

**A case study of customer motivation in boutique hotels  
in Xiamen, China using push-pull theory**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to understand push and pull factors that motivate guests to choose to stay at a boutique hotel in Xiamen, China. The concept of boutique hotels and their rapid expansion worldwide has been noticed by the industry and academics for several decades. The research objective of this study was to establish a framework for push and pull motivation factors for consumers to stay at local boutique hotels in Xiamen. This study represents the first attempt to use push and pull theory, which has been widely discussed in tourism literature, to ascertain motivation of guests to visit boutique hotels. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to present boutique hotel guest profile. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to reveal the underlying themes of motivation reported by respondents. The principal component analysis revealed three factors in push motivation and two factors in pull motivation. More specifically, “Uniqueness-seeking”, “Interpersonal experience”, and “Social networking” were derived from push motivation, whereas “Decoration & theme”, “Site value” were revealed from pull motivation. This study also identified the difference across socio-demographic features of the guests in boutique hotels on push and pull motivation factors. Significant differences on the push and pull factors were found in age, marital status, and income. The findings of this research may provide useful information regarding customer motivation factors which could benefit hotel managers for designing marketing strategies such as targeting, packaging, and advertisement.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the Study**

During the past two decades, a growing number of travelers have become tired of staying in chain hotels that accommodate a large number of guests. Many travelers have begun switching to book their lodging at new and more intimate types of hotels (Samadi, 2012). This study was conducted to reveal a customer profile of boutique hotels, and explore customer motivation to stay in the boutique hotels, thus providing practitioners in the hospitality industry strategies for the design of products and services as well as customer communication.

### **Problem Statement**

Since the 1980s, there has been a rapid development of boutique hotels to provide a more intimate type of lodging. Van Hartesvelt (2006) described a boutique hotel as “something like art, hard to define, but you know it when you see it” (p. 32). Boutique hotels represent a “one-of-a-kind lodging experience” with the emphasis on stylistic uniqueness, high standards, and individual interaction with guests (McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Van Hartesvelt, 2006). Horner and Swarbrooke (2005) identified four distinguishing features of a boutique hotel, including: (1) a relatively smaller structure with a more intimate feeling; (2) an individual identity despite the presence of a “soft brand” in some circumstances; (3) modern styles developed by key designers to generate new concepts; and (4) personalized

service. Overall, previous studies have widely concurred that boutique hotels incorporate the features of intimate design, individual or luxurious environment and quality services (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006; Lim & Endean, 2009; McNeill, 2009). Van Hartesvelt (2006) further noted that boutique hotels should be rated as 4-star or above, provide food service on the premises, and have room numbers ranging from 20–150.

Previous studies on boutique hotels have been limited, focusing primarily on a business perspective through interviews conducted with hotel managers (e.g., Lim & Endean, 2009). However, sporadic research has been carried out to assess boutique hotel operations from the customers' viewpoint. McIntosh and Siggs (2005) conducted in-depth interviews with 19 hosts and 30 guests at boutique accommodation establishments in Nelson, a Southern Island in New Zealand to fill the gap.

Understanding guests' motivation is a critical issue in the hospitality industry. Olga (2009) observed that boutique hotels in the U.S. have significantly outperformed other luxury hotels on all dimensions. Hospitality practitioners have noted that guests are still motivated to pay for boutique hotel nights despite hard economic times (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983). Why have boutique hotels weathered the storm better than others? Identifying motivation that drive guests to choose boutique hotels could enable hospitality marketers to understand more clearly their customers' needs, and better tailor hotel products and services for the boutique hotel segment. Furthermore, as a segment of the hotel industry, boutique hotels should be

able capitalize on this importance, and modify their marketing and advertisement strategy according to the motivation of their customers.

The push-pull concept has been applied to understand why people travel. More importantly, this theory has supplied a framework for researching customer motivation by introducing two sets of motivation: (1) customers are pushed into making decisions by internal forces; and (2) they are pulled into certain decisions by external forces such as destination attributes (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Jang & Cai, 2002; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). In other words, push motivation act as internal energy for an individual to increase one's desire to make a purchase or travel, whereas pull motivation attract a customer externally and influence what the customer chooses, given the initial desire to purchase or travel (Jang & Wu, 2006). By applying the push and pull factor theory, previous scholars have identified the forces that underlie the dimensions and structure of customer motivation in different segments of the hospitality and tourism industry (Jang & Cai, 2002; Yuan & McDonald, 1990; Zhang & Lam, 1999).

### **Lodging Industry in China**

As generally recognized, the hospitality industry in China has experienced dramatic development since 1978, when economic reform was initiated. The development of the lodging sector has mirrored the rapid economic transition of the country in general. According to records compiled by the China National Tourism Administration, there were 13,537 hotels, star 1-5, in 2013 (China National Tourism Administration, 2013), and this

number has continued to increase.

The modern lodging industry has been developing for more than 30 years. In the early 1980s, international hotel groups entered China forming management contracts and joint ventures. The first management contract was reached in 1982 between the Hong Kong-based Peninsular Hotel Group and co-owners of the Beijing Jian Guo Hotel. Global groups have further extended the lodging market with management contracts for select upscale and luxury hotels (Gu, Ryan, & Yu, 2012). After witnessing the success of early practices in management contracts and joint ventures, global groups continued to expand and accelerate their business to international metropolises in China, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. During the past 10 years, these international chain lodging ventures have become saturated in the main cities; thus, greater attempt has been made to initiate hotels in smaller cities in China, such as Xiamen (Gu et al., 2012).

During the past 30 years, domestic name-brand hotels have also experienced rapid development. In 2011, the top 30 domestic hotel brands reached a total of 426,647 rooms (Gu et al., 2012). Domestic name-brand hotels are not only seen in several main cities, but also many small cities. Many domestic hotel brands that were initiated in specific small cities further expanded to other regions of China (Gu et al., 2012). Intensive competition in the lodging market has propelled businesses to engage in product differentiation and target niche market segments. This has led to the rise of boutique, themed, and resort hotels as well as many other forms of accommodation to meet new customer demands.

Numerous previous studies have investigated the development of the lodging industry in China's main cities. Gu et al. (2012) summarized the development the Chinese hotel industry from 1980 to 2012 in a group of main cities, and other scholars have interpreted the investment of multinational hotels in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou (Guillet, Zhang & Gao, 2011); other studies have explored the geographic distribution of hotels in a number of metropolises in China (Zhang, Guillet, & Gao, 2012). However, the current author has noted there is a paucity of research focused on the hospitality industry in relatively smaller cities in China that specifically addresses boutique hotels.

### **Boutique hotels in Xiamen**

The current study focused on Xiamen city as the investigation site. Xiamen city, also known as Amoy, is located on the Southeast coast of Fujian Province in China, 250 kilometers across the South China Sea from Taiwan. Xiamen was one of the first two cities that opened to Western countries as treaty ports in 1840s. In 1984, the State Council of China authorized Xiamen to become a Special Economic Zone, with privileges of policy regarding administrative freedom, foreign investment, economic development, infrastructure, city planning, and import/export trade. Since then, Xiamen has attracted a significant number of international investors as well as tourists. The history of Xiamen explains the amalgamation of Eastern and Western cultures in the city (Honggen, 1997). The cultural uniqueness is also exhibited in the lodging sector in the form of architecture, service, and other aspects of the city (Honggen, 1997).

Nevertheless, the distribution of hotel locations is uneven across Xiamen. Bégin (2000) revealed that a greater number of lodging businesses have located downtown as well as areas nearby tourism attractions. The boutique hotels in Xiamen are all categorized as 2-4 star hotels, with 37 self-identifying as boutique hotels. The authors noted that 26 satisfied the criteria for boutique hotels as suggested by Horner and Swarbrooke (2005). Although the number of hotels that are identified as boutique is limited in Xiamen, the architecture and atmosphere of many boutique hotels uniquely exhibit the blending of Eastern and Western culture. Therefore, the present author selected Xiamen as the study site to investigate customer motivation to seek and visit boutique hotels in this city.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate push and pull factors that motivate consumers to patronize boutique hotels in Xiamen, China. The specific objectives were to:

1. Develop a customer profile of boutique hotels;
2. Identify the primary themes of pull and push factors that motivate customers to visit boutique hotels; and
3. Explore differences on the identified push and pull motivation factors across demographic variables of customers to boutique hotels.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study offers significant theoretical and practical contributions for the hospitality

industry. From a theoretical perspective, the study applied push-pull theory to investigate customer motivation in the context of boutique hotels. Very few previous studies have investigated customer motivation regarding boutique hotels; thus, the present research may be considered as a pioneer in studies targeting niche markets. Discussions of customer motivation regarding boutique hotels may enrich the knowledge body of push-pull theory. From practical perspective, the study identified the drive for customers to patronize boutique hotels, thus providing practitioners in the hospitality industry strategies for the design of products and services as well as customer communication.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides a review of the literature on boutique hotels and push-pull factor theory. The first section begins with a review of boutique hotel industry worldwide and provides a discussion of boutique hotel features. Then push-pull theory is introduced by defining two categories of factors: push versus pull.

### **Boutique Hotels**

The most impressive boutique hotels as viewed by the general public are the famous flagship W hotels (Starwood) that are located worldwide in large metropolises. However, because of the size of W hotels and the background of Starwood, a very limited number of scholars have included W hotels within the scope of the boutique hotel industry (Blank, 1999). Majority of scholars have defined boutique hotels by identifying their distinguishing features, such as private ownership, relatively small in size, design oriented to interact with guests individually, and absence of duplication, with each focused on a certain theme or ambiance (e.g., Aliukeviciute, 2011; Henderson, 2011; Lim & Endean, 2009; McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Olga, 2009). By emphasizing stylistic uniqueness, high standards, and individual interaction with guests (McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Van Hartesvelt, 2006), boutique hotels have established a unique identity of their own in the hotel industry.

The importance of boutique hotels in lodging industry has attracted the attention of hospitality scholars since the late 1990s. Blank (1999) suggested boutique hotels in the U.S.

have developed dramatically since the 1990s. In 1999, among 2.5 million hotel rooms occupied nationwide on an average day, approximately 15,000 structures were classified as boutique hotels. Since 2000, more scholars have investigated boutique hotels worldwide. McIntosh and Siggs (2005) investigated the impact of customer s' experience on their satisfaction and benefits realized during their stay in boutique hotels. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 19 hosts and 30 guests at boutique accommodation establishments in Nelson, an Island in the South of New Zealand. Their results confirmed the importance of the emotive aspects of the experiences on customer satisfaction with boutique hotels. Five key experiential dimensions for the success of boutique accommodations were identified, including unique, personalized, homely, quality, and value added. McIntosh and Siggs (2005) suggested that boutique accommodation show distinct features as opposed to traditional hotels.

Lim and Endean (2009) attempted to identify the aesthetic and operational features of boutique hotels in the U.K. They assessed 15 consortia recognized as operating boutique hotels in the U.K. by several authoritative sources. Through scrutinizing the website of each hotel by content analysis and interviewing the hotel managers, the authors identified the common features of boutique hotels in the U.K., which include small size, comprised of less than 100 rooms; not part of a large chain; generally located in urban or city centers; have an historical or other interesting aspects associated with the building; personal service; facilities; and 3-5 star ratings. Lim and Endean (2009) suggested that the majority of boutique hotels in

the U.K. are not privately owned, which are different from the findings of studies conducted at other locations (Henderson, 2011; McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Olga, 2009; Rogerson, 2010). Olga (2009) discussed three primary features of boutique hotels in the U.S., including: (1) style, distinction, warmth, and intimacy; (2) outstanding and personalized service that connect the guests and hotel staff; and (3) target customers who are in their early 20s to mid-50s, with mid-to-upper-incomes. Olga (2009) further discussed the characteristics of boutique hotels in different locations. For example, boutique hotels in resort destinations are relatively exotic, small, and intimate as compared to those in downtown areas.

Henderson (2011) discussed the development and trends, as well as the features of boutique hotels in Singapore. Many old buildings have been converted to boutique hotels, and reveal a combination of modern design and traditional architectural heritage. Henderson (2011) indicated boutique hotel is a developmental trend in Southeast Asia. Rogerson (2010) investigated the emergence and development of boutique hotels in South Africa. The boutique hotels in South Africa address customers' quality of experience by improving design, ambience, and offerings of personalized service. However, Rogerson (2010) noted that the lack of standards applied by tourism governmental departments or trade organizations has created barriers for the further development of boutique hotels in South Africa.

### **Customer Motivation**

Motivation is a state of need or a condition that drives an individual toward certain

types of actions that lead to satisfaction (Moutinho, 2000). Mook (1996) also defined motivation as the cause of human behavior. Motivation has been widely used to discuss customer drive to a tourism destination (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Jang & Cai, 2002; Jang & Wu, 2006; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). Crompton (1979) attempted to conceptualize motives for pleasure vacation travelers by identifying two groups of motives. The travel motivation of Taiwanese seniors was investigated by Jang and Wu (2006). Their results showed that health status, and positive and negative affects significantly contribute to the travel motivation of Taiwanese seniors. Yuan and McDonald (1990) examined cross-cultural motivation and found that people from each of the four countries (Japan, France, West Germany, and the U.K.) travel to satisfy their distinct needs. Cha, McCleary, and Uysal (1995) investigated the travel motivation of Japanese overseas travelers using factor-cluster analysis. The study revealed six distinct motivation factors: relaxation, knowledge, adventure, travel bragging, family, and sports. Furthermore, by using cluster analysis, they established three motivation-based market segments: sports seekers, novelty seekers, and family/relaxation seekers. Jang and Cai (2002) suggested that motivational factors vary from country to country in an international tourism setting after a review of tourism motivation literature. Therefore, the present author surmised that studies on travel motivation should have the target customer segment and location set.

### **Push-pull Motivation Theory**

Push-pull theory has been widely used in previous studies to explain motivation (e.g.,

Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Cha et al., 1995). Push factors describe the drive for an individual to participate in touristic activities or the internal “igniter” that propels the tourist to travel outside of his/her everyday environment (Crompton, 1979). Pull factors, on the other hand, are the forces that attract tourists to choose a specific tourism product or service (Cha et al., 1995; Crompton, 1979). More details of push and pull factors are discussed as follows.

Crompton (1979) first identified push motives (escape, self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, kinship-enhancement, and social interaction) and pull motives (novelty and education). Since Crompton’s initial empirical efforts, many studies have attempted to determine push and pull motivational factors in different settings (e.g., Cha et al., 1995; Yuan & McDonald, 1990; Zhang & Lam, 1999). Some well-identified push factors include push motives such as knowledge-seeking, relaxation, family togetherness. Pull factors consider the natural and historic environment, cost, facilities, safety, and accessibility.

## **Push**

The motivation to spend time and money in leisure tourism could be described as either anomie or ego-enhancement (Dann, 1981). Anomie motivation considers the need to stay away or escape from one’s daily routine whereas ego-enhancement is the need for recognition and status that can be gained through tourism activities. Iso-Ahola (1982) identified two basic dimensions of touristic behavior: escaping and seeking. These two dimensions impact an individual’s travel behavior, and are used to explain tourist purchase behavior and destination choice. For example, a tourist may choose to take a trip to escape

from his/her daily life and seek psychological rewards, either personal or interpersonal (e.g., friendship building or novelty seeking). These motivational factors may explain individuals' escapism behavior and destination choice.

Several previous studies have investigated push factors to seek diverse tourism destinations. Bogari, Crowther, and Marr (2003) revealed nine push factors for tourists to visit Saudi Arabia: cultural value, utilitarian, knowledge, social, economical, family togetherness, interest, relaxation and convenience of facilities. Moreover, the authors found significant differences in motivation factors across demographic groups. Bansal and Eiselt (2004) explored several domains of motivation, such as climate (atmosphere or environment), relaxation, adventure, personal reasons, and educational motivation. Climate used in this sense refers to escape from a mundane environment whereas relaxation may be used to describe having a good time or a romantic experience. The adventure is identified as a motive for novelty and curiosity, and personal reasons may include prestige, enhancement of relations, or social interaction. In addition, educational motives may refer to the desire to experience other cultures.

Gunasekaran and Anandkumar (2012) identified the factors that lead tourists to choose alternative accommodation including commercial homes, bed and breakfast, and guest houses. The study location was the city of Pondicherry, a heritage coastal town in India, which has experienced a spurt in the growth of alternative accommodations. The authors pointed out that "homely atmosphere", "value for money", "local touch", and "guest-host

relationship” influence tourists to choose alternative accommodations. Factor analysis was used to examine the factors of accommodation choices.

## **Pull**

Pull factors are a result of the attractiveness of the features and attributes of a particular destination. Crompton (1979) identified novelty and education as a significant pull factor. Yuan and McDonald (1990) added budget, culture and history, wilderness, ease of travel, cosmopolitan environment, facilities and hunting to the profile of pull factors to tourism destinations. Several studies have used factor analysis to identify pull factors to different destinations (e.g., Turnbull & Uysal 1995; Uysal & Jurowski 1994). Sirakaya and McLellan (1997) investigated 56 destinations and identified eight significant pull factors, including local hospitality and services, cost and convenience, secure environment, change in daily life environment, recreation and sporting activities, entertainment, shopping services and personal and historical connections. Hanqin and Lam (1999) adopted a model based on push and pull factors as the foundation framework, and the results indicated that the importance of push and pull factors in motivating Chinese travelers is different from that found in previous studies. Hanqin and Lam (1999) suggested that mainland Chinese travelers basically looked for a unique, modernized, friendly, and convenient place for holidays in Hong Kong. In addition, demographic characteristics of tourists from Mainland China may also have an influence on their motivation to destinations.

A few studies have investigated customer motivation in the lodging industry. A recent

study was conducted to identify the push and pull factors in entrepreneurs' motivation to start up small- and medium-size businesses in the tourism industry in Malaysia (Ahmad, Jabeen, & Khan, in press). Gunasekaran and Anandkumar (2012) identified pull factors of choosing alternative accommodations, including commercial homes, bed and breakfast, and guest houses by using factor analysis.

More specifically related to the context of boutique hotels, Lim and Endean (2009) pointed out that unique personal services motivate customers to patron boutique hotels. Olga (2009) noted that boutique hotels in the U.S. have significantly outperformed other luxury hotels in many perspectives, such as distinction, warmth, intimacy, and outstanding and personalized service. Henderson (2011) suggested that heritage buildings of boutique hotels could be an attraction for customers.

The studies mentioned above have discussed many features or characteristics of boutique hotels that drive customers to patronize them, but have not clearly indicated which are pull or push factors directing customers to choose boutique hotels. To fill the research gap, the present study investigated the push and pull factors influencing customer motivation choose boutique hotels. Based on previous studies of push and pull factors in the tourism and lodging industry, this author identified potential motivation factors which may be applicable to the context of boutique hotels.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to understand push and pull motivation factors of guests who choose to stay at boutique hotel in Xiamen city. The research objective of the present study was to reveal a construct for push and pull motivation factors to stay at local boutique hotels in Xiamen. This chapter includes a discussion of the development and modification of motivation factors, followed by an explanation of instrument and data collection procedure. Exploratory factor analysis, as the primary statistical analysis method, was also conducted.

### **Institutional Review Board Approval**

Prior to conducting this study, a research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Iowa State University for approval to conduct research with human subject. The study was declared exempt for research purposes because all data were anonymous and there was no direct contact with the respondents. A copy of the approval is shown in Appendix A.

### **Motivation Factors**

#### **Push**

Five potential motivation factors were used as measurement tool in the survey used in this research. The primary push factors were adopted in the following categories:

*Seeking novelty* is a push factor identified by Yuan and McDonald (1990) that refers to escaping for novelty, and seeking a different climate. In this study, seeking novelty it describes the customers' motivation to get away from traditional hotels and pursue distinct features, themes and the unique buildings of boutique hotels.

*Fulfilling prestige* has been widely discussed as a push factor to destinations, and addresses the notion that tourists are motivated to pursue prestige, increase social status, during a travel experience, such as flying first class or staying in luxury hotels (e.g, Crompton, 1979; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). In the present study, fulfilling prestige illustrates customers' desire to impress relatives, stay in historic/artistic places, and enhance social status gained from experiencing the accommodations provided by boutique hotels.

*Comfort, relaxation, home, and privacy:* Bansal and Eiselt (2004) noted that comfort, relaxation, home and privacy are factors in which customers seek a psychologically peaceful place to relax, or pursue a home-like experience. In this study, the present author identified boutique hotels as providing comfort, relaxation, home and privacy as relaxation, escaping from dairy routine, private, and comfort of staying in a place that is just like home.

*Non-parallel experience and guest relationship* was introduced by Bansal and Eiselt (2004) as the desire for adventure. Apart from novelty and curiosity, experiencing something that has not been duplicated can be viewed as adventure (Lundberg, 1971; Shoemaker, 1994). Non-parallel experience and guest relationship in boutique hotels were interpreted as receiving individualized service and interacting with other guests and staff during a hotel

stay.

*Social enhancement* considers the enhancement of kinship relations (e.g., Crompton, 1979; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). Boutique hotels create an intimate atmosphere, which is enjoyable for guests to get involved in special events or activities as well as strengthen their relationship and/or friendship with others.

## **Pull**

The present study adopted measurements for pull factors from tourism studies (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004; Yuan & McDonald, 1990) and modified a set of pull items based on characteristic of boutique hotels (Aliukeviciute, 2011; Henderson, 2011; Lim & Endean, 2009; McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Sirakaya & McLellan, 1997; Tumbull & Uysal, 1995). Five categories of pull factors associated with the features of boutique hotel are discussed as follows:

*Sites & location:* Sirakaya and McLellan (1997) identified sites and location as a primary pull factor for tourism destinations. Tumbull and Uysal (1995) noted that local hospitality, convenience, and secure environment spark the interests of tourists to a destination. The explanation of site and location in the context of boutique hotels is the same as that proposed by Tumbull and Uysal (1995).

*Themes & Ambience* have been described as a core feature of boutique hotels in several previous studies (e.g., Henderson, 2011; Lim & Endean, 2009). For example, as

discussed previously, some unused buildings have been converted to boutique hotels to create a unique ambience or theme (Lim & Endean, 2009).

*Boutique decoration & layout* of hotel rooms and, particularly, the lobby are an important component of customer experience during one's stay in a boutique hotel (Aliukeviciute, 2011; McIntosh & Siggs, 2005). For example, boutique hotels that are constructed based on architectural heritage comprised of a distinctive layout and decoration compatible with the building enrich customers' experiences.

*Amenities & facilities* have been widely discussed in previous studies on boutique hotels (e.g., Lim & Endean, 2009). Many boutique hotels provide a waterbed, home theater, books and decorative sculpture in the room as incentive amenities, as well as some playful details in the building, which pull potential customers to patronize them.

*Pricing & value:* Zeithaml (1988) revealed the value of a specific product or service from four perspectives: low price, getting what is wanted, quality compared to price, and what is received for what is sacrificed. The price range of boutique hotel offerings in Xiamen is similar to the average cost of mid-level hotels, significantly lower than luxury hotels. High quality of boutique hotel offerings may increase competitiveness in the lodging market (McIntosh & Siggs, 2005).

## **Instrument**

A self-administered and close-ended online questionnaire was employed. Qualtrics, an online survey tool, was used to collect data. The questionnaire with the measurement

items of push and pull factors described above were translated to Chinese. Considering many customers may not directly connect their accommodation experience with boutique hotels, eight pictures of boutique hotels (e.g., the boutique hotel building, room layout, lobby, living area, spa and balcony) were shown at the front page of the survey to remind the previous experience of the respondents to boutique hotels. Then customers were asked two questions about their previous experience with boutique hotels: (1) “How much do you think you know about the term ‘boutique hotel’ in Xiamen city?” and (2) “Why do you think people choose to stay in boutique hotel in Xiamen city?”

Next, respondents were asked to evaluate 16 measurement items for push factors on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree...5=strongly agree). The 16 items covered the five categories of push factors discussed in literature review, including “seeking novelty” (Yuan & McDonald, 1990), “fulfilling prestige” (Crompton, 1979; Yuan & McDonald, 1990), “comfort, relaxation, home & privacy” (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004), “non-parallel experience & guest relationship (Lundberg, 1971; Shoemaker, 1994)”, “social enhancement” (Crompton, 1979; Yuan & McDonald, 1990).

In section three, the respondents were asked to evaluate 15 items examining pull attributes to boutique hotels. Consistent with section two, the 15 items were measured with five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree ... 5 = strongly agree). The 15 measurements covered five categories of attractive attributes discussed in literature review section, including “sites & location” (Sirakaya & Mclellan, 1997; Tumbull & Uysal, 1995), “themes

& ambience” (Henderson, 2011; Lim & Endean, 2009), “boutique decoration & layout” (Aliukeviciute, 2011; McIntosh & Siggs, 2005), “amenities & facilities” (Lim & Endean, 2009), “pricing & value” (McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Zeithaml, 1988).

The demographic information of the respondents was collected in the last section of the questionnaire. The questions asked respondents to provide information about their age, gender, education level, income, and marital status, number of children, employment status, and frequency of patronage at boutique hotels.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through Qualtric to reach guests in two boutique hotel companies: Junlongtang Hotel Management (Xiamen) Limited and Coco Investment Management (Fujian) Limited. Junlongtang Hotel Management (Xiamen) Limited is a local hotel management company, which manages five hotel properties that are boutique: Yue·Boutique Hotel, Yue·Sun Hotel, Yue·Port Hotel and Yue·Comfort Hotel. Each hotel has approximately 12 rooms, each with an intimate presentation to produce a personalized feeling based on different emotional themes. Coco Investment Management (Fujian) Limited is an investment management group that focuses on lodging, restaurant, and entertainment businesses in Fujian Province. Coco Investment Management (Fujian) Limited conducts investment management for three boutique hotels, including Coco Boutique Hotel Xiamen, Coco Boutique Hotel Fuzhou, and Coco Boutique Hotel Shishi. Each of these three hotels has a minimum of 105 rooms. The hotels are centrally located in Xiamen, which reflects their

lively ambiance and convenient transportation. They also promote themselves with a unique coconut grove theme. This tropical style is a unique feature of Fujian, which is a coastal province.

An email invitation was sent to a total of 917 individual customers from a list provided by the two hotel companies on September 20, 2013. The customers were Chinese at least 18 years of age or older, who stayed in at least one night during the past 3 years in one of the boutique hotels previously mentioned. An invitation email was sent on September 20, 2013. The letter explained the purpose of the survey and attached the survey link. A reminder email was sent after three days. The email invitation and follow-up letter are shown in Appendix B. The survey was closed on October 6, 2013. A total of 196 responses were obtained with the response rate of 21.3%.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed by using SPSS version 20.0. The present author used four steps to conduct data analysis: (1) descriptive analysis was applied to provide a summary of demographic information of the respondents; (2) exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the primary themes of pull and push factors; and (3) means of the extracted push and pull factors each were compared across demographic variables.

Reliability analysis was employed to test consistency of measures using Cronbach's alpha.

Cronbach's alpha, the most commonly used reliability measure, was applied to test the reliability of factor. An alpha of 0.7 and higher indicates that there is an acceptable level of

internal consistency among the items making up the factor (Hair, Tatham, Ronald, Anderson, & Black, 1998). The EFA was based on principal components analysis with a varimax rotation and a predetermined cut-off Eigenvalue of one. Only items have factor loadings larger than 0.4 were retained for further analysis of identifying the themes.

## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The results of the study are reported in this chapter, including a descriptive statistics of the sample profile, the reliability and adequacy of the sample, and results of exploratory factor analysis. Results are also presented for the mean comparison of push and pull factors across several demographic variables.

### Descriptive Statistics

#### Demographic characteristics of the participants

Among the 196 responses deemed usable, 95.5% of the respondents reported that they had experienced boutique hotels in Xiamen. The author used *excluded listwise* to handle missing data, with 178 responses deemed usable for the analysis. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the demographic information of the sample, including gender, age, marital status, education level, number of children, and monthly income, employment status, and patronage frequency to boutique hotels in Xiamen. The results revealed that the majority age group of the respondents was 18-25 (50.6%). The gender of the respondents was split nearly equally: 48.9% of respondents were male whereas 51.1% were female. Approximately two thirds of the respondents (58.4%) were either in a relationship or married, and almost three fourths (74.7%) had a college degree. Half of the participants (50%) indicated that they had no children, slightly more four fifths (82%) had a monthly salary of \$329 (2,000 RMB) or more and almost two thirds (62.4%) were full-time

Table 4.1. Sample profile

<b>Demographic information</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age (n=178)</b>		
18-25	90	50.6%
26-35	44	24.7%
36-45	30	16.9%
46-55	12	6.7%
56-65	2	1.1%
<b>Gender (n=178)</b>		
Male	87	48.9%
Female	91	51.1%
<b>Marital status (n=178)</b>		
Single	67	37.6%
In relationship	46	25.8%
Married	58	32.6%
Separated/Divorced	5	2.8%
Widowed	2	1.1%
<b>Highest education level (n=178)</b>		
High school	19	10.7%
College degree	133	74.7%
Master degree	22	12.4%
Doctoral degree	4	2.2%
<b>Income per month (n=178)</b>		
Below RMB2000	32	18.0%
RMB2000-RMB3500	36	20.2%
RMB3500-RMB5000	56	31.5%
RMB5000-RMB6500	18	10.1%
RMB6500-RMB8000	12	6.7%
RMB8000-RMB9500	11	6.2%
Above RMB9500	13	7.3%
<b>Hotel Patronage Frequency (n=178)</b>		
Once a week or more often	4	2.2%
2 to 3 times a month	22	12.4%
Once a month	9	5.1%
Every 2-3 months	41	23.0%
2-3 times a year	65	36.5%
Once a year or less often	37	20.8%

Table 4.1. (Continued)

<b>Demographic information</b>	Number	Percentage
<b>Employment status (n=178)</b>		
Unemployed	4	2.2%
Full time employed	111	62.4%
Part time employed	4	2.2%
Student	48	27.0%
Self-employed	10	5.6%
Retired	1	0.6%

employees. Four fifths (79.2%) of the participant claimed patronage experience of hotels at least twice per year.

### **Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to achieve dimension reduction; more specifically, principal component factor analyses with varimax rotation were performed to identify underlying dimensions associated with push and pull motivation of boutique hotel guests. Only the items with factor loadings greater than 0.4 were retained for each factor grouping. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were reported in the final factor structure. It is more important to consider the motivational constructs to further understand the principal driving forces of the guests than to look at individual motivation items.

### **Reliability and adequacy of the sample**

Reliability analysis was conducted for 16 push and 15 pull factors, respectively. The minimum requirement for alpha is 0.7 (Cortina, 1993; Hair et al., 1998; Nunnally, 1978). The results indicated that alpha for all the push items were 0.883 and alpha for all the pull items

were 0.925, which indicated the items in the sample have a high internal consistency. This study also used Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) to examine sample adequacy. The KMO measure of push motivation is 0.866, and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at 0.000. The KMO measure of the pull attributes is 0.895 and Bartlett's test of sphericity is also significant at 0.000. Overall, these results indicate an acceptable level of reliability and sampling adequacy to implement EFA in the next step.

### **Principal component analysis**

EFA is a widely used statistical technique to uncover constructs such as motivation dimensions. Three push factors (components) emerged from a factor analysis of 16 push items: "Uniqueness seeking", "Interpersonal experience", and "Social networking".

However, the five items including "to enjoy a private and comfort staying", "to have spacious area designed for relaxing", "to stay in a historical building that has converted into hotel", "to escape from dairy routing", and "to enjoy home-like experience" were not retained because of relatively lower factor loading ( $<.40$ ), which indicates that these five items are not useful to describe any one of the three components.

The EFA was rerun with the 11 retained items (Table 4.2). The results were readily interpretable as a three-factor structure as before, but with high loadings for each of the items. Moreover, the first component, "uniqueness seeking" factor, explained 39.297% of variance, and "interpersonal experience" and "social networking" explained 11.948% and

Table 4.2. Exploratory factor analysis for push items

Push factors (mean score)	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained %	Reliability alpha
<b>Uniqueness seeking (3.914)</b>		4.323	39.297	.775
To feel a specific theme of a hotel	.825			
To share wonderful moment with someone(s)	.692			
To stay in unique buildings and places	.675			
To stay in a hotel that would impress my friends and family	.644			
To stay in a hotel in which every room has a distinct feature	.527			
<b>Interpersonal experience (3.723)</b>		1.314	11.948	.720
To get proactive service offered by the staff with passion	.835			
To enjoy individualized service	.718			
To enhance relationship with friends and relatives	.692			
<b>Social networking (3.400)</b>		1.060	9.640	.716
To participate special event or activities	.869			
To have a greater chance to meet with others with same interests	.763			
To increase my social status	.634			
<b>Total variance explained</b>			60.884	

Note: Scale used to evaluate guest motivation: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

9.640% of variance, respectively. These three factors explained 60.884% of variance in total.

The reliability alphas to check internal consistency of items within each factor ranged from 0.7 to 0.9. The reliability alpha of each component indicated the acceptable level of reliability ranging from .716 to .857 (Cortina, 1993; Hair et al., 1998; Nunnally, 1978).

The EFA for the 15 pull items resulted in two components. However, the six items including “amenities and facilities designed for relaxation and entertainment”; “facilities that

traditional hotels do not have”; “many details worth your time to play with during your stay”; “converted buildings with unique styles”; “unique and intimate atmosphere”; and “match with beautiful views in Xiamen” were removed due to relatively lower factor loadings.

The nine retained items were retained and rerun in the EFA. The rerun result (see Table 4.3) of EFA with these nine retained items indicated two components, “site value” and “decoration & themes” explained 50.389% and 14.196% of the variance, respectively, and explained 64.585% of the variance in total. Factor loadings of each retained item reached a relatively high level. All factor loadings of retained items were above 0.58. The reliability

Table 4.3. Exploratory factor analysis for pull items

Pull factors (mean score)	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained%	Reliability alpha
<b>Site value (3.968)</b>		4.535	50.389	.857
Plentiful experience with reasonable cost	.852			
Certain usage of facility is free of charge (for example, SPA, rental bicycle, waterbed)	.743			
Relatively lower price	.765			
Easy to access and close to tourism sites	.730			
Various options of location (Kulangsu, Island Ring Road, etc.)	.736			
<b>Decoration &amp; theme (3.885)</b>		1.278	14.196	.812
Designed layout and details without duplication	.850			
Decorated differently in every corner	.830			
Wide range of themes in Xiamen boutique hotels	.741			
Themes compatible with city features	.589			
<b>Total variance explained</b>			64.585	

Note: Scale used to evaluate guest motivation: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

alphas of these extracted components were greater than 0.7.

The extracted push and pull motivation factors were ranked using a five-point Likert scale. Among three push factors, “uniqueness seeking” had the highest mean score (3.914), followed by “interpersonal experience” (3.723) and “social networking” (3.400). For the extracted pull motivation factors, “site value” had a higher mean score (3.968) than “decoration & theme” (3.885).

### **Mean comparison of extracted push and pull factors across demographic variables**

The mean comparison of the push factors is presented in Table 4.4. The age group and income group were both divided into two rational groups for comparison, respondents under 25 accounted for approximately half (50.6%) of the entire sample; respondents who were older than 25 accounted for the other half, who usually have jobs in China. Two groups were divided by income as well; a boundary (approximately \$1050) was set to distinguish respondents (relatively wealthier, accounted the top 20.2% of the entire sample) who earned more than \$1,050 (6,500 RMB) per month and respondents who earned less than \$1,050 (6,500 RMB) per month. Significant differences were found in age, marital status, and income.

First, age groups showed a significant difference in “social networking” factor; respondents over the age of 25 perceived higher ratings for the “social networking” factor. This implied that older respondents were willing to socialize with people staying at boutique

Table 4.4. Mean comparison of push factors across demographic information

	Groups	US	T-value	Sig.	IE	T-value	Sig	SN	T-value	Sig.
<b>Gender</b>	Female (n=91)	3.839			3.766			3.385		
	Male (n=87)	3.709	1.395	.165	3.682	.749	.455	3.414	.239	.811
<b>Age</b>	18-25 (n=90)	3.735			3.659			3.244		
	26-above (n=88)	3.816	.867	.387	3.792	1.190	.236	3.557	2.611	.010*
<b>Employment</b>	Full-time (n=111)	3.802			3.742			3.420		
	Student (n=48)	3.705	.887	.377	3.729	.098	.922	3.222	1.410	.161
<b>Marital status</b>	Single (n=67)	3.739			3.726			3.239		
	Married (n=58)	3.762	.195	.846	3.822	.725	.470	3.535	2.048	.043*
<b>Income</b>	<6500 (n=142)	3.716			3.681			3.369		
	>6500 (n=36)	4.009	2.561	.011*	3.898	1.574	.117	3.519	.991	.323

Note: \* indicates a significant difference at between-subject level across groups; US = Uniqueness seeking; IE = Interpersonal experience; SN = Social networking; n = sample size; income is presented by RMB, currency used in mainland China.

hotels.

Marital status showed significant difference in the push motivation of “social networking”. This implied that married respondents were possibly seeking more opportunities to socialize with people (attend events, make friends etc.) than did single respondents. The income difference associated with the push factor of “uniqueness seeking” indicated that relatively wealthier respondents (income greater than \$1,050 (6,500 RMB) per month) patronized boutique hotels for the unique experience. In addition, the three

components extracted did not reveal a significant difference across the gender; and there was no significant difference between students and full-time employees.

Table 4.5 presents the differences in pull factors as perceived by respondents with various demographic backgrounds. Significant differences were found in age, marital status, and income per month. Respondents who were 26 or older perceived a higher pull factor for “site value”.

The significant difference for “site value” among respondents older than 25 indicated

Table 4.5. Mean comparison of pull factors across demographic information

	Groups	DT	T-value	Sig.	SV	T-value	Sig
<b>Gender</b>	Female (n =91)	3.907			4.011		
	Male (n =87)	3.865	.412	.681	3.922	.865	.388
<b>Age</b>	18-25 (n =90)	3.853			3.796		
	26-above (n =88)	3.921	.670	.504	4.143	3.480	.001*
<b>Employment</b>	Full-time (n =111)	3.926			4.023		
	Student (n =48)	3.787	1.189	.236	3.821	1.716	.088
<b>Marital status</b>	Single (n =67)	3.907			3.893		
	Married (n =58)	3.922	.124	.902	4.155	2.136	.035*
<b>Income</b>	<6500 (n =142)	3.836			3.932		
	>6500 (n =36)	4.083	1.984	.049*	4.106	1.354	.177

Notes: \* indicates a significant difference at between-subject level across groups; DT = Decoration & theme; SV = Site value; n = sample size; income is presented by RMB, currency used in mainland China.

that they paid more attention to cost and location of a boutique hotel than did younger adults (18-25). Married respondents also rated higher on factor “site value” than single respondents. Respondents with an income of more than \$1,050 (6,500 RMB) per month rated higher on “decoration & theme” such as “designed layout and details without duplication”, “decorated differently in every corner”, “wide range of themes in Xiamen boutique hotels”, and “themes compatible with city features” than did respondents who earned less than \$1,050 (6,500 RMB) per month. However, there was no significant difference on pull factors between male and female respondents; the same pattern was found between full-time employee and students.

## **CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION**

This chapter discusses the research findings and provides implications for theory and practice. Limitations and recommendations for future study are also presented.

### **Theoretical Contribution**

Boutique hotel is a relatively new segment of the lodging industry, especially in mainland China. Although push-pull theory has been widely used to evaluate visitors' motivation to tourism attractions (e.g. Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Jang & Wu, 2006; Yuan & McDonald, 1990), few studies have used this theory in the lodging industry. To the knowledge of this author, previous research has not focused on the motivation to visit boutique hotels. The present study fills the research gap. The findings may provide useful implications, which might benefit the hospitality research from the perspective of boutique hotel guests.

The results of the respondent profile revealed some interesting information. First, respondents under 25 years of age accounted for approximately half (50.6%) of the entire sample. Young adults have a greater tendency to be adventurous and seek new experiences, and they are generally willing to try new products and services (Sirakaya & McLellan, 1997). Moreover, it could be explained by unique phenomena in China. College students are likely to stay in hotels nearby the campuses for a date or romantic relationships. The ambiance of boutique hotels attracts many college students for weekend stays. The author suggested that

younger guests could be the biggest potential target market of boutique hotels.

Approximately three fourths (74.7%) of the respondents have attended college; the majority (90%) had completed associate, bachelor, master, or doctoral degrees. The results indicated that boutique hotels are more preferred by guests who obtained higher education. The author suggests that well-educated respondents generally prefer boutique hotels and they are also more likely to appreciate the value of boutique hotels from an architectural perspective that includes building design, ambiance and leisure comfort.

The exploratory factor analysis revealed that the three push factors and two pull factors were found significant to explain the structure of guests' motivation to visit boutique hotels. This study was the first attempt to identify push and pull motivations to choose boutique hotels. The findings such as "social networking" and "site value" were supported by previous tourism research (Crompton, 1979; Lim & Endean, 2009; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). The author also suggests that recognizing the motivation factors of boutique hotel guests could benefit future studies on boutique hotel marketing.

*Uniqueness seeking* was associated with motives such as uniqueness and novelty, as a push motive that encourages guests to seek for a unique theme and feature or enjoy special activities and events. Uniqueness seeking was consistent with previous findings (Yuan & McDonald, 1990). In addition, uniqueness seeking was also supported by the motive of fulfilling prestige, which refers to "impress friends and family" (Crompton, 1979; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). Moreover, significant difference was found across income groups on this

factor. Relatively wealthier respondents (income greater than \$1,050 (6,500RMB) per month) perceived higher push motivation on “uniqueness seeking”.

*Interpersonal experience* was extracted as a push factor that explained the motive of receiving personalized and proactive service from the boutique hotel as well as enhancing interpersonal relationship with friends and relatives during stay. This factor further explained McIntosh and Siggs’s (2005) finding that guests are looking for a place that is intimate and comfortable to develop a close interpersonal relationship with staff and their company. In addition, no significant difference was found on the factor across the demographic variables.

*Social networking* was uncovered as another important push factor. Crompton (1979) identified the motive of social enhancement, which is associated with attending events and activities, where one can make new friends. Apart from the factor of interpersonal experience, this factor emphasizes socializing with other guests. Furthermore, a significant difference was found on the factor across the different groups of age and marital status. Respondents who were 26 or older were found to show higher push motivations on the factor “social networking” than did younger respondents. Respondents who were married also showed higher motivations on this factor than their single counterparts.

*Site value* was found useful describing the location of boutique hotels in Xiamen city as well as value perceived by boutique hotel guests, measuring what is received for what is sacrificed, which was revealed by Zeithaml (1988). This pull factor also includes attributes such as accessibility of tourism sites and facilities (Lim & Endean, 2009). In addition,

significant differences were found on the factor across different groups of age and marital status.

*Decoration & theme* was extracted from pull items describing the designing, decoration, and themes of a boutique hotel. Horner and Swarbrooke (2005) identified design and concept developing as very important attributes of boutique hotels, this factor supporting their findings by explaining decoration and theme play a vital role in attracting guests. This factor was also consistent with the conclusion of previous studies focusing on the theme of boutique hotels (e.g., Henderson, 2011; Lim & Endean, 2009). Another finding about this factor is that the significant difference was found between respondents with \$1,050 (6,500RMB) income per month and respondents with income less than that. Relatively wealthier respondents were more likely to be attracted by the factor “decoration & theme”.

Among the three extracted push factors, the top rated one was “uniqueness seeking”, followed by “interpersonal experience” and “social networking”. This indicates that guests choose to visit boutique hotels with an expectation of seeking unique experience. Thus, boutique hotels are advised to make their day more special and impressive. For example, the staff of boutique hotels could place special treats (candy, roses, etc.) in guest rooms or congratulate guests on their special day (e.g., birthday party, anniversary, etc.).

For pull factors extracted from the EFA, “site value” got a higher mean score than that of “decoration & theme”. Thus, a selected location and great accessibility are strongly recommended for boutique hotels to attract guests. For example, hotels located in Kulangsu,

Island Ring Road were considered popular due to good accessibility to various tourism sites and destinations.

### **Practical Implications**

The factor “uniqueness seeking” is mostly highlighted by its variance explained and mean rated by respondents. The boutique hotels are unique in nature, with a mission of fulfilling guests’ desire of seeking a unique experience during their stays at a boutique hotel. Thus, industry practitioners should be aware that guests are motivated to patronize boutique hotels based on their demand for a unique experience, which should be capitalized on hotel design and operation.

The extracted factors of “interpersonal experience” and “social networking” are consistent with previous tourism studies (e.g., Bogari, Crowther & Marr, 2003; Dann 1981). Hotel staff as well as other guests in the same boutique hotel influences the interpersonal experience of a single guest. Thus, efforts to create an ambience that please and satisfy the relationships among guests-staff and guests-guests should be emphasized in a boutique hotel. In order to help guests with social networking, boutique hotels are advised to create an atmosphere suitable for socializing, such as parties and events. From a facility perspective, transforming the boutique hotel’s lobby into a chatting-friendly area might be appealing to most guests. In addition, items associated with “to escape from dairy routine” fell into this category suggesting that the practitioners should ensure the privacy of guests who want to escape from crowds and be alone.

Two pull factors were identified—“decoration & theme” and “site value”. Industry practitioners in the boutique hotels in Xiamen are expected to emphasize themes by creating and designing decorations that focus on the mission of a specific boutique hotel (e.g., tropical, artistic, sporty, historical, classical, etc.). Moreover, “site value” was considered as the other vital factor that explained the guests’ preference of hotel location and value (what guests received based on what they paid). This could be explained by the tradition of Chinese guests to be picky about convenience of a site, location, and scenic views when travelling. It should be emphasizes that much time is taken to travel and most tourists tend to choose public-service transportations (e.g, bus, subway, train); thus, they may prefer to stay downtown or close to their destination (Jang & Wu, 2006; Johanson, 2008). However, considering the cost of labor and land are spiraling in Mainland China in recent years, many boutique hotels are restricted from choosing great locations.

This study also identified the difference in customer motivation in several socio-demographic categories. Significant differences on push and pull motivation each were revealed in age, marital status, and income; while no significant differences were identified in gender and employment status. Therefore, the marketers of boutique hotels should recognize demographic characteristics of boutique hotel guests, and further develop appropriate positioning, marketing, and advertising strategies. The managers of boutique hotels should also consider motivation preference when developing a theme and service.

Respondents who were 26 or older indicated higher push motivation on “social networking” and pull motivation on “site value”. This implies that this group of guests may have higher motives for socializing with people in a boutique hotel, while they may seek better deals in staying boutique hotels. In addition, married respondents compared to singles, indicated a higher level of motivation regarding these two factors “social networking” and “site value”. In order to better retain guests, boutique hotels in Xiamen should pay attention on creating socializing-friendly areas rather than use the majority of their space for rooms; for example, transform a chatting-friendly hotel lobby, design opening yard or balcony, and create a cocktail lounge (bar). Most boutique hotels in Xiamen do not have an area designed for socializing due to their small size; thus the findings suggest that practitioners recognize the motivation of “social networking” as well as “site value”.

Another implication from the pull factor, “site value”, was that boutique hotels were expected or perceived as deals (better location with acceptable price) for some deal-hunters. Moreover, the location of a boutique hotel played relatively more important role in the responses of several groups of guests (married respondents and respondents older than 25), who were concerned about location as an indicator of “what can I do or see” around the hotel. They perceived boutique hotels as deals and could be a place for social activities. Therefore, the author suggests that marketers of boutique hotels advocate these two aspects when communicating with customers, especially married and older guests. The author also suggests that boutique hotels may also consider potential opportunities to target convention

groups and corporate guests who tend to pay more because they usually get reimbursement from their organizations. However, when considering the fact that boutique hotels have fewer rooms compared with other types of hotels (Aliukeviciute, 2011; Lim & Endean 2009; Olga, 2009), only small or mid-size groups and organizations (design studio, art gallery etc.) should be considered as targets for group sales. The unique and intimate atmosphere of boutique hotels could also be promoted when considering congruity with the culture of organizations or companies (Henderson, 2011; Olga, 2009; Rogerson, 2010).

Another important implication for practitioners is that guests who had a higher income scored higher on the push factor of “uniqueness seeking”, and the pull factor “decoration & themes” in boutique hotel staying than did lower income respondents. This implies that practitioners should emphasize theme creating and hotel design as well as detail decoration, especially when targeting a high-end market. Moreover, the effort of helping guests to feel unique should not be confined to managing theme and decoration. Greater emphasis should be placed on how to make a special and valuable stay for each guest, practitioners should recognize that guests (have higher income) are likely to visit boutique hotel for the purpose of seeking uniqueness and appreciating decoration and themes.

### **Limitations and Future Study**

Although this study provides important contributions to the lodging industry, it has some limitations. First, the data were collected from the guests of only two companies which run boutique hotels in Xiamen. Therefore, the results cannot be generalizable to other hotels

and locations. Second, to help participants to better recall the experience of boutique hotels and draw more attention, a group of pictures of boutique hotels were provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. It should be noted that these pictures may have generated a stereotypic image of boutique hotels and influenced the respondents' mental definition of boutique hotels, especially for those who mentioned they were infrequent guests at these hotels. Third, there is still controversy about the definition and scope of boutique hotels. Although the chosen hotels claimed they were boutique hotels, the results should be interpreted with caution as there is a variance in classification of what constitutes a boutique hotel.

It should be noted that only 11 of 16 items and 9 of 15 items were included as categories of pull and push motivation by EFA. The categories of pull and push motivation cannot cover all of the customers' driving forces to boutique hotels. Therefore, explanations and implications based on the results may be limited. Future studies could consider cluster analysis, which could enable analyzing a larger number of guests and reveal the features of guests in boutique hotels different from those who prefer other type of hotels. Researchers may also include additional pull and push motivation factors for analysis, especially psychological factors that motivate guests to seek special accommodations. Finally, conducting a study utilizing another theory (e.g., drive theory of motivation) may help to generate additional motivation for visiting boutique hotels.

## APPENDIX A. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board  
Office for Responsible Research  
Vice President for Research  
1138 Pearson Hall  
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207  
315 294-4566  
FAX 515 294-4267

**Date:** 8/19/2013

**To:** Tao Wang  
115 University Village, Apt D  
Ames, IA 50010

**CC:** Dr. Liang Tang  
12 MacKay Hall

**From:** Office for Responsible Research

**Title:** The Push and Pull Factors of Boutique Hotel in a Resort City of China

**IRB ID:** 13-378

**Study Review Date:** 8/19/2013

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**
- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

**Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form.** A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that **approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

## APPENDIX B. RESPONDENT COMMUNICATION

### B-1. Initial and follow-up emails [translated from Chinese]

Dear participants,

Thank you for taking our survey. This anonymous survey aims at collecting opinions about a specific type of hotel. Your participation will help us to improve research on our topic. All data collected in this questionnaire will only be used to serve our research purpose; no identical information will be recorded. You will need approximately 8-13 minutes to complete this survey. Your participation is voluntary regarding each question and your response is highly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions about our survey. Here is the link:

[https://aeshmhsiastate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_dgIxuJJqhf8BuRy](https://aeshmhsiastate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_dgIxuJJqhf8BuRy)

Thank you.

Tao Wang  
Master Student  
Iowa State University  
Vince@iastate.edu

Dear participants,

Thank you for considering our invitation to participate in this survey once again. This is a reminder regarding our anonymous survey that aims at collecting opinions regarding a specific type of hotel. Your participation will help us to improve research on our topic. All data collected in this questionnaire will be used only for research purpose. No identical information will be recorded; and there is no risk for taking this survey. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions about our survey. If you have finished our survey, please accept our sincere appreciation and disregard this email. Here is the link:

[https://aeshmhsiastate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_dgIxuJJqhf8BuRy](https://aeshmhsiastate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_dgIxuJJqhf8BuRy)

Thank you.

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## APPENDIX C. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

[translated from Chinese]

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time without any penalty or prejudices. However, your assistance with filling out this survey would be of great importance to this study. Your opinions are very important and will help in making this research project a success.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. Information obtained will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be collected and saved separately and will not be associated with your email address. Thus there is no risk forecasted for taking this survey.

What is a boutique hotel? One of our research objectives is to study boutique hotels, specifically those located in Xiamen city. The “boutique hotel” was imported to China as a term that describes hotels with unique themes, taste and style; usually know for providing a very different experience to guests with a variety of purpose. There are many local boutique hotels in Xiamen city. We collected some photos to show you what boutique hotels look like.



Now, have a brief idea about what kind of hotel they are? Let's start give out your opinions to us!

How much do you think you know about the term "boutique hotel" in Xiamen city?

- A little, I only heard about this term before
- Quite a bit, I think I stayed in this type of hotel one or two times
- Very much, I am likely to choose a boutique hotel for staying when possible
- Not at all, I do not know any thing about this term

Why do you think people choose to stay in boutique hotel in Xiamen city? (multiple choices 1-6)

- For leisure purpose
- For business purpose
- For tourism purpose
- For family/friends gathering purpose
- For enjoying the "boutique" environment
- For other purpose

There is a list of motivations that explain why consumers are switching to alternative accommodation. Please tell us your degree of agreement or disagreement on following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
To stay in a hotel in which every room has a distinct feature	<input type="radio"/>				
To feel a specific theme of a hotel	<input type="radio"/>				
To stay in unique buildings and places	<input type="radio"/>				
To stay in a hotel that would impress my friends and family	<input type="radio"/>				
To stay in a historic/artistic building that has converted into hotel	<input type="radio"/>				
To increase my social status	<input type="radio"/>				
To have spacious area designed for relaxing	<input type="radio"/>				
To escape from dairy routine	<input type="radio"/>				
To enjoy a private and comfort staying	<input type="radio"/>				
To enjoy home-like experience	<input type="radio"/>				
To enjoy individualized service	<input type="radio"/>				
To get proactive service offered by the staff with passion	<input type="radio"/>				
To have a greater chance to meet with others with same interests	<input type="radio"/>				
To participate special event or activities	<input type="radio"/>				
To share wonderful moment with someone(s)	<input type="radio"/>				
To enhance relationship with friends and relatives	<input type="radio"/>				

Boutique hotels in Xiamen have their own advantages. Tell us your degree of agreement or disagreement on following statements regarding to characters that are attracting consumers to stay at boutique hotels.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Various options of location (Kulangsu, Island Ring Road, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Easy to access and close to tourism sites	<input type="radio"/>				
Match with beautiful views in Xiamen (sea, downtown, Kuanglangsu, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Wide range of themes in Xiamen boutique hotels	<input type="radio"/>				
Themes compatible with city features	<input type="radio"/>				
Unique and intimate atmosphere	<input type="radio"/>				
Converted buildings with unique styles	<input type="radio"/>				
Decorated differently in every corner	<input type="radio"/>				
Designed layout and details without duplication	<input type="radio"/>				
Facilities that traditional hotels do not have (waterbed, golf, home theater, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Amenities and facilities designed for relaxation and entertainment (books, handcraft, sculpture, stereo, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Many details worth your time to play with during your stay	<input type="radio"/>				
Relatively lower price	<input type="radio"/>				
Pleasant experience with reasonable cost	<input type="radio"/>				
Certain usage of facility is free of charge (for example, SPA, rental bicycle, waterbed)	<input type="radio"/>				

What is your gender?

Female

Male

What's your age group?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- Above 66

What is your marital status?

- Single
- In relationship
- Married
- Separated/Divorced
- Widowed/Widower

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than High School
- High School
- College Degree
- Masters Degree
- Doctoral Degree

How many children do you have (including step-children)?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12+

What's your income per month?

- Under RMB2000
- RMB2000-RMB3500
- RMB3500-RMB5000
- RMB5000-RMB6500
- RMB6500-RMB8000
- RMB8000-RMB9500
- Above RMB9500

How often do you check in a hotel?

- Once a week or more often
- 2 to 3 times a month
- Once a month
- Every 2-3 months
- 2-3 times a year
- Once a year or less often
- Do not use

What's your employment status?

- Unemployed
- Full time employed
- Part time employed
- Student
- Self-employed
- Retired

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