical locations, hotel categories, and customer demographics. The study aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing customer loyalty, with implications for various segments within the Chinese hospitality sector.

1.4.4 Scope of Timing

This research focuses on the contemporary landscape of the Chinese hospitality sector, with data collection scheduled for February to March 2024.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1. For Customers: This research holds substantial significance for customers within the Chinese hospitality sector. By delving into the factors influencing customer loyalty, the study aims to enhance the overall guest experience. Customers stand to benefit from improved service quality, streamlined logistics communication, and sustainable practices adopted by hotel chains. Understanding these aspects not only empowers customers to make informed choices but also contributes to heightened satisfaction and a more enjoyable stay. The insights gained from this study are expected to elevate the quality of services offered to customers, fostering loyalty and positive engagement.

2. For Hotel Chain Industry: The findings of this research are of paramount importance to the hotel chain industry in China. Insights into the influence of brand image, service quality, logistics communication, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility on customer loyalty provide a strategic roadmap for hotel chains. Armed with this knowledge, the industry can refine marketing strategies, optimize service delivery, and implement sustainable practices to cultivate stronger customer relationships. Moreover, the study contributes to the industry's

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understanding of key factors that drive customer loyalty, enabling a competitive edge and the potential for sustained growth.

3. For Academic Community: Within the academic realm, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the fields of hospitality management, marketing, and consumer behavior. The research investigates nuanced dimensions of customer loyalty specific to the Chinese hospitality sector, thereby expanding academic discourse. Scholars and researchers can leverage these insights to advance theories, develop models, and contribute to the literature on brand image, service quality, logistics communication, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility in the context of customer loyalty. This study thus enriches the academic landscape and provides a foundation for future research endeavors in the broader field of hospitality and consumer studies.

1.6 Definition of Terms

1. Customer loyalty is defined as the extent to which guests demonstrate a lasting and favorable commitment to the hotel. This commitment is gauged through indicators such as the guests' strong personal preference for the hotel over other options, their willingness to recommend it to friends and family, active and positive public promotion, expressed intention to choose the hotel for their next trip, and their likelihood to remain loyal even when other alternatives are available.

2. Brand image encompasses the uniformity of the brand across different locations, the measurement of brand recognition in terms of awareness and familiarity, the evaluation of the positive contribution of visual elements like the logo and design to the overall brand perception, the examination of the influence of the hotel chain's commitment to social responsibility on its brand image, and the gauging of the association of the brand with qualities such as exclusivity and luxury.

3. Service quality is defined by the promptness of staff responses to guest requests, ensuring a timely and efficient service delivery. Additionally, it includes the consistent and dependable nature of services throughout a guest's stay, emphasizing reliability. The operationalization extends to the demonstration of understanding and empathy by hotel staff, gauging the human aspect of service provision. Furthermore, service quality is measured through the competence, courtesy, and credibility exhibited by staff, reflecting both professional and interpersonal attributes. Lastly, it encompasses the accuracy and consistency of information provided to guests, ensuring reliable and precise communication.

4. Logistics Communication Channels is defined by assessing the clarity and comprehensibility of information, including check-in/out procedures and amenities, provided through various channels such as the website, app, and in-room systems. Accessibility is a key measure, indicating the ease with which guests can retrieve logistics-related information through

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these channels. The effectiveness of Logistics Communication Channels is gauged by their ability to deliver timely and pertinent information throughout a guest's stay, enhancing their understanding of logistics. The operational definition also considers the consistency of information provided through different channels, ensuring coherence and avoiding discrepancies in logistics details. Lastly, Logistics Communication Channels are characterized by the user-friendliness and ease of navigation of interfaces used by the hotel to convey logistics information to guests.

5. Sustainable practice, within the context of this research, refers to the hotel's commitment and implementation of environmentally conscious measures across various facets of its operations. This encompasses initiatives related to waste management, energy conservation, and the use of eco-friendly amenities.

6. Transportation Accessibility encompasses the ease and convenience with which guests can reach their desired destinations through either the hotel's transportation services or nearby public transit options. This operational definition is centered on the efficiency and availability of the hotel's transportation facilities, with a particular emphasis on the existence and functionality of shuttle services.

7. Hotel chain logistics refers to the management and coordination of various logistical operations within a hotel chain network to ensure efficient and effective delivery of goods and services to guests. It encompasses a wide range of activities, including procurement, inventory management, transportation, warehousing, and distribution, all tailored to meet the unique demands and requirements of the hospitality industry. In the context of hotel chains, logistics play a crucial role in ensuring the smooth functioning of operations across multiple properties or locations. This includes managing the flow of goods and services from suppliers to individual hotels, as well as the internal distribution of resources within each hotel to meet guest needs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of Hotel Chain Logistics in China

The hotel industry in China has witnessed significant growth and transformation, with hotel chain logistics playing a pivotal role in shaping the sector's operational landscape. This overview delves into the intricate web of logistical processes and strategies employed by hotel chains across the country.

Hotel chains in China are strategically expanding their reach by establishing an extensive network of properties. This involves meticulous planning of locations to optimize accessibility for guests and ensure seamless logistics management (An, 2019). The distribution networks are designed to enhance the overall efficiency of the supply chain, catering to diverse customer needs.

Logistics within hotel chains encompass intricate inventory management systems. This involves the procurement and distribution of various resources, including linens, toiletries, and food supplies (Bu, 2022). Efficient inventory management ensures that each hotel within the chain operates smoothly, meeting guest expectations and maintaining consistent service quality.

An emerging trend within hotel chain logistics in China is the integration of sustainable practices (Óscar et al., 2019). From waste management to energy conservation, hotel chains are increasingly adopting eco-friendly initiatives. This overview explores how sustainability has become a focal point in logistics, driven by both consumer demand for responsible practices and the industry's commitment to environmental stewardship.

The role of technology in hotel chain logistics cannot be overstated (Van et al., 2020). China's hospitality sector is embracing technological advancements to streamline logistics processes. From automated check-in systems to smart inventory tracking, technology integration is enhancing operational efficiency and contributing to a seamless experience for guests.

Hotel chain logistics in China are evolving to prioritize customer satisfaction (Mohammed, 2019). This involves tailoring logistics to meet the specific needs and expectations of guests. Whether it's offering shuttle services or providing detailed information through various communication channels, customer-centric logistics contribute significantly to fostering loyalty.

Hotel Chain Business in China: An Overview

The hotel chain business in China has witnessed remarkable growth and transformation in recent years, reflecting the dynamic nature of the country's hospitality sector (Li, 2019; Anas, 2022).

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As the Chinese economy continues to expand and international tourism increases, hotel chains play a crucial role in providing accommodation options that cater to diverse traveler needs. This overview explores key aspects of the hotel chain business in China, including its current state, major players, challenges, and future prospects.

China's hotel chain industry has experienced significant development, driven by factors such as urbanization, rising disposable incomes, and an increasing middle-class population (Bu, 2022). Both domestic and international hotel chains have established a strong presence in major cities and popular tourist destinations. The market offers a wide range of hotel categories, from budget and economy to luxury and boutique, providing options for various traveler preferences (Chen et al., 2021).

Several domestic and international hotel chains contribute to the competitive landscape of the Chinese hospitality sector. Domestic chains like Hanting, 7 Days Inn, and Home Inns have expanded rapidly, offering affordable and convenient accommodation options (Dong, 2019). International giants such as Marriott, Hilton, and InterContinental have also invested significantly in establishing a robust presence, especially in top-tier cities (Gao et al., 2022).

Despite its growth, the hotel chain business in China faces certain challenges. Intense competition, regulatory complexities, and evolving consumer preferences are among the factors that hotel chains must navigate (Chen et al., 2021). Additionally, the industry has been affected by global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the need for resilience and adaptability (Reham et al., 2022).

Looking ahead, the Chinese hotel chain business is poised for further evolution. The industry is expected to witness continued expansion, with a focus on technology integration, sustainability, and personalized guest experiences (Chen et al., 2021). The rise of online travel platforms, digital marketing, and innovative service models are anticipated to shape the future trajectory of hotel chains in China (Wang, 2018).

The hotel chain business in China reflects the vibrancy and competitiveness of the country's hospitality sector. As the market continues to mature, hotel chains need to stay agile, embracing technological advancements and adapting to changing consumer expectations. Understanding the unique dynamics of the Chinese market is essential for hotel chains aiming to thrive in this dynamic and rapidly evolving landscape.

2.2 Concept and Theories of Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a multifaceted concept that holds paramount significance in the realm of service industries, including the hospitality sector. Understanding the intricate dynamics and

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theories surrounding customer loyalty is imperative for comprehending the factors that influence guests' lasting commitment to a particular hotel or hotel chain.

2.2.1 Definition of Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty can be defined as the degree to which individuals consistently choose a specific product or service over available alternatives, demonstrating a steadfast commitment and preference (Oliver, 1999). In the context of the hospitality sector, customer loyalty is often manifested through repeat visits, positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and a genuine inclination to choose a particular hotel even when confronted with competitive options.

2.2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Customer Loyalty

2.2.2.1 Expectation-Confirmation Theory

The Expectation-Confirmation Theory posits that customer satisfaction is a result of the confirmation or disconfirmation of pre-existing expectations. When a guest's experience aligns with their expectations, it leads to confirmation and satisfaction, contributing to loyalty (Oliver, 1999).

2.2.2.2 Relationship Marketing Theory

Relationship Marketing Theory emphasizes the cultivation of long-term relationships between the service provider and the customer. Building strong, positive relationships is considered a precursor to customer loyalty, as satisfied customers are more likely to engage in repeat business (Berry, 1995).

2.2.2.3 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory suggests that individuals engage in relationships based on the expectation of mutual benefits. In the context of hospitality, loyal customers perceive a reciprocal relationship with the hotel, receiving value in the form of quality service and personalized experiences (Blau, 1964).

2.2.2.4 Brand Loyalty Theory

Brand Loyalty Theory asserts that customers develop loyalty not only to the product or service itself but also to the brand. A positive brand image, recognition, and consistent quality contribute to heightened customer loyalty (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973).

2.2.3 Dimensions of Customer Loyalty

2.2.3.1 Behavioral Loyalty

Behavioral loyalty pertains to the actual purchasing patterns and repeat business exhibited by customers. It encompasses actions such as frequent stays, repeated bookings, and a consistent choice of a particular hotel brand (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978).

2.2.3.2 Attitudinal Loyalty

Attitudinal loyalty delves into customers' emotional connection and positive sentiments toward a hotel or brand. It includes factors such as willingness to recommend, positive word-of-mouth, and a genuine preference for the brand (Dick & Basu, 1994).

In summary, understanding the concept and theories of customer loyalty provides a foundational framework for investigating the interplay of various factors that contribute to guests' lasting commitment to a hotel chain. This comprehension is vital for designing effective strategies to enhance customer loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector.

2.3 Concept and Theories of Brand Image

Brand image is a pivotal element in understanding consumer behavior and plays a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions and preferences within the hotel industry. This section explores the concept and theories associated with brand image, shedding light on its significance in influencing consumer choices and fostering loyalty.

2.3.1 Definition of Brand Image:

Brand image refers to the overall perception and impression that consumers form about a brand based on their interactions, experiences, and exposure to the brand's marketing efforts (Kotler, 1999). It encompasses the unique set of associations, emotions, and attributes linked to a brand, shaping how consumers identify and differentiate it from competitors.

2.3.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Aaker's Brand Equity Model

Aaker (1991) proposed a comprehensive model that outlines the building blocks of brand equity, with brand image being a central component. According to Aaker, brand image is formed through a combination of brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations. This model emphasizes the interconnectedness of these elements in influencing consumer perceptions of a brand.

Keller's Brand Resonance Model

Keller's (1993) model posits that brand image is a crucial driver of brand resonance – the ultimate level of brand loyalty. The model highlights the importance of creating a strong brand image that fosters a deep, emotional connection with consumers. Keller emphasizes the role of

brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, brand judgments, and brand feelings in shaping a favorable brand image.

2.3.3 Role of Brand Image in the Hotel Industry

In the context of the hotel industry, brand image significantly influences consumer decision-making. Consumers often choose hotels based on the perceived image of the brand, which includes factors such as service quality, consistency, and the overall experience offered by the hotel chain (Chen et al., 2018). Positive brand image contributes to customer loyalty, as guests are more likely to revisit a hotel that aligns with their favorable perceptions (Hankinson, 2007).

Understanding the conceptual foundations and theoretical frameworks related to brand image is imperative for hotel chains seeking to cultivate a positive and enduring perception among their target audience. The next section will delve into the concept and theories surrounding service quality, another crucial determinant of customer loyalty in the hospitality sector.

2.4 Concept and Theories of Service Quality

In the hotel industry, service quality is a critical determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty. This section explores the conceptual framework and key theories that underpin the understanding of service quality in the context of hotel chain operations.

2.4.1 Definition of Service Quality

Service quality in hotels refers to the overall evaluation of the services provided by the hotel, encompassing various dimensions such as responsiveness, reliability, empathy, assurance, and tangibles (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). It reflects the extent to which the hotel meets or exceeds customer expectations regarding the delivery of services.

2.4.2 Theories of Service Quality

SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988): The SERVQUAL model is widely used to assess service quality by identifying five key dimensions – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This model serves as a benchmark for measuring customer perceptions and expectations, highlighting the areas where service improvements may be needed.

Gap Model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985): The Gap Model identifies several gaps that may exist between customer expectations and perceptions of service quality. These gaps include the knowledge gap, policy gap, delivery gap, and communication gap. Understanding and addressing these gaps are crucial for enhancing service quality and meeting customer expectations.

Causal Model of Service Quality (Brady & Cronin, 2001): This model suggests that customer perceptions of service quality directly influence their satisfaction, which, in turn, impacts loyalty.

It emphasizes the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between perceived service quality and loyalty.

2.4.3 Application to the Hotel Chain Industry

In the hotel chain industry, the application of these theories involves a comprehensive assessment of the different dimensions of service quality. Hotel chains need to focus not only on the physical aspects (tangibles) but also on staff competence, reliability, responsiveness to customer needs, assurance of service, and empathy towards guests.

Understanding and applying these theories contribute to the development of strategies that enhance service quality, thereby positively influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in the competitive hotel industry.

This section lays the foundation for exploring the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty within the specific context of hotel chains.

2.5 Concept and Theories of Logistics Communication Channels

In the context of hotel chain logistics, effective communication channels play a pivotal role in conveying information to guests regarding various aspects of their stay. This section delves into the conceptual framework and relevant theories that govern logistics communication channels within the hotel industry.

2.5.1 Definition of Logistics Communication Channels

Logistics communication channels refer to the mediums and methods through which hotels disseminate information related to logistical aspects, including check-in/out procedures, amenities, and other relevant details. These channels aim to enhance guest understanding, facilitate a seamless experience, and contribute to overall customer satisfaction.

2.5.2 Theories of Logistics Communication Channels

Information Theory (Shannon & Weaver, 1949): This foundational theory emphasizes the process of communication, where information is transmitted from a sender (hotel) to a receiver (guest). Within logistics communication channels, the effectiveness of conveying accurate and timely information is crucial for ensuring guests' understanding and satisfaction.

Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989): In the digital age, the acceptance and utilization of technology in communication channels are integral. This model posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness significantly influence individuals' intentions to use technology. For

logistics communication channels, user-friendly interfaces and accessibility are essential for effective communication.

Multi-Channel Integration Theory (Li & Kannan, 2014): With the proliferation of various communication channels such as websites, apps, and in-room systems, this theory underscores the importance of integrating these channels cohesively. The consistency of information across different channels contributes to a seamless logistics communication experience for guests.

2.5.3 Application to the Hotel Chain Industry

In the hotel chain industry, adopting a multi-channel approach that incorporates both digital and traditional communication methods is vital. The selection and implementation of technology, along with the clarity, consistency, and accessibility of information, directly impact guests' understanding and satisfaction with logistics processes. Understanding these theories provides a framework for hotel chains to optimize their logistics communication channels, ensuring an efficient and positive guest experience. This section establishes the theoretical groundwork for exploring the relationship between logistics communication channels and customer loyalty within the hotel chain context.

2.6 Concept and Theories of Sustainable Practice

Sustainable practices in the hotel industry have become increasingly crucial as environmental concerns grow globally. This section delves into the conceptual framework and theories underpinning sustainable practices, examining their relevance within the context of hotel chain operations.

2.6.1 Definition of Sustainable Practice

Sustainable practice, within the hotel industry, refers to the commitment and implementation of environmentally conscious measures across various facets of hotel operations. These measures encompass initiatives related to waste management, energy conservation, and the use of eco-friendly amenities.

2.6.2 Theories of Sustainable Practice

Triple Bottom Line Theory (Elkington, 1997): This theory suggests that sustainable practices should not only focus on economic aspects but also consider social and environmental impacts. In the hotel context, it implies that sustainable practices should contribute to the financial success of the hotel while also benefiting society and minimizing environmental harm.

Cradle to Cradle Design (McDonough & Braungart, 2002): This design approach emphasizes creating products and systems that are not only environmentally friendly but also contribute

positively to ecological health. In the hotel industry, this theory encourages practices that go beyond mere reduction of environmental impact to actively enhancing ecological systems.

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory (Barney, 1991): RBV theory suggests that sustained competitive advantage comes from a firm's unique resources. In the context of sustainable practices, hotels can achieve a competitive edge by developing distinctive environmentally friendly resources, such as efficient waste management systems or innovative energy-saving technologies.

2.6.3 Application to the Hotel Chain Industry

In the hotel chain industry, sustainable practices involve adopting and integrating these theories into daily operations. This may include waste reduction strategies, energy-efficient technologies, and partnerships with local communities to promote social responsibility.

Understanding and applying these theories are vital for hotel chains aiming to contribute to environmental conservation, meet changing consumer expectations, and create a positive brand image associated with sustainability.

This section provides a foundation for comprehending the theoretical framework that informs sustainable practices in the hotel chain industry, setting the stage for the subsequent exploration of the impact of these practices on customer loyalty.

2.7 Concept and Theories of Transportation Accessibility

Transportation accessibility is a critical aspect of the hotel industry, influencing guests' ability to reach desired destinations conveniently. This section explores the conceptual underpinnings and relevant theories related to transportation accessibility within the hotel chain context.

2.7.1 Definition of Transportation Accessibility

Transportation accessibility refers to the ease and convenience with which guests can access their desired destinations through either the hotel's transportation services or nearby public transit options. It encompasses the efficiency and availability of the hotel's transportation facilities, with a particular emphasis on the existence and functionality of shuttle services.

2.7.2 Theories of Transportation Accessibility

Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991): This theory suggests that individuals' intentions and behaviors are influenced by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of transportation accessibility, guests' perceptions of the convenience and efficiency of the hotel's transportation services contribute to their intentions and decisions regarding their stay.

Travel Behavior Theory (Cascetta, 2001): Understanding travel behavior is essential for comprehending guests' choices related to transportation. This theory examines the factors

influencing travel decisions, including mode choice and travel time. For hotel chains, providing efficient and accessible transportation options aligns with the principles of travel behavior theory.

Service Convenience Theory (Parasuraman et al., 1985): Convenience is a crucial factor influencing customer satisfaction. This theory posits that perceived convenience affects customers' overall service evaluations. In the context of transportation accessibility, guests' perceptions of the hotel's efforts to provide convenient transportation options contribute to their overall satisfaction.

2.7.3 Application to the Hotel Chain Industry

In the hotel chain industry, ensuring transportation accessibility aligns with enhancing the overall guest experience. By incorporating insights from the Theory of Planned Behavior, Travel Behavior Theory, and Service Convenience Theory, hotel chains can strategically design and promote transportation services that meet guests' expectations and preferences.

This section establishes a theoretical foundation for understanding the role of transportation accessibility in influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty within the hotel chain context.

2.8 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

The hypotheses for this research are developed based on the conceptual framework and theories discussed in the preceding sections. Each hypothesis represents a specific relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable, customer loyalty.

Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the perceived brand image of the hotel chain and customer loyalty. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior and Brand Image theories, this hypothesis posits that a positive and consistent brand image contributes to guests' intentions to exhibit lasting commitment and loyalty to the hotel.

Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between the service quality of the hotel chain and customer loyalty. Informed by the Service Convenience Theory, this hypothesis suggests that prompt, reliable, and empathetic service provision positively influences customer satisfaction and, consequently, their loyalty to the hotel.

Logistics Communication Channels and Customer Loyalty

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between the Logistics Communication Channels of the hotel chain and customer loyalty. Anchored in theories of effective communication, this hypothesis asserts that clear, accessible, and consistent logistics-related information positively impacts guests' loyalty by enhancing their understanding and satisfaction.

Sustainable Practice and Customer Loyalty

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between the sustainable practice of the hotel chain and customer loyalty. Building on sustainability theories, this hypothesis proposes that guests who perceive the hotel as environmentally conscious are more likely to exhibit loyalty due to shared values and a positive corporate image.

Transportation Accessibility and Customer Loyalty

H5: There is a significant positive relationship between the transportation accessibility of the hotel chain and customer loyalty. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior and Travel Behavior Theory, this hypothesis posits that convenient and efficient transportation options positively influence guests' intentions to remain loyal to the hotel.

In summary, there are five hypotheses as follows:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the brand image of the hotel chain and customer loyalty.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between the service quality of the hotel chain and customer loyalty.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between the logistics communication channel of the hotel chain and customer loyalty.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between the sustainable practice of the hotel chain and customer loyalty.

H5: There is a significant positive relationship between the transportation accessibility of the hotel chain and customer loyalty.

Based on the five hypotheses, a conceptual framework has been developed as shown in figure 2.1.

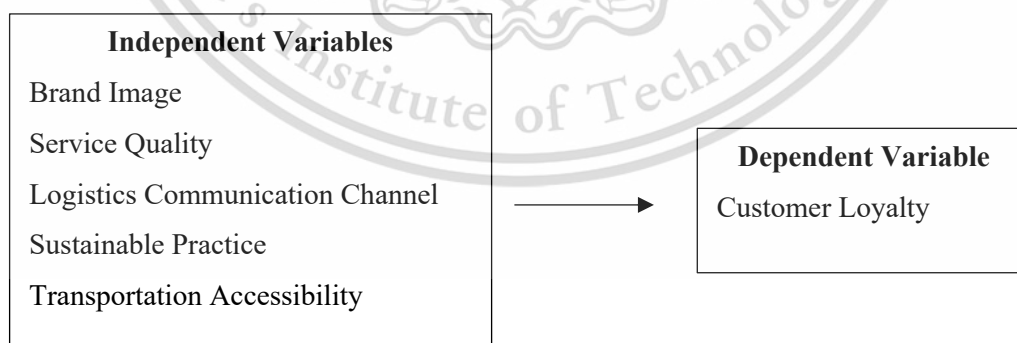


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population and Sample

The population for this research comprises customers within the Chinese hospitality sector. Specifically, it includes individuals who have experienced services offered by hotels operating under a chain model in various regions of China.

The target sample for this research encompasses 385 individuals, representing an unknown population size. In this context, the Cochran's 1977 Sample Size Formula is employed for sample size determination, expressed as:

$$n = \frac{z^2}{4e^2}$$

Where: n denotes the sample size.

z is the z-score.

e represents the margin of error (set at 5%).

Substituting the specified values into the formula. Consequently, the calculated sample size is 385 individuals. In consideration of the unknown population, a z-value of 1.96 is employed, aligning with the z-score for a 95% confidence level. This calculation yields a sample size of 385, indicating the number of participants required for the study.

The research sample, comprising 385 participants, is drawn from individuals who have recently patronized hotels within a prominent hotel chain in China, utilizing a convenience sampling approach. This method facilitates accessibility to participants based on their availability and willingness to engage in the study.

The inclusion criteria for the sample are delineated as follows: (1) Individuals who have lodged at a hotel within the specified hotel chain within the past year. (2) A diverse representation of customers across varying age groups, genders, and travel purposes. (3) Participants expressing a willingness to candidly share their experiences and perceptions regarding hotel services and loyalty.

The adoption of a convenience sampling approach is driven by the pragmatic need to efficiently gather insights into customer loyalty influenced by hotel chain logistics within the Chinese hospitality sector. This approach is selected for its expediency in reaching participants conveniently and expeditiously, thereby yielding valuable perspectives for the study.

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument serves as a critical tool for collecting data instrumental in testing the hypotheses and achieving the research objectives. This section outlines the development and characteristics of the research instrument.

3.2.1 Survey Questionnaire

A structured survey questionnaire is employed as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire is designed to capture responses from customers who have recently stayed at hotels within a prominent hotel chain in China. The instrument consists of sections corresponding to the key variables of the study, including:

Customer Loyalty: This section gauges the extent to which guests demonstrate a lasting and favorable commitment to the hotel. Indicators such as strong personal preference for the hotel, willingness to recommend it, active public promotion, expressed intention to choose the hotel for the next trip, and likelihood to remain loyal are assessed.

Brand Image: Participants evaluate the hotel chain's brand image based on factors such as brand consistency, recognition, visual elements, and associations with social responsibility, luxury, and exclusivity.

Service Quality: Questions related to service quality cover aspects like staff responsiveness, service promptness, staff competence, courtesy, credibility, understanding, and empathy, as well as the accuracy and consistency of information provided.

Logistics Communication Channels: This section assesses the clarity, comprehensibility, accessibility, effectiveness, consistency, and user-friendliness of logistics-related information communicated through various channels (website, app, in-room systems).

Sustainable Practice: Participants are queried on their perceptions of the hotel chain's commitment to sustainable practices, encompassing initiatives related to waste management, energy conservation, and the use of eco-friendly amenities.

Transportation Accessibility: Questions focus on the ease and convenience with which guests can access desired destinations through the hotel's transportation services or nearby public transit options.

3.2.2 Scale Development

Likert-type scales are predominantly utilized, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree or from very dissatisfied to very satisfied, depending on the nature of the questions. The scale points allow respondents to express their perceptions and opinions in a quantifiable manner.

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3.3 Reliability and Validity Test

In preparation for the comprehensive survey, a pre-test involving 30 participants takes place. This preliminary phase identifies and resolves potential issues, such as ambiguities or complexities in the survey questions. Additionally, the pre-test evaluates the reliability of the survey instrument using Cronbach's alpha and ensures its validity through feedback from three subject matter experts.

A diverse sample of 30 individuals, reflecting various demographic characteristics and previous stay experiences within the hotel chain, is chosen for the pre-test. Cronbach's alpha assesses the internal consistency and reliability of the survey instrument, with a value above 0.7 considered acceptable. This indicates that the questions in each section consistently measure the same construct.

To enhance content validity, feedback is sought from three experts in hospitality management, consumer behavior, and survey methodology. These experts evaluate the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions, ensuring that the survey effectively captures the intended constructs. Based on the pre-test results and expert feedback, necessary adjustments are made to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the survey questions.

After implementing these adjustments, Cronbach's alpha is recalculated to confirm the survey instrument's continued reliability. Expert feedback is revisited to ensure that the survey maintains its content validity. Upon successful completion of the pre-testing phase, the survey questionnaire is finalized, incorporating all necessary improvements and refinements.

This meticulous pre-testing process guarantees that the survey instrument is not only reliable and valid but also clear and comprehensible to the target participants. The insights gained from this pre-test contribute significantly to the overall robustness of the research methodology.

3.4 Data Collection

The main data collection process involves administering a structured survey to the selected sample of participants. The survey is distributed electronically, ensuring efficiency and convenience for both researchers and participants. The survey targets a diverse group of participants who have recently stayed at hotels within the selected prominent hotel chain in China. This approach aligns with the research objectives and ensures the collection of relevant data for the study.

A convenience sampling approach is employed, considering the practicality and accessibility of participants. The aim is to collect responses from 385 participants, chosen based on their recent experiences with the selected hotel chain. The survey encompasses questions related to customer loyalty, brand image, service quality, logistics communication channels, sustainable practices, and transportation accessibility. The questions are designed to measure the constructs accurately.

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Participants' data is treated confidentially, with all information anonymized. The survey platform employs encryption and secure protocols to protect participants' privacy. The survey is administered during February and March 2024 to ensure a timely collection of data aligned with the study's scope and objectives. To enhance response rates, participants receive reminders about the survey, emphasizing its importance and encouraging their valuable input.

Throughout the data collection period, regular checks are conducted to ensure the completeness and accuracy of responses. Incomplete or inconsistent data is addressed promptly. This research adheres to ethical standards, and participants provide informed consent before participating. Ethical approval is obtained from the relevant institutional review board.

The comprehensive data collection process outlined above aims to gather high-quality and reliable data, facilitating the rigorous analysis required to address the research questions and objectives.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey undergoes a robust and systematic analysis to draw meaningful insights and conclusions aligned with the research objectives. The data analysis process involves several key steps:

3.5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as mean, median, and standard deviation, summarize the main characteristics of the data. This initial analysis provides an overview of the distribution of responses and key trends.

3.5.2 Inferential Analysis

Inferential statistical techniques explore relationships between variables and investigate hypotheses formulated in the study. Correlation analysis assesses the strength and direction of associations between different variables, shedding light on potential connections relevant to customer loyalty within the context of hotel chain logistics. Additionally, regression analysis examines the extent to which independent variables, such as brand image, service quality, logistics communication channels, sustainable practices, and transportation accessibility, predict variations in customer loyalty. These inferential analyses enable a deeper exploration of the underlying dynamics and factors influencing customer loyalty in the context of the Chinese hospitality sector.

Regression analysis, a statistical method, examines the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables. In this study, regression analysis assesses the extent to which various independent variables (such as brand image, service quality, logistics

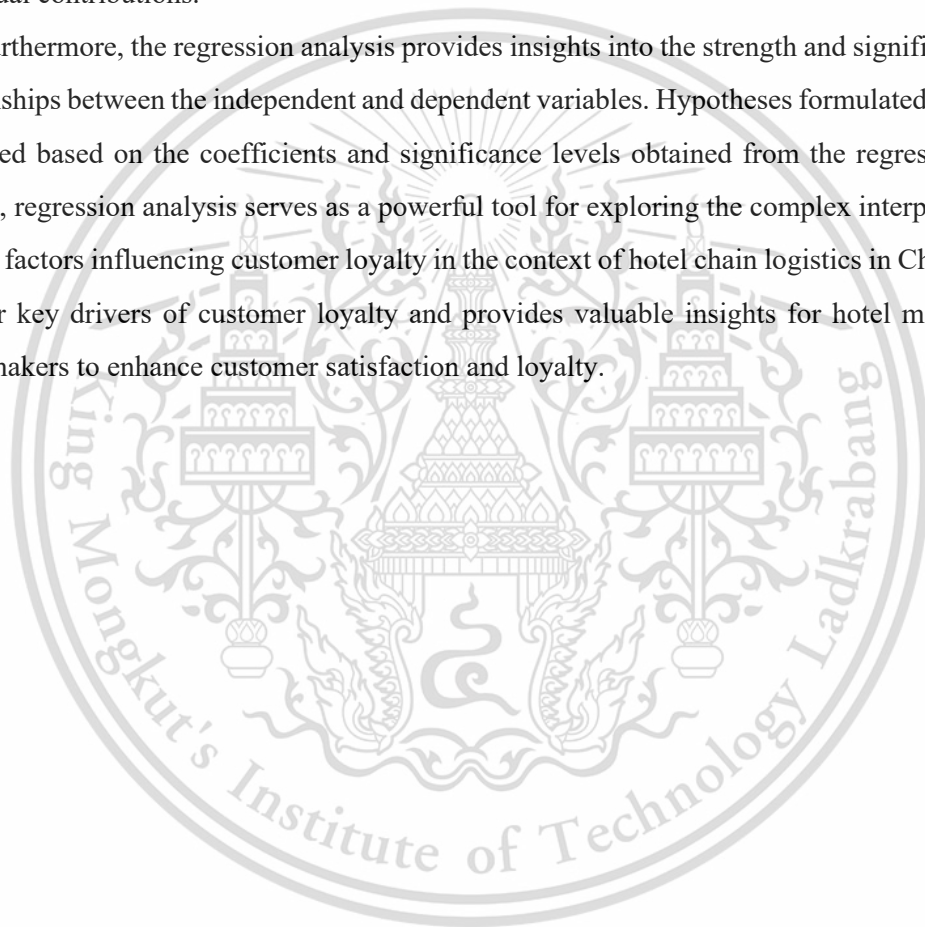
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communication channels, sustainable practices, and transportation accessibility) predict variations in the dependent variable, which is customer loyalty.

The regression analysis involves building a regression model that estimates the impact of each independent variable on customer loyalty while controlling for other factors. The coefficients derived from the regression model indicate the magnitude and direction of the relationships between the independent variables and customer loyalty. Specifically, multiple regression analysis examines the combined influence of multiple independent variables on customer loyalty. This analysis allows for the identification of significant predictors of customer loyalty and the quantification of their individual contributions.

Furthermore, the regression analysis provides insights into the strength and significance of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Hypotheses formulated in the study are tested based on the coefficients and significance levels obtained from the regression model. Overall, regression analysis serves as a powerful tool for exploring the complex interplay between various factors influencing customer loyalty in the context of hotel chain logistics in China. It helps uncover key drivers of customer loyalty and provides valuable insights for hotel managers and policymakers to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.



CHAPTER 4

ANALYTICAL RESULTS

The primary data collection method in this study was a comprehensive survey, resulting in a total of 385 completed questionnaires. The researcher meticulously verified the validity and completeness of the questionnaires. Using statistical software, a widely recognized statistical software, the data was analyzed to meet the objectives of the study. The findings from this analysis are systematically organized in a descriptive table, divided into five distinct sections for clear and systematic interpretation of the results. These sections are as follows:

4.1 Demographic Information

4.2 Levels of Each Variables

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

4.1 Demographic Information

Table 4.1 Demographic Information (n = 385)

Variable	Items	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	196	50.9
	Female	189	49.1
Age	20-30 years old	50	13.0
	31-40 years old	78	20.3
	41-50 years old	90	23.4
	50-60 years old	147	38.2
	>60 years old	20	5.2
Education	Below Bachelor's degree	269	69.9
	Bachelor's degree	97	25.2
	Master's Degree	18	4.7
	Doctoral Degree	1	.3
Monthly Income (RMB)	2,000 or lower	19	4.9
	2,001-4,000	93	24.2
	4,001-6,000	117	30.4
	6,001-8,000	73	19.0
	Over 8,000	83	21.5
Marital Status	Single	40	10.4
	Married	335	87.0
	Others	10	2.6

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Table 4.1 (Cont.)

Variable	Items	Frequency	Percent
Occupation	Student	9	2.3
	Employed full time	195	50.6
	Employed part time	3	.8
	Self-employed	58	15.1
	Retired	58	15.1
	Unemployed	5	1.3
	Others	57	14.8

The results from Table 4.1 demonstrate a diverse demographic profile among the participants. In terms of gender, there was a nearly equal distribution, with 50.9% male and 49.1% female respondents. Regarding age, the majority of participants fell within the 41-50 years old category (23.4%), followed by 50-60 years old (38.2%). The education level of the participants varied, with the majority having below a Bachelor's degree (69.9%), while 25.2% held a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, 4.7% had a Master's degree, and a small proportion (0.3%) had a Doctoral degree. Regarding monthly income, the largest proportion of participants (30.4%) reported earning between 4,001-6,000 RMB, followed by 2,001-4,000 RMB (24.2%). In terms of marital status, the majority of participants were married (87.0%). Occupation varied among participants, with the most common being employed full-time (50.6%), followed by self-employed (15.1%) and retired (15.1%). Overall, the findings highlight the diverse representation of demographics among the participants, providing a comprehensive understanding of the sample composition.

4.2 Level of Each Variables

Table 4.2 Mean and Standard Deviation for Each Variable

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Level
Brand Image	4.381	.743	High
Service Quality	4.459	.725	High
Logistics communication channel	4.457	.742	High
Sustainability	4.401	.778	High
Transportation Accessibility	4.381	.780	High
Customer Loyalty	4.401	.764	High

Table 4.2 presents the mean and standard deviation for each variable investigated in the study. On average, participants rated the brand image of the hotel chain at 4.381, service quality at 4.459,

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logistics communication channel at 4.457, sustainability at 4.401, transportation accessibility at 4.381, and customer loyalty at 4.401. These mean scores suggest that participants generally held a high level of perception across all variables.

Table 4.3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Brand Image

Brand Image	Mean	S.D.	Level
The hotel chain maintains a consistent image across its different locations.	4.395	.866	Highest
The hotel chain is easily recognizable, and its brand is well-known in the market.	4.504	.764	Highest
The visual elements of the hotel chain, including its logo and design, contribute positively to its overall image.	4.460	.806	High
The hotel chain's commitment to social responsibility positively influences its brand image.	4.436	.840	High
The hotel chain is associated with exclusivity and a perception of luxury.	4.112	1.066	High
Overall	4.381	.743	High

Table 4.3 provides an overview of customer opinions regarding a hotel chain's brand image across various dimensions. The data show mean scores ranging from 4.112 to 4.504 across different aspects such as consistency across locations, brand recognition, the positive contribution of visual elements, and the influence of social responsibility on the brand image. Overall, the data indicate a robust and favorable brand image for the hotel chain, with a mean score of 4.381, reflecting a high level of agreement among respondents.

Table 4.4 Mean and Standard Deviation of Service Quality

Service Quality	Mean	S.D.	Level
The hotel staff responded promptly to my requests.	4.423	.804	High
The hotel's services were consistent and dependable during my stay.	4.455	.766	High
The hotel staff demonstrated understanding and empathy toward my needs and concerns.	4.439	.779	High
The hotel staff were competent, courteous, and credible in providing services.	4.483	.740	High

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Table 4.4 (Cont.)

Service Quality	Mean	S.D.	Level
The information provided by the hotel staff was accurate and consistent throughout my stay.	4.494	.718	High
Overall	4.459	.725	High

Table 4.4 presents the mean and standard deviation of the opinion of service quality among customers of the hotel chain. The data reveal consistently high mean scores ranging from 4.423 to 4.494 across various aspects, indicating positive opinions of service quality. Specifically, customers highly value prompt responses to their requests, consistent and dependable services throughout their stay, understanding and empathetic staff behavior, as well as the competence, courtesy, and credibility of the staff, along with accurate and consistent information provided by the hotel staff. The overall mean score for service quality is 4.459, reflecting a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the hotel chain's service quality.

Table 4.5 Mean and Standard Deviation of Logistics Communication Channel

Logistics communication channel	Mean	S.D.	Level
The information provided through the hotel's communication channels regarding logistics (e.g., check-in/out procedures, amenities) was clear and easy to understand.	4.491	.729	High
I found it easy to access logistics-related information through the hotel's communication channels.	4.449	.802	High
The hotel's communication channels effectively delivered timely and relevant information about logistics during my stay.	4.436	.792	High
Information provided through different communication channels (e.g., website, app, in-room systems) regarding logistics was consistent with each other.	4.421	.807	High
The interfaces of the communication channels used by the hotel for logistics information were user-friendly and easy to navigate.	4.486	.740	High
Overall	4.457	.742	High

Table 4.5 presents the mean and standard deviation of customer opinions regarding the logistics communication channels of the hotel chain. The data indicate consistently high mean scores ranging from 4.421 to 4.491 across various aspects, suggesting high level of agreement on of the effectiveness of these channels. Customers found the information provided through the hotel's communication channels regarding logistics to be clear, easy to understand, and accessible, with the interfaces being user-friendly and easy to navigate. Additionally, the communication channels were deemed effective in delivering timely and relevant information about logistics during guests' stays. Moreover, customers appreciated the consistency of logistics-related information across different communication channels, including the website, app, and in-room systems. The overall mean score for logistics communication channel effectiveness is 4.457, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the hotel chain's logistics communication channels.

Table 4.6 Mean and Standard Deviation of Sustainability

Sustainability	Mean	S.D.	Level
The hotel commits to sustainable logistics, including waste management and energy conservation.	4.408	.799	High
The hotel uses eco-friendly amenities, such as biodegradable toiletries.	4.384	.843	High
The hotel's recycling initiatives, such as waste separation, are effective in promoting sustainability.	4.390	.822	High
The hotel's efforts in water conservation, such as the use of efficient fixtures, are noticeable and appreciated.	4.403	.808	High
The hotel's energy conservation measures, such as energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems, are noticeable and contribute to its sustainability efforts.	4.418	.790	High
Overall	4.401	.778	High

Table 4.6 presents the mean and standard deviation of customer opinions regarding sustainability within the hotel chain. The data indicate consistently high mean scores ranging from 4.384 to 4.418 across various aspects, suggesting a high level of agreement with the hotel's sustainability efforts. Customers have a high level of agreement on the hotel's commitment to sustainable logistics, including waste management and energy conservation, as well as its use of eco-friendly amenities such as biodegradable toiletries. Additionally, customers appreciate the effectiveness of the hotel's recycling initiatives and water conservation efforts, including the use of efficient fixtures. Moreover, the hotel's energy conservation measures, such as energy-efficient

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lighting and HVAC systems, are noticeable and contribute to its sustainability efforts. The overall mean score for sustainability is 4.401, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the hotel chain's sustainability.

Table 4.7 Mean and Standard Deviation of Transportation Accessibility

Transportation Accessibility	Mean	S.D.	Level
The hotel's transportation services or nearby access to public transit make it easy for me to reach desired destinations.	4.478	.747	High
Shuttle services provided by the hotel are available.	4.262	.988	High
The transportation options offered by the hotel meet my arrival and departure expectations.	4.351	.875	High
The hotel's proximity to transportation hubs (e.g., airports, train stations) meets my expectations.	4.387	.825	High
The hotel's transportation accessibility is effective in reaching popular destinations.	4.429	.798	High
Overall	4.381	.780	High

Table 4.7 presents the mean and standard deviation of customer opinions regarding transportation accessibility within the hotel chain. The data show consistently high mean scores ranging from 4.262 to 4.478 across various aspects, indicating positive perceptions of transportation accessibility. Customers highly value the ease of reaching desired destinations facilitated by the hotel's transportation services or nearby access to public transit. Additionally, although slightly lower in mean score, shuttle services provided by the hotel and transportation options meeting arrival and departure expectations are still perceived positively. Moreover, customers find the hotel's proximity to transportation hubs and the effectiveness of transportation accessibility in reaching popular destinations to be satisfactory. The overall mean score for transportation accessibility is 4.381, reflecting a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the hotel chain's transportation accessibility.

Table 4.8 Mean and Standard Deviation of Customer Loyalty

Customer Loyalty	Mean	S.D.	Level
In my heart, I prefer this hotel over others.	4.413	.780	High
I would recommend this hotel to my friends and family.	4.405	.792	High
I will positively promote this hotel in public.	4.335	.863	High

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Table 4.8 (Cont.)

Customer Loyalty	Mean	S.D.	Level
I would choose this hotel again for my next trip.	4.429	.774	High
I am likely to stay at this hotel again on my future trips even if there are other options available.	4.421	.810	High
Overall	4.401	.764	High

Table 4.8 outlines the mean and standard deviation of customer loyalty towards the hotel chain. The data reveal consistently high mean scores ranging from 4.335 to 4.429 across various loyalty indicators, indicating high customer loyalty. Customers express a preference for this hotel over others, indicating a high likelihood of recommending it to friends and family, and positively promoting it in public. Moreover, customers express intentions to choose this hotel for their future trips, even when other options are available, suggesting a high level of loyalty. The overall mean score for customer loyalty is 4.401, reinforcing the high level of agreement among respondents regarding their loyalty towards the hotel chain.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Table 4.9 Multiple Linear Regression Results for Customer Loyalty

Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	.127	.097		1.308	.192
Brand Image	.119	.044	.116	2.723	.007**
Service Quality	.113	.067	.107	1.690	.092
Logistics communication channel	.157	.064	.152	2.465	.014*
Sustainability Practice	.147	.056	.149	2.629	.009**
Transportation Accessibility	.434	.048	.444	9.069	.000**
R-square = .849; Sig. = .000**					

* $p < .05$; ** $p < 0.01$

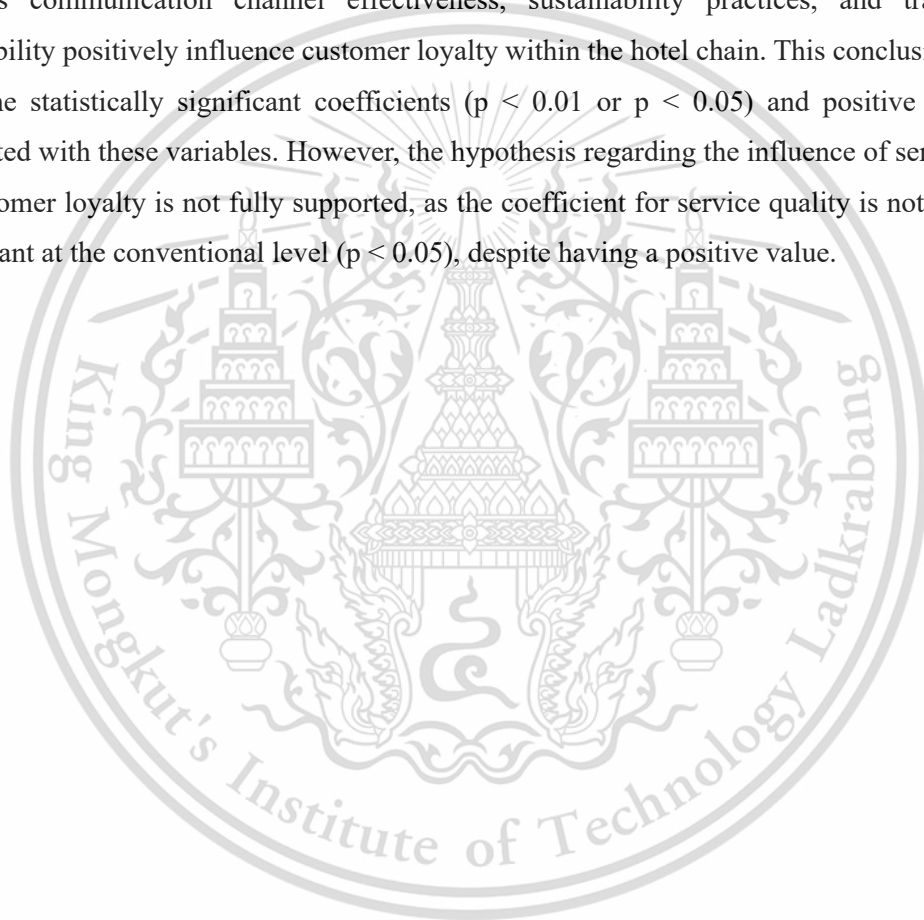
Table 4.9 displays the results of a multiple linear regression analysis examining the relationship between various independent variables (brand image, service quality, logistics communication channel, sustainability practice, and transportation accessibility) and the dependent variable, customer loyalty. The regression coefficients provide insights into the strength and direction of these relationships. Notably, brand image, logistics communication channel, sustainability practice, and transportation accessibility demonstrate statistically significant positive effects on customer loyalty, as indicated by their respective beta coefficients and p-values.

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Specifically, for every one-unit increase in brand image, logistics communication channel, sustainability practice, and transportation accessibility, there is a corresponding increase in customer loyalty by 0.116, 0.152, 0.149, and 0.444 units, respectively. These findings suggest that improvements in these factors are associated with higher levels of customer loyalty. Conversely, service quality does not show a statistically significant effect on customer loyalty in this analysis. The R-square value of 0.849 indicates that the independent variables collectively explain approximately 84.9% of the variance in customer loyalty, highlighting the strength of the regression model in predicting customer loyalty based on the selected factors.

The regression analysis results provide evidence supporting the hypotheses that brand image, logistics communication channel effectiveness, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility positively influence customer loyalty within the hotel chain. This conclusion is drawn from the statistically significant coefficients ($p < 0.01$ or $p < 0.05$) and positive beta values associated with these variables. However, the hypothesis regarding the influence of service quality on customer loyalty is not fully supported, as the coefficient for service quality is not statistically significant at the conventional level ($p < 0.05$), despite having a positive value.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusion

In this research, the study delved into the intricate dynamics of customer loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector, specifically focusing on hotel chains. By meticulously analyzing a range of operational and strategic factors, this study unearthed pivotal determinants that significantly influence guest loyalty. The findings shed light on the critical importance of strategic management in areas such as brand image, logistics communication channels, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility in fostering enduring relationships with guests.

The significance of brand image cannot be overstated, as it serves as a cornerstone for building trust and loyalty among guests. A positive brand image not only attracts customers but also instills confidence and loyalty in them, driving repeat business and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Similarly, the effectiveness of logistics communication channels in facilitating seamless interactions and satisfying guest needs underscores the importance of efficient communication systems in enhancing overall guest experiences.

Moreover, the analysis revealed the substantial impact of sustainability practices on customer loyalty, reflecting the growing importance of environmental and social responsibility in consumer decision-making. Guests are increasingly drawn to brands that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, reflecting their values and beliefs. Finally, the accessibility of transportation options emerged as a significant predictor of guest loyalty, highlighting the importance of convenient access to transportation hubs and services in enhancing guest mobility and overall satisfaction.

However, it is noteworthy that this analysis did not find a statistically significant effect of service quality on customer loyalty. While this may seem surprising given the established importance of service quality in driving guest satisfaction and loyalty, it underscores the need for hotel chains to carefully prioritize and invest in factors that have the most substantial impact on guest perceptions and preferences.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the nuanced dynamics of customer loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector, offering practical implications for hotel management and marketing strategies. By strategically managing factors such as brand image, logistics communication channels, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility, hotel chains can effectively cultivate guest loyalty and gain a competitive edge in the market.

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5.2 Discussion

The findings from the multiple linear regression analysis provide valuable insights into the factors influencing customer loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector. Notably, brand image, logistics communication channel, sustainability practice, and transportation accessibility emerge as significant predictors of customer loyalty, with statistically significant positive effects observed for each of these variables. These results underscore the importance of strategic management of these aspects in enhancing customer loyalty within hotel chains. Specifically, investments in improving brand image perception, optimizing logistics communication channels, implementing sustainable practices, and ensuring transportation accessibility can contribute to higher levels of customer loyalty. However, it is noteworthy that service quality does not demonstrate a statistically significant effect on customer loyalty in this analysis, suggesting potential areas for further investigation or improvement. Overall, the findings highlight the critical role of various operational and strategic factors in shaping customer loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector, providing valuable insights for hotel chains seeking to enhance their competitiveness and foster long-term relationships with customers. Further research could explore additional factors influencing customer loyalty and investigate potential moderators or mediators of the identified relationships to deepen the understanding of consumer behavior in the hospitality industry.

The findings of this study shed light on several important aspects related to customer loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector. Firstly, the statistically significant positive effects of brand image, logistics communication channel, sustainability practice, and Transportation Accessibility on customer loyalty emphasize the critical role of these factors in shaping guests' perceptions and fostering long-term relationships with hotel brands. These results align with prior research emphasizing the importance of branding, effective communication, and sustainable practices in enhancing customer loyalty (Anas, 2022; Brady & Cronin, 2001; Hankinson, 2007). The strong relationship between brand image and customer loyalty highlights the need for hotel chains to invest in building and maintaining a positive brand reputation to attract and retain customers (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Similarly, the significant impact of logistics communication channels underscores the importance of efficient communication systems in ensuring seamless interactions and satisfying guest needs (Dong, 2019). Moreover, the positive influence of sustainability practice on customer loyalty reflects the growing importance of environmental and social responsibility in consumer decision-making, with guests increasingly favoring brands that demonstrate commitment to sustainability (McDonough & Braungart, 2002; Óscar et al., 2019). Furthermore, the substantial influence of transportation accessibility on customer loyalty highlights the importance of

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convenient access to transportation options for guests (Cascetta, 2001). Hotel chains should consider factors such as proximity to transportation hubs, availability of shuttle services, and ease of transportation arrangements to facilitate guests' mobility and enhance their overall experience.

However, it is noteworthy that service quality did not demonstrate a statistically significant effect on customer loyalty in this analysis. This finding contrasts with previous research highlighting the pivotal role of service quality in driving customer satisfaction and loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Parasuraman et al., 1988). One possible explanation for this discrepancy could be the subjective nature of service quality perceptions, which may vary among guests based on individual expectations and experiences (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Additionally, it is important to consider the specific dimensions of service quality examined in this study and their alignment with guest preferences and priorities (Chen & Yang, 2014; Van et al., 2020).

In overall, the findings of this study contribute to the understanding of customer loyalty dynamics within the hospitality sector and have implications for hotel management and marketing strategies. By focusing on enhancing brand image, optimizing logistics communication channels, and integrating sustainability initiatives, hotel chains can effectively cultivate customer loyalty and gain a competitive edge in the market. Future research could explore additional factors influencing customer loyalty and investigate potential moderators or mediators of the identified relationships to provide further insights into guest behavior and preferences in the evolving hospitality landscape.

5.3 Recommendation

The findings of this study carry significant implications for hotel management and marketing strategies within the Chinese hospitality sector. Firstly, the identified determinants of customer loyalty, including brand image, logistics communication channels, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility, offer valuable insights into areas where hotel chains can focus their efforts to enhance guest loyalty.

Strategic investments in building and maintaining a positive brand image can pay dividends in terms of attracting and retaining customers. Hotel chains should prioritize efforts to enhance brand visibility, credibility, and reputation through targeted marketing campaigns, consistent messaging, and proactive brand management strategies.

Similarly, optimizing logistics communication channels is essential for ensuring seamless interactions and satisfying guest needs. Hotel chains should invest in robust communication systems, user-friendly booking platforms, and responsive customer service channels to facilitate efficient communication and enhance guest experiences.

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The growing importance of sustainability practices in influencing guest loyalty underscores the need for hotel chains to integrate environmental and social responsibility into their operations. By implementing eco-friendly initiatives, reducing carbon footprint, and promoting sustainable practices, hotel chains can appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and differentiate themselves in the market.

Furthermore, ensuring transportation accessibility is critical for enhancing guest mobility and overall satisfaction. Hotel chains should consider factors such as proximity to transportation hubs, availability of shuttle services, and ease of transportation arrangements to facilitate guest travel and enhance their overall experience.

Overall, the implications of this study highlight the strategic importance of prioritizing factors that significantly influence guest perceptions and preferences. By strategically managing brand image, logistics communication channels, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility, hotel chains can cultivate guest loyalty, foster long-term relationships, and gain a competitive edge in the dynamic hospitality landscape of China.

5.4 Future Research

The findings of this study open up several avenues for future research in the field of customer loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector. Firstly, future studies could delve deeper into the specific dimensions of brand image, logistics communication channels, sustainability practices, and transportation accessibility to identify which aspects have the most significant impact on guest loyalty. By understanding the underlying mechanisms driving these relationships, hotel chains can develop more targeted and effective strategies to enhance customer loyalty.

Additionally, future research could explore the moderating or mediating effects of demographic variables, such as age, gender, income, and travel preferences, on the relationship between operational and strategic factors and customer loyalty. By examining how these factors interact with each other, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of guest behavior and preferences in the context of the Chinese hospitality sector.

Moreover, longitudinal studies could track changes in guest perceptions and behaviors over time to assess the long-term effectiveness of strategic management initiatives aimed at enhancing customer loyalty. By analyzing trends and patterns in guest satisfaction, loyalty, and repeat business, researchers can identify areas for continuous improvement and refinement of hotel management and marketing strategies.

Furthermore, comparative studies could compare the effectiveness of different loyalty-building strategies across various segments of the Chinese hospitality market, such as luxury hotels, budget accommodations, and boutique properties. By examining differences in guest preferences and expectations across these segments, researchers can provide tailored recommendations for hotel chains to optimize their loyalty-building efforts.

Finally, future research could explore the impact of emerging trends and technologies, such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and virtual reality, on guest loyalty within the Chinese hospitality sector. By leveraging these technologies to personalize guest experiences, anticipate needs, and deliver tailored services, hotel chains can enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty in innovative ways.

Overall, future research endeavors in this area have the potential to deepen the understanding of customer loyalty dynamics within the Chinese hospitality sector and provide actionable insights for hotel management and marketing practitioners striving to foster long-term relationships with guests.



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APPENDIX



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Questionnaires

The Influence of Hotel Chain Logistics on Customer Loyalty: A Case Study in the Chinese Hospitality Sector

Personal Information (Single choice)

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Age:

20-30 years old

31-40 years old

41-50 years old

51-60 years old

60 years old or older

3. Education

Below Bachelor's degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctoral degree

4. Monthly income

Less than 2,000 yuan

2,000-4,000 yuan

4,001-6,000 yuan

6,001-8,000 yuan

More than 8,000 yuan

4. Marital Status

Single

Married

Others

5. Occupation

Student

Employed full-time

Employed part-time

Self-employed

Retired

Unemployed

Others

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Part 2: Influential Factors

Please complete the questionnaire honestly based on your genuine thoughts and opinions. Indicate your level of agreement by marking a check (✓) in the corresponding column. Please provide responses for all the questions to ensure completion of the questionnaire. The options provided represent the degree to which you agree with your actual experiences and attitudes, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Influential Factors	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Brand Image					
The hotel chain maintains a consistent image across its different locations.					
The hotel chain is easily recognizable, and its brand is well-known in the market.					
The visual elements of the hotel chain, including its logo and design, contribute positively to its overall image.					
The hotel chain's commitment to social responsibility positively influences its brand image.					
The hotel chain is associated with exclusivity and a perception of luxury.					
Service Quality					
The hotel staff responded promptly to my requests.					
The hotel's services were consistent and dependable during my stay.					

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Influential Factors	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The hotel staff demonstrated understanding and empathy toward my needs and concerns.					
The hotel staff were competent, courteous, and credible in providing services.					
The information provided by the hotel staff was accurate and consistent throughout my stay.					
Logistics Communication Channels					
The information provided through the hotel's communication channels regarding logistics (e.g., check-in/out procedures, amenities) was clear and easy to understand.					
I found it easy to access logistics-related information through the hotel's communication channels.					
The hotel's communication channels effectively delivered timely and relevant information about logistics during my stay.					
Information provided through different communication channels (e.g., website, app, in-room systems) regarding logistics was consistent with each other.					
The interfaces of the communication channels used by the hotel for logistics information					

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Influential Factors	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
were user-friendly and easy to navigate.					
Sustainability Practices					
The hotel commits to sustainable logistics, including waste management and energy conservation.					
The hotel uses eco-friendly amenities, such as biodegradable toiletries.					
The hotel's recycling initiatives, such as waste separation, are effective in promoting sustainability.					
The hotel's efforts in water conservation, such as the use of efficient fixtures, are noticeable and appreciated.					
The hotel's energy conservation measures, such as energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems, are noticeable and contribute to its sustainability efforts.					
Transportation Accessibility					
The hotel's transportation services or nearby access to public transit make it easy for me to reach desired destinations.					
Shuttle services provided by the hotel are available.					

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Influential Factors	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The transportation options offered by the hotel meet my arrival and departure expectations.					
The hotel's proximity to transportation hubs (e.g., airports, train stations) meets my expectations.					
The hotel's transportation accessibility is effective in reaching popular destinations.					

Part 3: Customer Loyalty

Please complete the questionnaire honestly based on your genuine thoughts and opinions. Indicate your level of agreement by marking a check (✓) in the corresponding column. Please provide responses for all the questions to ensure completion of the questionnaire. The options provided represent the degree to which you agree with your actual experiences and attitudes, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Customer Loyalty	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In my heart, I prefer this hotel over others.					
I would recommend this hotel to my friends and family.					
I will positively promote this hotel in public.					
I would choose this hotel again for my next trip.					
I am likely to stay at this hotel again on my future trips even if					

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Customer Loyalty	Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
there are other options available.					



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