Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences

journal homepage: http://kjss.kasetsart.org

The relationship among impressive experiences, value perception, and visiting intentions of Chinese tourists toward accommodation under the new normal in Samui

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Article Info

Article history:
Received 03 December 2024
Revised 19 April 2025
Accepted 06 May 2025
Available online 12 November 2026

Keywords:
accommodation,
Chinese tourists,
impressive experience,
value perception,
visiting intention

Abstract

This study aims to develop a conceptual model that explains impressive experience, perceived value, and visiting intention to stay in a hotel of Chinese tourists to prepare for accommodation in Koh Samui District, Surat Thani, Thailand under the new normal context. The research introduces a novel perspective by integrating experiential and value-based components to better understand tourist decision-making in post-pandemic travel. A quantitative approach was employed using a structured questionnaire administered to Chinese tourists who had previously visited Thailand. Data were collected through an online platform using non-probability sampling techniques, including accidental and snowball sampling. The research utilized structural equation modeling to analyze relationships among the variables. The findings reveal that impressive experiences significantly influence the intention to stay in hotels under the new normal, with value perception serving as a key mediating factor. These insights offer implications for hospitality businesses aiming to enhance tourist satisfaction and adapt to evolving travel behaviors in the post-COVID era.

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https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2026.47.4.29
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Introduction

China has been a significant source of tourists to Thailand, with over 11 million visiting in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic. Chinese tourists averaged a 7.5-day stay, spending 6,118.41 baht daily, with a higher proportion participating in group tours (61.44%) than self-travel (38.56%) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020). Koh Samui, a favored destination, welcomed 334,099 Chinese tourists in 2019, arriving via direct flights from cities like Chengdu, Chongqing, and Xi'an, with additional access through Surat Thani Airport (Siam Rath Online, 2019). Koh Samui's hotel industry, comprising approximately 1,000 properties ranging from luxury resorts to budget accommodations, emphasizes unique experiences under SHA and SHA Plus safety protocols. However, questions remain about the effectiveness of these measures in rebuilding trust and encouraging Chinese tourists to return. Understanding Chinese tourists' decision-making, influenced by the pandemic, is crucial for designing memorable experiences. Operators must navigate uncertainties about how health and safety measures, combined with tailored service processes, can meet post-pandemic expectations. Bridging this gap requires further research into Chinese tourists' preferences and behaviors, ensuring Koh Samui remains competitive in the new normal.

The COVID-19 pandemic halted global tourism and reshaped tourist behavior, with increased emphasis on health safety and cautious decision-making regarding destinations and accommodations. Understanding customer needs is critical for developing effective marketing strategies. Research highlights the importance of creating impressive experiences, which positively impact guest satisfaction (Liu et al., 2016; Ren et al., 2016; Rust & Huang, 2014), service quality (Yoon & Lee, 2017), loyalty (Liu et al., 2016), brand reputation (Nasution et al., 2011), and perceived value (Alnawas & Hemsley-Brown, 2019). Additionally, customer experience management practices significantly enhance hotels' financial performance, including RevPAR and profitability (Kandampully & Hu, 2007). Service design that fosters positive experiences also strengthens competitiveness in the accommodation industry (Gomezelj, 2016). However, existing studies have predominantly focused on pre-pandemic conditions or general service contexts, often overlooking the nuanced behavioral changes brought about by the pandemic. Specifically, there is a lack of research examining how health-conscious travelers, particularly Chinese tourists, form perceptions of value and develop intentions to stay in accommodations within the new normal context. This represents a critical gap in the literature that must be addressed to support recovery and growth in destinations like Koh Samui.

Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the relationship among impressive experiences, value perception, and visiting intentions of Chinese tourists toward hotel accommodation in Koh Samui, Surat Thani, Thailand, under the new normal. By exploring these relationships, this research aims to provide actionable insights for accommodation providers seeking to enhance guest satisfaction and promote repeat visitation. The findings will support the design of experience-driven service models that respond to Chinese tourists' evolving needs and expectations, thereby strengthening the competitiveness of Samui and similar destinations in the post-pandemic tourism landscape. Academically, this study will make a significant contribution by proposing a novel conceptual framework that integrates the perspective of tourist experience with the context of the post-pandemic "new normal." Moreover, the findings will not only address an existing gap in marketing and tourist behavior literature but also offer practical implications for the development of service strategies and tourism promotion policies.

Literature Review

This study is grounded in Experiential Value Theory (Holbrook, 1999) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which together explain how experiences and perceptions shape tourists' decisions. Experiential Value Theory (EVT) emphasizes that consumers derive value from emotional, cognitive, and sensory experiences, not just practical benefits. This supports the path from impressive experiences to perceived value, particularly in the post-pandemic tourism context. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) explains how perceived value influences visiting intention through attitudes and behavioral control. Tourists who perceive high value are more likely to revisit or recommend the destination. By synthesizing insights from Experiential Value Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior, this study establishes a comprehensive theoretical basis that coherently connects experience design to value perception and subsequent behavioral intention.

Impressive Experience

The studies on creating a good experience are diverse, especially in the variables used to measure creating a good experience, which still differ depending on the context of the research. Alnawas and Hemsley-Brown (2019) studied the process of creating a good experience for customers through 7 elements: employees, learning, lifestyles, physical environment

design, and customer safety, with the goal of addressing customer desires, emotions, and satisfaction. In addition, creating an experience also requires marketing, operations, design, human resources, and strategies that are linked to today's technology and online media (Kandampully et al., 2018). A study on the creation of a specific type of experience in a budget hotel found that some factors that create an impressive customer experience are different from general hotels. These include tangible and emotional experiences, service delivery staff factors, and perceptions of beauty and location (Ren et al., 2016). There is also research that evaluates customer experience through emotions, including bonding and having fun (Liu et al., 2016). Pine and Gilmore (1998) classified customer experience into 4 majors as 4Es, including entertainment, education, aesthetics, and escapism. Guan et al. (2021) studied the customer stay experience in a full-service accommodation consisting of functional, affective, and social aspects. Bonfanti et al. (2021) identified seven components for creating safe hotel experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic: hygiene, work and service scape reorganization, technology adoption, wait time management, staff training, and enhanced communication. These measures shaped customer experiences through reassurance, quickness, intimacy, and proximity. However, the qualitative study focused solely on managers' perspectives, leaving service recipients' views unexplored.

Perceived Value

Perceived value or customer perceived value is another important element that marketers give importance to. Perceived value means the comparative assessment of the overall utility that customers/consumers receive from the cost or value paid in deciding to buy products or services that arise from knowing the perceived value. If customers/consumers receive benefits as expected, it will be expressed in the form of value (Lai, 2004). This is in line with Kotler and Keller (2012), where customer perceive value refers to the difference between the value that customers expect from the benefits and the costs, they pay for purchasing a product or service. In addition, perceived value may vary depending on the type or form of the product or service (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived value is not only a judgment of price, but also encompasses and includes other psychological factors (Jamal et al., 2011). Products and services are perceived to have more value for less, such as by receiving coupons or promotions for products while services are perceived to have more value for the service than the customer expected (Kuo et al., 2009). Luturlean et al. (2018) studied customer value perception through 4 elements, including rational, emotional, experiential, and spiritual elements including, emotion, experience, and spirit, while Alnawas and Hemsley-Brown (2019) studied the variable of customer value perception of hotel customers including value for money, worth the money spent comparing other, comparing price, time, effort.

To study the perception of value of this research, such was adapted from Alnawas and Hemsley-Brown (2019), including: 1) When I stay at a hotel that focuses on creating a new normal customer experience, I feel that I get value for money; 2) A hotel that focuses on creating a new normal customer experience will give me more value than other hotels that I have stayed at; 3) When considering factors such as price, time, safety, and other efforts, this hotel is a good place to stay; and 4) What do I get from a hotel that focuses on creating a new normal customer experience? I feel safe and warm.

Visiting Intention

Visiting Intention is an attitude that arises because of perception from various media including the hotel's own marketing communication strategies which forms a feeling of wanting to stay at that hotel. It is part of the behavior that arises from the perception process that affects attitude and behavior. Ajzen (1991) defined behavioral intention or Planned Behavior as the intention to do something to achieve the expected results, which is the result of perception, experience, including values, and norms. Intention is an important variable in predicting the behavior that will occur. The level of intention will be a motivator and affect the success of the behavior that will occur. If the level of intention is high, the chance of the behavior will be high. Past research has studied behavioral intention in various forms, with different indicators of behavioral intention. In the tourism industry, Kanthachai and Techamaneesathit (2015) studied the behavioral intention of tourists through the issues of willingness to use the service, recommending others to use the service, and returning to use the service again. It was found that the behavioral intention of tourists was at a high level overall. When considering each aspect, it was found that the aspect with the highest average value was recommending others to travel, followed by being happy and willing to travel. It was also found that service quality and image had a positive effect on behavioral intention.

Hotel research studies also have a variety of factors studied and issues used. Kim et al. (2012) studied whether green hotel measures affect hotel re-visit intentions. The results found that water reduction measures did not affect hotel stay intentions. Tsaur et al. (2023) studied factors affecting hotel re-stay. It was found that brand personality, self-congruence, and consumer affinity had a positive impact on customer intention to stay in a hotel. This study examined the intention to stay in a hotel

through 3 factors: 1) there is a high likelihood of staying in this hotel; 2) if there is a desire to stay, it will be chosen to stay in this hotel; and 3) it is certain that the hotel will be tried. Verma and Chandra (2018) studied the factors affecting the intention to stay in a green hotel using the Planned Behavior Theory. The results of the study found that attitude, self-norms and perceived behavioral control factors affect the intention to stay in a green hotel among the young generation of India. The study examined the intention by 3 elements including 1) Willingness to stay while traveling, 2) Plan to stay in this hotel if traveling, and 3) Willingness to try hard to stay in this hotel. Patwary et al. (2021) also studied the perception of environmental responsibility with attitude and visiting intention. The results found that for the perception of environmental responsibility, tourist attitudes are related to the visiting intention. They studied the intention to stay through four issues. Luturlean et al. (2018) studied the behavioral intention through the intention to come back and the opportunity to re-stay. The results found that the experience and the perception of value influence the repeat stay of hotel customers.

From the literature review that has been conducted on the visiting intention, in this research are the following 4 issues: intention to stay in this hotel when traveling to Samui (Tsaur et al., 2023; Verma & Chandra, 2018), planning to stay in this hotel when traveling to Samui (Tsaur et al., 2023; Verma & Chandra, 2018), effort to stay in this hotel when traveling to Samui (Verma & Chandra, 2018), and willing to pay more to stay in this hotel when traveling to Samui (Patwary et al., 2021).

The Relationship between Impressive Experiences, Perceived Value and Visiting Intention

Impressive experiences and visiting intention

Impressive experiences in hotels significantly influence guests' intentions to revisit or recommend the establishment. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) demonstrate that effective loyalty programs and positive guest experiences have a substantial impact on members' general satisfaction and their likelihood to revisit the hotel, illustrating the importance of both service quality and loyalty incentives in fostering repeat business and customer loyalty in hospitality contexts. Rather and Sharma (2016) emphasize that overall satisfaction with hotel stays is critical in shaping guests' intentions to return or recommend the hotel, linking satisfaction directly to future behaviors such as repeat visits and positive recommendations. Luturlean et al. (2018) underscore that positive travel experiences significantly boost tourists' intentions to revisit a destination, highlighting the pivotal role of enjoyable and memorable experiences in influencing return decisions. Guan et al. (2021) reported that customer experiences with full-service hotels are proposed to be categorized into functional, emotional, and social dimensions, with a chain effect from customer experience to brand trust and brand impact and brand loyalty. Brand engagement moderates the relationship between customer experience and brand trust and brand impact but not brand loyalty.

Impressive experiences and perceived value

Recent studies continue to highlight that customer experience plays a pivotal role in shaping perceived value. Positive customer experiences, characterized by personalized service, efficient processes, and emotional engagement, enhance customers' perceptions of the value they receive from a product or service (Foroudi et al., 2020). These experiences contribute to customers' overall satisfaction and loyalty, as they feel that the benefits received justify the costs incurred (Ho & Ko, 2020). Moreover, a study by Guan et al., (2022) underscores that improving various aspects of customer experience, such as convenience, reliability, and responsiveness, can directly influence customers' perceptions of value and their willingness to pay premium prices.

Perceived value and visiting intention

Perceived value plays a critical role in influencing visitors' intentions to revisit hotels. Studies indicate that when guests perceive a high value in their hotel experience—such as the quality of service, amenities offered, and overall experience—they are more likely to intend to revisit the hotel in the future (Chen & Tsai, 2007). This relationship underscores the importance of managing perceived value through personalized services, pricing strategies, and service quality enhancements to enhance guests' satisfaction and loyalty (Han & Hyun, 2020). Moreover, research by Kim and Han (2022) suggests that perceived value mediates the relationship between service quality and guests' behavioral intentions, highlighting its significant role in shaping guests' decisions to return to the same hotel.

Consequently, this research aims to confirm the relationships between these variables in the context of hotels following the pandemic situation, which differs significantly from previous contexts. Four hypotheses were proposed as follows:

H1: Impressive experiences under the new normal have a positive impact on accommodation intention under the new normal context

H2: Impressive experiences under the new normal have a positive impact on value perception under the new normal context

H3: Value perception under the new normal context has a positive impact on accommodation intention under the new normal context

H4: Impressive experiences under the new normal have a positive impact on accommodation intention under the new normal context through value perception under the new normal context

Methodology

This research is quantitative research, focusing on surveying people to confirm the situation and empirical data. Data were collected by surveying the attitudes of Chinese tourists to use the results to design accommodation to create an impressive experience, perception, and intention to stay in Koh Samui District, Surat Thani, Thailand.

Participants

This research is quantitative research, focusing on surveying people to confirm the situation and empirical data. Data were collected by surveying the attitudes of Chinese tourists to use the results to design accommodation to create an impressive experience, perception, and intention to stay in Koh Samui District, Surat Thani, Thailand.

The research population is Chinese tourists who have traveled to the country at least once and know the tourist attractions of Koh Samui which is an infinite population. The sample size uses the calculation formula for the unknown population of Cochran (1954) which specifies the confidence level at 95 percent and the acceptable error value at the significance level of .05 to obtain the sample size. The sample size is equal to 323 samples. To enhance representativeness, convenience and snowball sampling were used via online platforms to reach diverse participants across regions and demographics. Structural equation modeling has been criticized for its appropriate sample size. Nunnally (1967) suggested a rule of thumb, a ratio of 10 to 1 observed variable, which is considered a lower bound for the appropriate sample size. In addition, Kline (2011) stated that the number of samples depends on the complexity of the model and the number of observed variables used to measure the latent variables. The number of samples should be more than 200 and/or the number of samples should be approximately 5–10 per parameter estimated in the analysis. In this research, the number of observed variables is estimated to be 36, so the appropriate number of samples is 360. Therefore, at least 360 samples were collected, and finally 398 samples were achieved. This study used non-probability sampling and convenience sampling by publicizing through online media in China for those who have traveled to Thailand at least once and know about Koh Samui tourist attractions, and this was combined with recommendation and snowball sampling technique if there were friends or acquaintances with such characteristics to make data collection faster.

Measurement

The research instrument is a questionnaire. It consists of five sections: 1) Personal factors are closed-ended questions, consisting of questions about gender, age, education level, occupation, average income (yuan per month), using a nominal scale to measure data, including gender, occupation. An ordinal scale to measure data, including age, education level, and average income (yuan per month). 2) Creating an impressive experience during a stay under the new normal is a closed-ended question using an interval scale. The items used to measure service quality under the new normal context are surveyed using the Likert Ranking Scale. The opinions were divided into 7 levels: 7 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree, and 5) additional suggestions were open-ended questions.

The development of the research instrument was conducted through three qualified persons to examine the quality of the content validity of each item and considering the consistency between each variable question that needs to be measured by finding the index of consistency (IOC) value greater than or equal to .67 as a question in the questionnaire. After that, it was sent to the Human Ethics Committee, Suratthani Rajabhat University, with the Human Ethics Number SRU-EC2022/091. Then, the translation was done from Thai to Chinese using Back Translation techniques, i.e., the first translator translated from Thai to Chinese. The second translator translated from Chinese to Thai again to ensure that the content was consistent in both Thai and Chinese. A pilot test was conducted to check the reliability of the questionnaire and variables, including the development and improvement of sentences to make them more understandable. Testing 33 sets of questionnaires (Connelly, 2008), which is 10 percent of the sample size studied in this research, to find the reliability of the questionnaire (Cronbach alpha) which must be .60 or more. By testing with a sample group that is not the same as the actual data collection of 398 sets, the tests results of the reliability of the entire questionnaire set, consisting of 60 questions, were .966. The variables included the creation of an overall impressive experience, which was .985, the perception of value from staying at the

hotel, .936, and the intention to stay at the hotel, .960. Data collection was conducted directly via online media such as Baidu and wjx.cn in China, which are popular online media platforms among Chinese people (Gong & Verboord, 2020).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via wjx.cn and shared through Baidu and WeChat travel groups, which are popular online media platform among Chinese people (Gong & Verboord, 2020), using convenience and snowball sampling. Respondents were screened for prior travel to Thailand and invited to share the survey link. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and the survey remained open for four weeks to ensure diverse responses from the target population. Prior to applying the structural equation model, the data were meticulously checked for several conditions: missing values, coding errors, normal distribution via kurtosis and skewness, multi-collinearity, and the Cronbach's Alpha of each construct. Confirmatory factor analysis, both first and second order, was conducted initially to verify the quality of the measurement model in terms of convergent and discriminant validity for all latent constructs in the study. Subsequently, the structural equation model was analyzed. Convergent validity was indicated by high indicator loadings, composite reliability greater than .7, an average variance extracted (AVE) of .5 or higher, and a T-test value greater than 1.96 (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity, which refers to the extent to which variables are distinct and uncorrelated, was assessed by comparing the AVE and the maximum shared variance (MSV), ensuring that MSV was less than AVE. The goodness of fit indices was evaluated using several criteria: χ^2/df less than 3, GFI greater than .9, CFI greater than .9, and RMSEA less than .07 (Hair et al., 2019).

Results

Most of the sample were female, aged 20–29, living in Guangdong Province, holding a bachelor's degree, working as a private employee, with an income of 3,001–4,500 yuan per month. Most of the sample traveled to Thailand once, traveling to Bangkok, staying in hotels with prices lower than 1,500 baht per night.

Data examination is in accordance with the conditions of structural equation analysis. The data must be normally distributed, with a skewness value not exceeding 3 and a kurtosis value not exceeding 10. It was found that the data had a skew between .87 and -3.01 and a kurtosis of .89 and -9.81, which is normally distributed. In addition, the data must not have Multicollinearity, which is the correlation between more than 2 independent variables. Considering the correlation value, it was found to be .307–.717, which does not exceed .8 Therefore, the data are suitable for structural equation analysis.

The variables used in the confirmatory factor analysis consisted of 1) the second-order latent variable and Chinese Customer Experience (CCE). It consists of 7 latent variables: emotions and feelings (EMF), atmosphere and environment (ATE), service staff interaction (INP), guest interaction (ING), safety (SAS), products and amenities (PRO), and service process (SEP). 2) the perceived value under the new normal context (Customer perceive value: CPV). 3) the intention to stay under the new normal context (Visiting Intention: VI).

The results of the validation test and model adjustment showed that the model was in good agreement with the empirical data. It considered 1) Chi-square statistic value (χ2 /df) 1.928 which shows that the model is consistent with the empirical data at a good level when the χ2 /df value is less than 2.00 (Bollen, 1989; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010); 2) Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) .870; 3) Comparative Fit Index (CFI) .977, where Schumacker & Lomax (2010) proposed that the CFI index is greater than 0.95 (CFI > .95). It shows that the model is consistent with the empirical data at a very good level; and 4) Root Mean Square error of Approximation (RMSEA) .048, which should be less than .05 (RMSEA < .05) (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010).

The structural equation has a weight value of the observed variables of more than .5 for all with values between .731–.973. The standard error (Standard Error: SE.) is between .020–.093. In addition, the test results are significant with the *t*-test statistic (*t*-value). All observed variables are statistically significant at .05 and *t*-value is more than 1.96 for all variables.

From Table 1, it was found that the reliability of the structural equation model (Construct Reliability: C.R.) was very close to zero, with values between .901–.958. The standard loading value was more than .5, with values between .731–.973. The C.R. value > AVE for all variables. When considering the convergent validity, it was found that the structural equation model was at a good level. The items were able to measure the latent variables very well, as seen from the AVE value, which was more than .5, with values of .754–.874. The discriminant validity was verified, with all AVE values > MSV.

Table 1 Validity of the measurement model

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	VI	CPV	CCE
VI	.901	.754	.724	.943	.868		
CPV	.954	.874	.724	.961	.851	.935	
CCE	.958	.766	.716	.967	.764	.846	.875

Note: Goodness of fit : $\chi 2$ /df = 1.928, GFI = .870, CFI = .977, RMSEA = .048

The results of the structural equation analysis to test the hypothesis found that all 4 hypotheses were accepted: H1) Impressive experiences under the new normal have a positive impact on accommodation intentions under the new normal context. It was found that impressive experiences have a positive impact on accommodation intentions under the new normal context. The correlation value was .185, which was significant at .05. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. H2) Impressive experiences under the new normal have a positive impact on value perception under the new normal context. The correlation value is 0.844, which is significant at .000. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. H3) Value perception under the new normal context has a positive impact on accommodation intention under the new normal context. The correlation value is .839, which is significant at .000; therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. H4) Impressive experiences under the new normal have a positive impact on accommodation intention under the new normal context through value perception under the new normal context. The correlation value is .708, which is significant at .000. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

In Figure 1, the intention to stay in the new normal context of Chinese tourists (Visiting Intention: VI) can be created through an impressive experience under the new normal context (Chinese Customer Experience: CCE). It will result in the perception of value under the new normal context (Customer Perceived Value: CPV). Creating an impressive experience will affect the perception of value and the intention to stay in the hotel more than directly affecting the intention to stay in the hotel. Creating memorable experiences under the new normal for Chinese tourists involves seven components: emotions and feelings (EMF), atmosphere and environment (ATE), guest-service personnel interactions (INP), guest-room interactions (ING), safety (SAS), products and amenities (PRO), and service process (SEP).

Discussion

The model of Chinese customers' intention to stay should be defined through creating an impressive experience leading to the perception of value of staying under the new normal context. This is consistent with the behavioral intention theory (Ajzen, 1991). Regarding perceived value, when customers perceive the value received, it will result in good future behavior or behavioral intention, such as telling others, referring others, and including future intention to stay. In addition, organizing an impressive experience for customers will affect the intention to revisit through the perception of good value (Luturlean et al., 2018). Rather and Sharma (2016) found that the dimensions of customer experience have a positive influence on customer satisfaction and commitment. Guan et al. (2021) reported that customer experience with a full-service hotel has an impact on customers' trust in the brand and affects trust in the brand.

Creating an impressive experience through 7 factors that are related to creating an experience in the new normal context in 5 levels are: interaction between guests and service staff. Followed by safety, interaction between guests, service process, and products and facilities. Good interaction between guests and service staff is still the most important thing to create an impressive experience for Chinese customers. This is consistent with Sombut (2021) who found that customer experience in terms of atmosphere, signs/symbols, and employee attitudes affects the loyalty of 4–5-star hotels. In terms of employee attitudes, this includes issues of care and customer service. The staff is the first step in creating an experience and impression, as well as the intention to stay. In addition, under the new normal, staff can also make customers feel safe in their stay. In addition, Yu (2019) found that staff service will result in customers' loyalty and repeat use. Cetin & Dincer (2014) found that social interaction of service staff is an expression of staff attitude and affects customer loyalty. In addition, Cetin & Walls (2016) found good customer experience in staying includes interaction with staff consisting of professionalism, attitude, and customer-focused service (Customization).

In addition, Chinese customers continue to prioritize safety in service provision under the new normal. Safety concerns cover feelings, property, guest and staff health and safety, and accommodation hygiene certification standards. Public health safety is an issue that influences accommodation selection decisions during the COVID - 19 pandemic (Atadil & Lu, 20221). It continues to be an issue in the new normal. The components of creating a good experience for hotel customers have changed according to the context. In 2009, the measurement

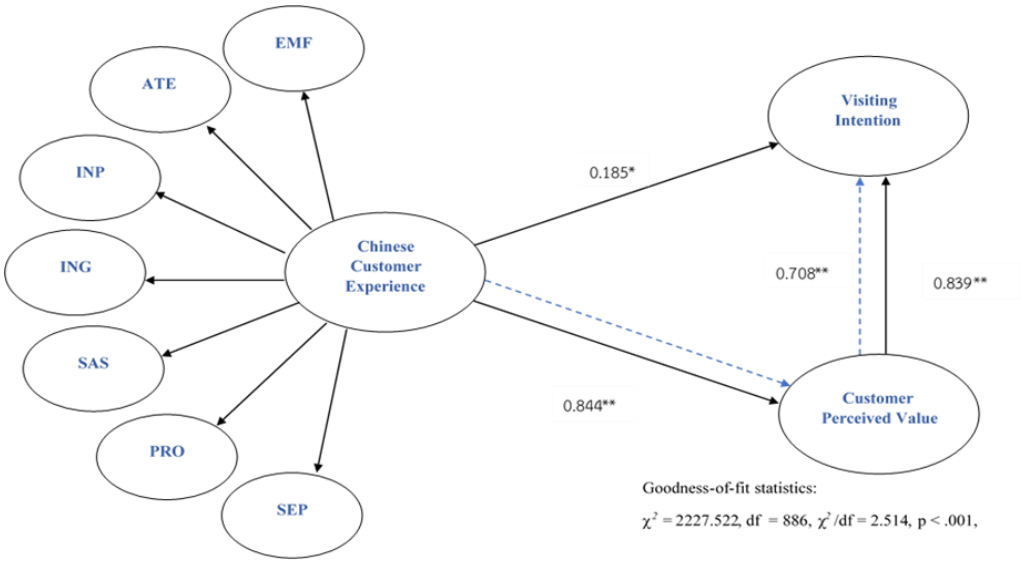


Figure 1 Structural equation model analysis

components still did not include safety issues, but focused on the environment, accessibility, benefits, and motivation (Knutson et al., 2009).

The results found that Chinese customers have a high intention to stay when the hotel focuses on creating a customer experience under the new normal SHA or SHAplus. When traveling to Koh Samui, they try and are willing to pay more to stay at a hotel with such characteristics. This is for their own safety when staying during their travel. The results of past studies found that the risk of the epidemic has a negative effect on the decision to choose to use the hotel's services (Peco-Torres et al., 2021).

Practical Implication

Accommodation operators should focus on creating good experiences to create value perceptions. It will lead to the intention to stay for Chinese customers under the new normal. The three factors that should be emphasized in creating good experiences are the interaction between customers and service staff, safety, and interaction between guests. To create good interactions between customers, accommodation operators should emphasize that staff are friendly, attentive and take good care of guests, to be ready to provide services quickly, strictly follow COVID - 19 prevention measures, and provide professional service, respectively. This may involve training workshops, designing work processes according to COVID - 19 prevention measures, and including creating positive incentives to encourage employees to provide professional service, such as outstanding service awards, customer appreciation awards, etc. For enhancing service safety under the new normal context, Operators should emphasize measures to make customers feel safe when staying at the hotel, prioritizing guest safety, having strict security measures, having measures to take care of assets and lost items during the stay at the hotel, having good hygiene and safety measures for guests, having good hygiene and safety measures for employees, and having hygiene and safety certification standards such as SHA, SHA plus.

In addition, Chinese customers still attach importance to the interaction between guests, including the issues of other guests being the most polite and respectful to others. Other guests respect the privacy of others. All guests strictly follow the hotel's hygiene and safety measures. Other guests do not make noise and follow the hotel's rules. This is quite difficult to control. However, operators should manage measures to create good interactions between guests, such as providing explanations during check-in, having English/Chinese signs along the corridors or in rooms, managing different service times, checking in or out from rooms, etc. Stimulating stay intention can be done by creating an impressive experience through the perception of value of staying. The impressive experience has a greater impact on creating value perception than the intention to stay. In addition, the components for creating an impressive experience for Chinese customers under the new normal consists of 7 factors: guest-service staff interaction, safety, guest-to-guest interaction, service process,

products and facilities, atmosphere and environment, and emotions and feelings.

According to the consumer behavior model, future research should focus on stimulating the intention to stay. It also should study other related factors such as marketing promotion, government policy, etc. In addition, it may be possible to study specific age groups, such as working-age people with potential for travel and purchasing power, or the elderly, whose proportion and tendency are to grow, and who are also a group with high purchasing power.

Theoretical Implications

This research extends the Theory of Planned Behavior by incorporating the concept of experiential value into the post-pandemic hospitality context. It confirms that perceived value mediates the relationship between experience and intention to stay, providing a stronger theoretical basis for understanding behavioral patterns in high-risk travel environments. Additionally, by identifying seven dimensions of experience under the new normal including safety and peer interaction, this study updates and enriches existing models of customer experience (Knutson et al., 2009) to better reflect post-pandemic realities.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendation

While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited to Chinese tourists with prior experience in Thailand, using a cross-sectional design and self-reported data. Future research should consider longitudinal approaches or experimental designs to test causal relationships. Additional variables such as marketing strategies, destination branding, and government policy incentives should also be examined. Segmenting the target population such as working-age travelers or seniors with high purchasing power, may offer further insights into differentiated behavioral drivers across age groups.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

Fundings

This research was granted by the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT). I also would like to thank Suratthani Rajabhat University for supporting the facilities in doing the research.

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