

Exploring the service needs of customers with children under the age of six years in Chinese luxury hotels

Yunke Wang

School of Hospitality and Tourism

Primary Supervisor: Pola Wang

Secondary supervisor: Peter Kim

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Abstract

The existing academic literature has addressed the service demands of family vacationers from hotels, yet it has commonly overlooked a significant subgroup—families with young children, particularly within the context of Chinese family education. This study delves into this specific niche by investigating expectations, motivations, and perceived performance from three dimensions, with a focus on children under the age of six. The research integrates the educational philosophies and traditional cultural backgrounds of the new generation of Chinese parents to comprehensively understand the behaviour of this subgroup within the hospitality sector. Through in-depth interviews with 16 Chinese parents, detailed service requirements were revealed. The findings indicate a lack of attention by luxury hotels in China on this particular group. Recommendations include the provision of parent-relaxation-oriented and educationally enriching parent-child activities and spaces, along with meticulous attention to facilities relevant to young children. Finally, the paper discusses theoretical and practical implications, proposing suggestions for future research. This study aims to offer valuable practical guidance to luxury hotel operators, addressing the identified gap in academic research.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBSC; 2021), the seventh national census recorded a total population of 1.411 billion people, including approximately 77 million children aged 0-4. The population is projected to reach 1.496 billion by 2024 (Chinanews, 2023). The number of newborns from 2017 to 2023 was projected to reach around 88.33 million (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2021). The widespread promotion and implementation of a comprehensive two-child policy and encouragement of threechild families are anticipated to drive a new phase of growth in the total child population. Consequently, the market for family trips involving children is poised for significant expansion. This integrated form of tourism, encompassing cognition, education, experiences, family bonding, and leisure, is increasingly appealing to a growing number of families. The growth in the children's tourism market is also linked to changes in the consumption attitudes of Chinese parents born in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents from these generations place greater emphasis on the quality of travel products and services, endorse refined parenting concepts, exhibit enthusiasm for consumerism, and are keen on luxury consumption (Yang & Lau, 2015).

In addition, in the fiercely competitive and service-driven hotel industry, adapting to evolving technologies and shifting consumer preferences stands out as a key characteristic. Within this context, family tourism has notably risen as a crucial element of the hotel industry in recent years. Families travelling with children, representing significant stakeholders in both the tourism and hotel sectors, bring essential importance to service requirements (Seraphin & Yallop, 2020; Siwek et al., 2022). Scholars such as Zaman et al. (2020), Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015), and Backer and Schänzel (2013) emphasize the significant role played by children in the hotel industry. Consequently, accommodation facilities must tailor their services to the specific needs

of children to truly enhance the leisure experience for all family members.

In researching family tourism within the hotel industry, the age of children emerges as an essential factor. Drawing from prior studies, it is essential to highlight the significance of differentiating between distinct stages of family life for both tourism and hotel practitioners. This differentiation becomes imperative due to notable variations in the impact and influences of children in families with infants (0-3 years) compared to those with older children (3-12 years; Therkelsen, 2010). Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) have additionally recommended that the hotel industry reassess its services for families with infants, focusing on their specific needs rather than taking a broad approach to children of all age groups.

Regarding motivation, Ben Lahouel and Montargot (2020) have emphasized that parents' decisions to choose luxury hotels for family vacations are primarily motivated by a quest for tranquillity and the desire to provide their children with an enjoyable hotel experience. The inherent brand recognition of luxury hotels and the extensive expertise accumulated by hotel groups significantly influence the choice of high-end branded accommodation. Despite variations in service orientations among different hotels, luxury establishments share a common objective of providing customers with superior geographical locations, expansive spaces, luxurious amenities, high-quality food, elegant aesthetics, privacy, safety, and personalized products and services (Chathoth et al., 2013; Lin & Choe, 2022). These aspects are also crucial factors in attracting parents to opt for luxury hotels when staying with their children.

Another critical motivational factor involves the impact of cultural values on shaping service demands. Individuals from diverse societal strata and cultural backgrounds are influenced by multiple factors, such as traditional culture, education, income, and occupation, which shape their service needs and consumption behaviours (Wang et al., 2008). Customers with various motivations, cultures, and nationalities place different

emphasis on the high-quality services provided by hotels (Wu et al., 2017). For consumers in the luxury hotel market, their evaluation of the overall value of luxury items is intertwined with the cultural context, particularly evident in their perceptions of the personal value derived from service usage and the pursuit of hedonic and emotional values (Wiedmann et al., 2007). This also elucidates the contrast in the views and consumption preferences of Asians regarding leisure and hotel tourism services compared to Westerners (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). Le and Quy's (2020) research indicates that customers influenced by Confucian culture often perceive luxury hotel services as an opportunity to demonstrate their capability to their families, serving as one of the driving forces behind their choice to purchase luxury hotel services.

Furthermore, certain distinctive policies of the Chinese government profoundly influence the motivating factors behind Chinese parents' choices. The one-child policy, implemented since 1979, stands as a significant societal policy in Chinese history. This policy restricted most families to having only one child, directly resulting in the phenomenon of "priceless children" (Liu & Bray, 2022; Liu, 2016; Wu, 2008). Each child becomes the sole focus of the family, and to ensure the best education and future for their only child, families invest more resources and attention in their children's education. Early educational investment becomes an integral part of family life, commencing even before the child enters kindergarten.

The prevailing educational competitive pressure in China is constantly increasing and expanding into diverse domains. Parents, harbouring elevated expectations, seek to instil qualities like resilience, confidence, and teamwork in their children through educational activities spanning the various age groups. These activities include extracurricular pursuits and even family vacations (Liu & Bray, 2022). Consequently, investment in children's education has evolved into an integrated lifestyle, aligned with the competitive essence of society.

In addition to the growing pressure of educational competition, Chinese parents' focus on their children's education can also be rooted in their culture and belief systems. According to a study by Clauzel et al. (2020), luxury hotels play a significant role in providing children with opportunities to experience culture and historical ambiances. These hotels achieve this by offering adaptive and proactive services, including cultural activities, which are immediately apparent as children enter the hotel and immerse themselves in the overall atmosphere. Consequently, there is an increased likelihood of cultural aspects, such as art or history, being experienced within the family.

To attain a profound insight into parents' service needs, it is imperative to focus not only on their expectations and motivations but also on their perceptions of the performance of services. Existing research has demonstrated that the satisfaction of Chinese hotel consumers is predominantly derived from elements like employee service, the facilities, dining, and value-added services (Heung, 2000; Li et al., 2011). Notably, the impact of the Confucian value of frugality within these factors makes Chinese consumers especially mindful of the extent to which the selected hotel products and services deliver value for money.

Nonetheless, the presence of children in the family reinforces collectivist values, adding complexity to vacation and hotel selection for Chinese families (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018). Chinese families, shaped not only by Confucian culture but also by the influence of grandparents, undertake a nuanced decision-making process. Even if grandparents do not accompany the family during travels, their concerns rooted in traditional education still exert some influence on the preferences and expectations related to family trips. For instance, family holidays tend to revolve more around the child, placing emphasis on the educational aspects of vacations (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; Wang & Li, 2021).

1.2 Literature Gaps

Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, this study has revealed several gaps in the analysis of family vacation demands. The primary limitations are in the following three areas. Initially, scholarly attention has primarily centred on the domain of resort hotels. Previous studies, exemplified by Gaines et al. (2004), have focused on the analysis of children's programs within vacation resorts. Similarly, Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) have delved into understanding the demands and decision-making processes of parents concerning vacation hotels. Additionally, the study by Buzlu and Balik (2022) underscored the significance of child-friendly parent-child hotels. However, these investigations have all overlooked the need for a comprehensive exploration of luxury hotels and their unique dynamics, particularly in relation to the influence of young children on the requirements for family vacation hotels.

Secondly, it is worth noting that, despite the thorough exploration by Siwek et al. (2022) into the provision of services for families with children in the urban hotel sector, unfortunately, these studies have not specifically targeted families with very young children. A lack of in-depth research with a comprehensive understanding of the overall landscape of family vacation demands, particularly regarding the youngest family members, namely children aged 0-6 years, was identified. As families with young children increasingly constitute a significant consumer demographic in the hotel market, there is a noticeable scarcity of research addressing their specific needs. As emphasized by Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015), families with school-age children and families with preschool children may exhibit substantial differences in their hotel requirements. Despite the meticulous examination of child experiences in luxury hotels in the study by Ben Lahouel and Montargot (2020), the homogenization of the needs of children aged under 12 means the study lacks the necessary granularity to delve into the specific impacts of differences in children's age groups on luxury hotel demands. Consequently, current research has yet to thoroughly investigate the nuanced effects of differences in

the age groups of children on the demands for luxury hotels.

Additionally, a prevailing trend in existing research is the predominant reliance on Western family concepts and consumer trends as a standard. For instance, parents in Western countries, when vacationing with young children, display specific interest in beach activities and dining experiences (Thornton et al., 1997). Likewise, studies investigating hotel service demands have drawn heavily on research conducted in Western contexts. An illustrative case is the expectation for services like valet parking when families with young children check in (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). However, there is currently a relative dearth of research on the service demands of Chinese families. For instance, whether services like valet parking and expectations regarding beach and pool amenities align with the needs and expectations of Chinese parents remains insufficiently explored. Specifically, the exploration of how young children influence the expectations of luxury hotels during family vacations lacks comprehensive analysis.

Various studies have explored the influence of Confucian culture on Chinese luxury hotel consumers, examining factors like prestige and reputation (Zhang & Tse, 2018). Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) have emphasized a correlation between parental demand for experiential games offered by hotels and Asian values, particularly the significant importance Asian parents place on academic achievements. Despite this, the existing research has not thoroughly investigated the impacts of Confucian culture on the cultural and educational dimensions of these consumers' demands. Specifically, there is a gap in the understanding of the expectations of Chinese parents regarding luxury hotel services within the framework of Confucian cultural values.

Expanding on the previous discussion, this study addresses the identified gaps by presenting a more systematic and comprehensive exploration tailored for Chinese luxury hotel practitioners and distributors. The focus of the study was on investigating

the service preferences of Chinese parents with young children (aged 0-6) in the context of luxury hotels. Utilizing expectation-confirmation theory as the theoretical framework and integrating considerations of Confucian culture and the prevailing educational landscape in China, the study probed deeply into the service expectations of Chinese parents within luxury hotel settings. The ultimate goal of this research is to offer targeted recommendations to Chinese luxury hotel practitioners, empowering them to effectively cater to the specific needs of this clientele. The anticipated outcome is an improvement in customer satisfaction and loyalty, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of hotels.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

Expanding upon the aforementioned research and analyses, this study aimed to comprehensively explore the service preferences of Chinese parents with children under the age of 6 when selecting and staying in luxury hotels in China. The specific focus was on understanding the expectations of parents with children aged 0-6 during their stay at Chinese luxury hotels and the preferred choices of this demographic. Of particular significance is the investigation into the expectations of this group concerning the cultural and educational aspects of Chinese luxury hotels. This examination has taken into account the distinctive educational landscape in China and the increasing pressures associated with parenting competition. Through a thorough analysis, the study has sought to achieve a holistic understanding of the overall requirements of Chinese parents for family-oriented products and services in the context of luxury hotels.

The theoretical framework employed in this study was expectation-confirmation theory. Rooted in the expectations and perceptions of performance of the targeted clientele, along with motivational factors, the research extensively examined the service

preferences of Chinese parents. The selection of this framework offers a nuanced focus for the Chinese luxury hotel industry, allowing it to respond effectively to the ever-growing demands of the family market and improve its comprehension of segmented markets. Concurrently, it can aid in elevating the satisfaction levels of Chinese parents during subsequent stays with their young children at luxury hotels.

Hence, to attain more in-depth insights into the service preferences of Chinese guests with young children. This study has used a qualitative research approach. Precisely, one-on-one interviews were conducted, involving comprehensive discussions with individuals from this specific demographic. Through this method, the research has sought to understand the authentic expectations and essential needs of this distinct clientele regarding Chinese luxury hotels, particularly within the backdrop of the prevailing educational pressures in China.

The research questions are:

- 1) What are the expectations of Chinese parents travelling with children under 6 years old regarding the services provided by luxury hotels in China?
- 2) What motivates Chinese parents with children under 6 years old to choose luxury hotels in China?
- 3) How do Chinese parents travelling with children under 6 years old perceive the performance of luxury hotels in China?
- 4) How can luxury hotels in China enhance the satisfaction of Chinese parents travelling with children under 6 years old?

The research questions encompass service expectations, choice motivation, perceived service performance, and the enhancement of service satisfaction. Concurrently, by considering the escalating trend of family tourism and the localized development of China's luxury hotel market, along with the distinctive educational background and the intensifying pressure of parenting competition in China, a comprehensive

understanding of the demands of parents of children under six in luxury hotels for family products and services was sought.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the luxury hotel industry in three key ways. Firstly, it has explored the service demands of Chinese parents with young children (aged six and below) from luxury hotels from the perspectives of expectations, motivations, and perceived performance. This investigation provides a novel perspective on addressing the needs of young children during family vacations, complementing the concerns raised by previous scholars (Curtale, 2018; Koc, 2004; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Siwek et al., 2022). Focusing on this specific demographic aids luxury hotel practitioners in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the expectations and preferences of families with children aged six and below when selecting luxury accommodation. By delving into their motivations and perceptions of service performance, this study not only addresses existing research gaps but also furnishes luxury hotel professionals with robust guidance. Simultaneously, it facilitates these practitioners in fine-tuning their products and services more effectively, catering precisely to the demands of the niche market of families with young children.

Secondly, from the perspective of luxury hotel practitioners, this paper offers recommendations and literature support for the luxury hotel industry to adapt to the demands of the Chinese market. Despite existing research focusing on the service preferences of Chinese luxury hotel consumers, there is still a lack of indigenous studies concerning the service needs of families travelling with young children. Given the unique educational background and influence of traditional culture in China, the expectations and service requirements of such family travellers from Chinese luxury hotels may significantly differ (Clauzel et al., 2020; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Le &

Quy, 2020; Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018). Therefore, by delving into Chinese family consumer expectations and perceptions and analysing service demands through a combination of traditional culture and contemporary parenting concepts, this study provides practical operational guidelines for luxury hotels.

Thirdly, previous investigations into hotel selection and service needs during family vacations have predominantly focused on Western countries (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Li et al., 2020). This study addresses this gap by centring its attention on Chinese families. With the rapid economic growth in China, many families have accumulated greater economic capital, enabling parents to afford better educational and vacation choices (Chan et al., 2016a; Hardingham, 2012; Liao & Wang, 2009; Wang & Lin, 2009). According to the *2020 China Parent-Child Travel Consumption Trend Report* released in 2021 by Ctrip, a Chinese online travel services company, Chinese family parent-child outings are undergoing a noticeable quality upgrade, reflected in the increasing popularity of boutique, themed tourism, and the choice of high-quality hotels (China Daily, 2021). Therefore, this study, through detailed explanation backed by the literature provides robust research on family consumers in the Chinese luxury hotel industry.

1.5 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 explores the current socio-educational landscape in China, the development of luxury hotels, and the behaviours and preferences of consumers in the luxury hotel market. Firstly, it provides an in-depth analysis of the profound impact of Chinese education on family values and travel behaviours, providing a crucial backdrop for understanding the significance of the luxury hotel industry in family tourism. Secondly, the chapter synthesizes a wealth of literature, providing a systematic overview of research findings on the service requirements of customers with young children. It

emphasizes the unique demands of Chinese parents when accommodating children in luxury hotels, offering theoretical support for the subsequent research questions. Finally, the chapter introduces expectation-confirmation theory as the theoretical framework for the study, introducing its background and explaining how parental expectations are formed and confirmed through actual experiences when staying in luxury hotels with young children. This chapter establishes a robust theoretical foundation and literature support for the ensuing research.

Chapter 3 introduces the research paradigm employed in the study and offers a comprehensive description of participant information. Additionally, it delineates the methods and tools employed for both data collection and analysis, providing insights into the rationale behind opting for qualitative research and detailing the approach used in conducting the interviews. This section holds paramount importance within the dissertation, as it expounds on the practical aspects of the study's execution and elucidates the methodologies applied to address the research questions.

Chapter 4 presents the data garnered from interviews, employing expectation-confirmation theory for detailed analysis and summarization. This section systematically consolidates the expectations, motivations, perceived performance, and key findings derived from interviews with Chinese parents staying with young children (under six years old) in luxury hotels. Through a thorough exploration of the service requirements within this particular market segment, it unveils the uniqueness and complexity embedded in their demands, offering substantial data support to address the research questions.

Chapter 5 offers a comprehensive discussion and summary of the issues addressed in the study, providing a succinct assessment of the extent to which research objectives were attained. It highlights both the theoretical and practical implications for the luxury hotel industry in China. Through a thorough analysis of the expectations, motivations,

and perceptions of performance of Chinese parents when bringing young children to stay in luxury hotels, the chapter furnishes targeted guidance for the industry, with the goal of enhancing service quality and meeting the specific needs of this customer segment. Moreover, while conducting a detailed examination of the study's practical aspects, the chapter openly acknowledges its limitations and puts forth suggestions for future research, providing valuable directions for further exploration in this field.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to an extensive exploration of four pivotal domains through an in-depth analysis of the abundant literature resources. Firstly, it meticulously examines the developmental history of the Chinese luxury hotel industry, elucidating the reasons for selecting this field and investigating the driving forces behind China's rapid economic growth and the influx of international hotel brands. Secondly, in contrast to previous studies predominantly focused on luxury hotel consumers in Western countries (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Yan et al., 2020), this research directs its focus to consumer preferences in the Chinese luxury hotel market. Highlighting the distinctive consumer behaviour influenced by Confucian culture and other traditional values, it unveils a discernible inclination towards family-oriented consumption (Zhang & Zhao, 2019). The third aspect concentrates on understanding the service demands of young clients (under six years old) in hotels and the motivations of parents travelling with young children. Despite a declining birth rate, young children still represent a considerable proportion of the market (Statista, 2023), underscoring the crucial importance of comprehending their needs to enhance service satisfaction. Lastly, by integrating the backdrop of China's educational competition pressure, the chapter deeply explores the distinct parenting perspectives of Chinese parents and their impact on hotel demands. Employing expectation-confirmation theory as the theoretical framework, the chapter aims to address gaps in the current research field, outline the significance of the study, and provide profound theoretical insights and substantial support for the Chinese luxury hotel industry.

2.2 The Development of the Luxury Hotel Sector in China

Luxury hotels, being providers of upscale services, fundamentally aim to provide guests with a distinctive and extraordinary leisure experience (Wirtz et al., 2020). According to research conducted by Peng and Chen (2019), luxury hotels are characterized as establishments offering unique and high-quality services that signify guests' wealth and status. Additionally, Chu et al. (2016) have described luxury hotels as 5-star accommodation establishments that not only fulfil basic lodging and dining needs but also provide high-quality experiences, encompassing elegant interior and exterior decorations and facilities. Barbara Talbott, former chief marketing officer of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, underscored that style, comfort, service, and care are the four pivotal factors enhancing the luxury hotel experience. Whether affiliated with a hotel chain or an independent brand, as long as these four criteria are satisfied, an establishment can be classified as a luxury hotel (Talbott, 2004, as cited in Chu et al., 2016).

The history of the Chinese hotel industry is illustrious, from the earliest origins, the concept of 'relay stations' can be traced back to the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BC) in ancient China. Significant progress occurred during the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD), marked by a substantial increase in both the quantity and size of establishments. By the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 AD), the hotel industry had expanded its presence extensively across diverse regions. The Ming and Qing periods (1368-1911 AD) witnessed comprehensive development and enhancement of hotel facilities, especially in the restaurant and guest room sectors (Gu et al., 2012).

Since the commencement of economic reforms in 1978, the hotel industry has played a pioneering role in China's economic development and privatization efforts (Chan & Yeung, 2009). The period of economic liberalization and collaboration with foreign investors has led to a significant increase in foreign investment opportunities for the

Chinese hotel industry. More than 50% of these investments are directed towards hotel development, attracting the attention of numerous international hotel companies seeking entry into the Chinese market. Consequently, this trend has resulted in the establishment of upscale and luxurious hotels catering to both international business and leisure travellers (Gu et al., 2012; Hardingham, 2012).

In the 1990s, the influx of international enterprises into the Chinese market was initially driven by the prospects presented by international tourists. However, as time progressed, the remarkable growth of the Chinese market also garnered their attention (Xiao et al., 2008). Research conducted by Gu et al. (2012) has highlighted that during the first decade of the 21st century, international hotel brand groups have gradually adapted to the actual conditions and market demands in China, leading to an accelerated expansion. The study has further indicated that the growth rate of highly rated hotel room supply in China is closely linked to the expansions of both international and domestic tourism. This has not only increased the number of hotels but has also raised their proportion relative to the overall supply of hotel rooms (Gu et al., 2012). This developmental process aligns with the perspective of Yang and Cai (2016), who have asserted that the Chinese hotel industry ranks among the fastest-growing globally, and this growth has been attributed to the rapid expansion of the Chinese economy, the enhancement of residents' purchasing power, and the decrease in transportation costs. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on consumer behaviours, China is positioned to become the world's largest market for personal luxury goods by 2025 (Bain & Company, 2020, as cited in Wang et al., 2022).

Chan and Yeung (2009) have concurred that the Chinese luxury hotel industry has experienced rapid growth in the past decade. Additionally, Qin et al. (2021) identified a phase of relatively rapid growth for Chinese luxury hotels in major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai starting in 1982, and sustained growth in second-tier cities such as Xi'an and Wuhan from 2000 onwards, leading to moderate growth throughout China

in the last decade. In the hospitality sector, China is poised to emerge as the global leader in the market for luxury hotels (Hsu, 2014). According to an audit in 2022 by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA; 2023), there were 783 luxury hotels in China, collectively generating a revenue of 440 billion CNY (see Table 1).

Table 1 *Numbers of Luxury Hotels and Revenue in 2022*

Number of Hotels/Rooms	Total Operating Revenue (in billion CNY)	Proportion of Room Revenue to Total Operating Revenue (%)	Proportion of Food and Beverage Revenue to Total Operating Revenue (%)
783	440.72	41.68	39.13

Note. Source: China National Tourism Administration, 2023

Hardingham (2012) has emphasized that the upper-middle class in China is anticipated to experience significant growth by 2039. This projection implies a substantial expansion in the market for luxury hotels, particularly as Chinese cities gain increased global significance, leading to a heightened demand for luxury accommodation. The luxury hotel industry in China has experienced rapid growth in recent years and is at the forefront of the country's hospitality sector development (Zhang et al., 2020). Gu et al. (2012) have contended that significant changes in the Chinese hotel market, in terms of both the quantity and demand for higher-quality services, have occurred over the past three decades. These factors have contributed to the increased scale of investment in luxury hotels in China.

Prominent luxury brands, including Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton, and Shangri-La, have established a presence in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Marriott International has also initiated investment in more upscale brands within the Chinese market. Additionally, other popular brands in China such as InterContinental, Starwood, Accor, Hyatt, and Hilton, continue their expansion efforts into additional cities and popular tourist destinations (Gu et al., 2012; See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Numbers of Luxury Hotels in China from 2012 to 2022



Note. Sources. China National Tourism Administration [CNTA], 2012-2022

As a result, the opportunities in the mid-to-high-end market segment within the Chinese hotel industry have enticed numerous luxury brands to broaden their business presence in China. Marriott, for instance, introduced Ritz-Carlton, Courtyard, and JW Marriott into Beijing. Similarly, the Starwood Hotels Group introduced Westin and St. Regis into China, aiming to enhance the visibility of foreign luxury hotel brands in the Chinese market (See Table 2), and the successful introduction of these luxury hotel brands into China to Chinese consumers' appreciation for luxury brands and their increasing personal wealth (Hardingham, 2012). Therefore, against the backdrop of China's rapid economic growth and the influx of international hotel brands, examining the development of the luxury hotel industry in China provides compelling justification for choosing this field of study. Furthermore, consumers in the Chinese luxury hotel market have distinct preferences (Yan et al., 2020).

Table 2*Time When Luxury Hotel Brands Entered the Chinese Market*

Time when luxury hotel brands entered the Chinese market		
Time	Brand	Location
1989	Peninsula	Beijing
1996	Inter Continental	Shanghai
1998	Ritz-Carlton	Shanghai
2000	St Regis	Beijing
2005	Banyan Tree	Yunnan
2006	Raffles	Beijing
2008	Aman	Beijing
2008	Park Hyatt	Shanghai
2009	Mandarin Oriental	Hainan
2010	Conrad	Hainan
2010	Waldorf Astoria	Shanghai
2011	Andaz	Shanghai
2011	Jumeirah	Shanghai
2013	W	Guangzhou
2014	Lux	Yunnan
2015	Niccolo	Chengdu
2016	Edition	Hainan
2017	Bulgari	Beijing
2017	Capella	Shanghai
2018	Bellagio	Shanghai

Note. Adapted from "No one will remember the second place! The Most Complete Inventory Ever: 64 International Hotel Brands' First Stores in Mainland China" by Rick, 2021, *Yi Life*, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/l67RKLthKVuH4m4oLwTN-w>

2.3 Consumers of the Luxury Hotel Market in China

Primarily, in the realm of culture, customers' personal values and cultural backgrounds significantly influence their perceptions of luxury services and subsequently shape their behaviour within the luxury hospitality industry (Le & Quy, 2021). Extant findings have underscored that cultural values play a pivotal role in shaping customers' perceptions of service quality, with service needs varying significantly across cultural groups (Tsaur et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2008). The inability of many multinational companies operating in China to achieve anticipated success is often attributed to their failure to adapt adequately to local cultural differences and meet local needs (Yuan, 2010).

Consumer behaviour is constrained by cultural backgrounds, making the implementation of globally standardized services exceedingly difficult (Li, 2014).

Therefore, there is a heightened need to acknowledge the impact of cultural factors on the Chinese luxury hotel industry. Zhang and Zhao (2019) have asserted that consumers from collectivist countries and cultures such as China and Confucian culture, exhibit unique cultural values, such as the concept of "face," which differ from those in Western countries. China is characterized by a high level of Confucian cultural values (Cam et al., 2021). The influence of Confucian culture on Chinese luxury hotel consumers manifests in various ways, including considerations of vanity and saving face (Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Numerous studies have consistently demonstrated that Chinese individuals are often influenced by Confucian culture to spend on luxury hotels as a means of preserving or gaining respect from others, choosing such expenditures for symbolic purposes (Li et al., 2012; Li et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Zhan and He (2012) have asserted that Chinese consumers' purchasing behaviour is profoundly influenced by the collective culture of China. Consumers in Western and Asian societies may have different motivations for purchasing the same product and it may serve different social functions (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Numerous prior studies have also established a correlation between culture and consumption (Craig & Douglas, 2006; Yaprak, 2008). Frugality is a foundational value in Chinese culture, exerting a substantial impact on consumers' daily lives and purchasing behaviour (Wang & Lin, 2009). Chinese individuals place significant value on their relationships with others, particularly in terms of the recognition of their personal social status. Consequently, Chinese middle-class consumers employ luxury consumption as a means to communicate their personal social status and garner respect from others (Zhan & He, 2012).

For Chinese consumers, luxury consumption has significant social symbolism (Sun et

al., 2016). The purchasing behaviour of Chinese consumers, particularly in acquiring luxury items like clothing and jewellery, underscores the primary role of luxury goods as social symbols. This stands in contrast to the emphasis on private meanings and hedonistic values highlighted by Western consumers (Zhang & Kim, 2013). According to Zhang and Zhao's (2019) study, emotional value and quality value emerge as the principal factors influencing Chinese luxury hotel consumers. Those influenced by Confucian culture express a desire for personalized or differentiated services in luxury hotels (Le & Quy, 2021).

Secondly, regarding consumers, the luxury consumption market in China is undergoing a subtle yet significant transformation. Recent research suggests that affluent elderly consumers are no longer the exclusive or dominant force in the luxury goods market; instead, the younger middle class is progressively becoming a crucial contributor to this market. This shift is attributed not only to the ongoing expansion of people's self-fulfilment needs but also to the evolving mindset of the new generation of consumers, transitioning from a savings culture to a consumption culture (Bilge, 2015; Kim et al., 2020).

In contrast to other luxury sectors, the essence of the luxury hotel industry resides in delivering outstanding and impeccable services to fulfil consumer requirements and elevate guest experiences (Giglio et al., 2020; Padma & Ahn, 2020). Directing attention to the luxury hotel landscape in China, the predominant consumer demographic has shifted to Gen Y, denoting individuals born between 1980 and 1995. Chinese consumers now possess elevated standards for quality attributes in luxury hotels, and expect exceptional facilities, personalized services, and a diverse array of culinary options (H. Tsai et al., 2011).

In contrast to preceding generations, Gen Y in China demonstrates distinct consumption preferences, willingly investing in high-quality and luxury brands (O'Cass & Choy,

2008). This cohort of Chinese consumers not only seeks value for their expenditure but also insists on excellence in aesthetics and comfort (Yang & Lau, 2015). The study conducted by Yang and Lau (2015) underscores that, in the realm of luxury hotels, Chinese consumers regard top-tier rooms and highly skilled service personnel as indispensable criteria and anticipated components. Personalized service and innovation emerge as effective strategies for garnering loyalty from Gen Y consumers in China. They place significant emphasis on the courtesy and professionalism of staff, expecting service providers to integrate cultural norms and values into hotel operations (Chen, 2011; H. Tsai et al., 2011). Scholars have posited that consumers from the new generation in China's emerging luxury hotel market endeavour to harmonize traditional Confucian values with contemporary ideals of individualism and hedonism, amalgamating Eastern and Western cultures (Lynton & Thøgersen, 2010, as cited in Yang & Lau, 2015). This suggests an evolution in consumers' cultural perspectives and value systems, introducing novel challenges and opportunities for the luxury hotel industry in China.

The extant literature lacks studies that incorporate Chinese cultural context and the characteristics of Chinese consumers in the luxury hotel industry (Yang & Mattila, 2016). While many studies have acknowledged the influence of traditional Confucian cultural values on various consumer behaviours in China, there is a paucity of research investigating these values concerning luxury goods (Sun et al., 2014). Research in this domain has predominantly focused on Western consumers, leaving a notable gap in understanding of the behaviours of luxury hotel consumers in newly affluent countries such as China (Zhang et al., 2020).

2.4 Service Needs of Customers with Young Children

2.4.1 Travelling with Young Children

Current research is increasingly directing attention towards family vacations, yet there remains a notable gap in the research into the influence of young children on the hospitality industry. A review of the literature reveals a scarcity of travel studies considering the perceptions of young children, with previous research inadequately recognizing the significance of young children in family vacation hotel decisions (Wang & Li, 2021). However, hotel choice during family vacations is substantially influenced by children, as they frequently contribute to creating distinctive hotel experiences alongside their parents (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015).

In 1990s, there was a notable emphasis on recognizing children as significant influences in family vacation choices (Cullingford, 1995). Kim et al. (2010) highlighted that certain hotel companies, such as Hyatt Hotels, have acknowledged this aspect. For example, Hyatt Hotels developed exclusive marketing plans for children and established a children's committee to conduct focus-group testing for child-related activities. Additionally, some travel agencies have introduced tailored travel tours specifically designed for children. Koc (2004) has suggested that younger family members often play a crucial role in accommodation decisions during family vacations, based on their individual preferences. In particular, toddlers under the age of six, while seemingly passive in the decision-making process, significantly contribute to family dynamics, which, in turn, influences hotel choices (Poria & Timothy, 2014).

During family vacations, parents are generally willing to pay additional expenses to accommodate their children's preferences (Curtale, 2018). This perspective aligns with Siwek et al.'s (2022) assertion that parents prioritize their children's accommodation preferences when considering hotel selection, irrespective of the child's age. As children

often impact parents' activities within the hotel, such as meal times and sleep requirements, studying the factors influencing parents' hotel choices when vacationing with toddlers will contribute to a more nuanced segmentation of the hotel market (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). Based on the aforementioned literature review, this study categorizes the needs of guests with young children for hotel services into the following classes.

Accommodation needs

Gram (2005) noted that guests with young children prioritize accommodation satisfaction over other hotel amenities and discounts. Similarly, Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2018) underscored the need for hotels to focus on the accommodation needs of young children, including considerations such as room size, safety, and hygiene, when designing facilities and delivering services for this demographic. In a comparison of parents vacationing with children of different ages, Siwek et al. (2022) revealed that parents with young children aged 0-6 years had the highest expectations for accommodation.

Dining needs

Guests with young children are not only concerned about the taste and healthiness of the food in the hotel restaurant but also about the ambience, cleanliness, and service. They pay particular attention to the way the food is served, children's menus, and equipment and services for young children's dining, such as food reheating and catering for different dietary needs (Siwek et al., 2022). Children's needs for hotel food significantly differ from those of adults, including considerations like portion sizes and menu complexity (Hay, 2017). In studies focusing on family vacations in China, food holds a special significance as it can be an attractive feature of a place itself, providing children with various sensory and cultural experiences. It also satisfies the cultural needs of Chinese parents and the requirements for a hotel restaurant (Wu et al., 2019). According to Siwek et al. (2022), guests with young children place greater importance

on restaurant amenities such as high chairs and toddler menus and cutlery. Fulfilling these needs allows greater freedom for parents during mealtime and enables young children to eat in a comfortable and proper manner.

Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) conducted a study revealing notable distinctions in the preferences of one year olds and twelve year olds concerning hotel accommodation. Specifically, when parents are accompanied by infants, there is a tendency to seek hotels that offer nutritious child-friendly meals and specialized utensils. This arises from the understanding that the dynamics of mealtime can significantly shape the vacation goals of parents with very young children. Owing to the distinctive caregiving requirements and rigid schedules of infants, their mere presence holds the potential to influence both family vacations and the selection of hotels (Thornton et al., 1997).

Entertainment needs

Hemmington (2007) demonstrated that children have specific consumer needs and desire creative, fun-filled experiences and activities. This aspect is also underscored in Obrador's (2012) study, which suggests that hotels should provide diverse entertainment facilities for children across different age groups, including dedicated pools for young children. For families travelling with children, it is highly appealing when hotels offer various facilities for kids in separate entertainment spaces, such as kids' club areas, tents, and games rooms (Siwek et al., 2022). Certain hotels, by incorporating local cultural themes and fostering positive collaborations with the local community to establish a favourable image, can gain a competitive edge and become more preferred by parents. This proactive engagement and community integration are believed to not only enrich a hotel's uniqueness but also enhance the appeal of family travel, providing children with more educational experiences (Seraphin & Yallop, 2020). Seraphin and Thanh (2020) emphasized the educational role of hotel activity programs and recommended integrating sustainable development concepts into the entertainment activities offered to children. In practice, when families are on vacation, parents often

focus on various children's activities outside their rooms, such as kids' clubs and swimming pools (Carr, 2011).

Service and activity needs

Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) discovered that when parents bring young children to stay in hotels, they prioritize high-quality interaction between hotel staff and children, as well as personalized services based on children's interests and ages. Even the inclusion of a children's section in the hotel's website, facilitating parents' easy access to information about children's facilities, can enhance the hotel's appeal to guests with young children (Buzlu & Balik, 2022). Multiple studies have also indicated that the additional care provided by hotel staff for young children is one of the most crucial factors for parents when choosing a family-friendly resort. This care includes factors such as being knowledgeable about emergency medical contact numbers, prioritizing child safety during the service process, and providing stroller-friendly pathways (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Liu & Filimonau, 2020; Siwek et al., 2022).

When hotels develop services and infrastructure, it is imperative to consider the varied requirements of children across different age brackets, ranging from infants to adolescents (Hamed, 2017). As highlighted by Therkelsen (2010), the influence of children on vacation-related decisions is contingent upon their age. The essential needs of young children, including sleep, hygiene, and safety, can directly impact parents' choices of accommodation. Conversely, older children may articulate their preferences through negotiation. Clearly, whether through direct or indirect means, children, particularly younger ones, wield a significant influence in the process of hotel selection (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018).

Previous research has delved into the selections of services offered by holiday hotels designed for families with children, such as kids' clubs and activity programs (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018; Seraphin & Yallop, 2019). However,

there remains a notable scarcity of studies examining similar services in luxury hotels. The limited exploration of this specific market segment may lead to imprecise service requests and delivery errors, adversely impacting customer satisfaction and resulting in negative experiences for hotels (Heo et al., 2004). It is crucial to highlight that the existing literature predominantly concentrates on research within hotels in Western countries, with studies on luxury hotels in China being comparatively scarce, thus representing a significant research gap in this field.

2.4.2 Motivations for Travelling with Young Children

To gain a deeper understanding of the motivations behind parents with young children seeking luxury hotel services, it is essential to examine the reasons influencing their choice of luxury hotels and travel destinations. As Li and Cai (2012) pointed out, motivations constitute the fundamental reasons behind human behaviour. Although scholars in recent years have explored the motivations of families vacationing with toddlers, drawing conclusions encompassing five dimensions, including bonding time, creating memories, learning and development, self-indulgence, and compensating for children (Li et al., 2017), this research has primarily explored the perspectives of travel bloggers from China and other countries. However, it has lacked a comprehensive focus on the motivations of the new generation of Chinese parents travelling with young children.

Literature on motivations suggests that parents in Western countries typically consider family-oriented programs arranged by hotels as potentially adding stress to their vacation experience. Therefore, their primary focus lies in relaxation and enjoyment during holidays (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). In contrast, Chinese parents place a stronger emphasis on the educational function of travel activities, seeking to strengthen family bonds through travel (Li et al., 2017). This perspective is closely tied to traditional Chinese culture, where the family is regarded as the crucial institution for

transmitting cultural influences and is seen as a more potent educational link than schools within a cultural context emphasizing family traditions (Stanworth, 2009). Consequently, the contemporary generation of Chinese parents may prioritize venues and activities that offer educational experiences and strengthen family bonds when choosing luxury hotels for family vacations. This aligns with their background in a society emphasizing traditional cultural values. However, there remains a significant research gap in this area.

While many studies have initiated investigations into the influence of children on hotel selection during family vacations (Ben Lahouel & Montargot, 2020; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2010), a conspicuous research gap persists in the examination of the impact of very young children on hotel choices. Current research in the domain of family tourism primarily concentrates on holiday decision-making processes and families' behaviours as consumers, allocating comparatively less attention to the specific demands of this guest group regarding hotel service (Bronner & de Hoog, 2008; Yang et al., 2020).

2.5 Chinese Parenting Concepts

Although understanding the needs of young clients is crucial for improving service satisfaction, it is equally important to consider the unique parenting perspectives of Chinese parents and their impact on hotel requirements. Undoubtedly, tourism has emerged as a primary avenue for Chinese families to engage in leisure activities. Chinese parents exhibit a willingness to allocate increasing financial resources and time to travelling with their children (Shuxia, 2018). Asians, in general, hold a distinctive perspective on leisure and tourism services, often regarding holiday activities as opportunities for enhanced learning experiences for children (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). For Chinese parents, deeply influenced by Confucian culture, the core tenet of

parenting centres around fostering educational achievement for their children. Yen et al. (2020) have proposed that when studying family vacations, it is essential to consider cultural differences, values, and the goals that families aim to achieve through travel.

The motivation for Chinese people to travel is intricately linked to Chinese Confucian culture (Fu et al., 2015). The roots of Confucianism can be traced back to ancient China in the 6th century BCE. It holds the belief that individuals are inherently good and should pursue moral order in life. It accentuates the importance of defining oneself and one's personality through interactions with others. This philosophical perspective significantly influences Chinese consumers, guiding them to align with the brand choices of their peers when selecting luxury hotels (Wong, 2001; Zhang & Tse, 2018).

Wang and Li (2021) found that Chinese parents aspire to expose their young children to diverse cultures, instil knowledge, and broaden their horizons from an early age through holidays. Influenced by the principles of self-cultivation and lifelong learning promoted by Confucian culture, Chinese travellers seek a journey of self-improvement and education during their travels more fervently than travellers from other countries (Zhang & Tse, 2018). Siwek et al. (2022) proposed in their study that the experiences young children gain from visiting cultural institutions such as museums and science centres significantly mould their perspectives, sensitivity to the world, and their eagerness to expand their knowledge during their formative years. Consequently, Chinese parents are placing greater emphasis on incorporating educational activities into their vacation plans.

Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) highlighted in their study that the primary allure for tourists visiting theme parks in Hong Kong is the educational component. Additionally, their research revealed that Asian parents, rather than focusing on hedonism, are more inclined to seek educational significance for their children through hotel activities. Xu et al. (2009) also discovered that, for Chinese travellers, a deeper understanding of

culture and history holds greater importance than the pursuit of hedonistic experiences. These phenomena can be traced back to the fundamental role of knowledge in Chinese Confucian culture, which prompts Chinese parents to closely monitor their children's academic achievements and adopt strategies that foster learning (Luo et al., 2013).

Hence, it is imperative for hotels to give heightened consideration to families hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds, as they harbour distinct expectations concerning the amenities and orchestrated activities tailored for children (Liu & Filimonau, 2020). A comparative analysis of the viewpoints of parents from Asian countries and Western nations regarding holidays has unveils contrasting preferences. Asian parents exhibited a greater inclination towards incorporating educational activities into vacations, whereas their Western counterparts leant towards emphasizing the individuality and creativity of their children during holiday experiences (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015).

Furthermore, these research findings align with the intensifying landscape of competition in education in China. Chinese people, in a society characterized by a pyramid-shaped social structure and an education system deeply rooted in an exam-oriented culture, have long been subject to competition in education. However, in the contemporary era, the intensity of educational competition in China has reached unprecedented levels, setting it apart from the majority of other countries and regions (Kai, 2012). Notably, both Vincent and Ball (2001) and Kai (2012) have highlighted that the trend of mounting educational pressure extends to the preschool and basic education stages in China. In today's context, an increasing number of parents perceive childcare as a crucial preparation for preschool education, aspiring to provide their children with a competitive edge. Vincent and Ball (2004) further observed that all their interviewees, who were Chinese parents, regarded childcare as an indispensable stage in the cultivation of "outstanding" children.

Since the initiation of the one-child policy in 1979, China has witnessed substantial social transformations. The subsequent relaxation of this policy, coupled with China's rapid economic growth in recent decades, has resulted in heightened competition in education. In this context, numerous Chinese parents are making substantial investments in their children's preschool education, actively exploring additional educational opportunities and markets to secure their children's success in an intensely competitive society (Liu & Bray, 2022). This phenomenon not only mirrors the deeply ingrained nature of China's education culture but also highlights the profound value Chinese parents place on education.

Furthermore, research indicates that from an early age, Asian children are taught to comply with their parents' directives, distinguishing them from their counterparts in Western societies (Kim et al., 2010). Chinese parents, in particular, place a strong emphasis on rules and obedience to authority in the upbringing of their children (Xu et al., 2005). This emphasis aligns with the prevalence of authoritarian parenting in collectivist countries like China, as opposed to individualist countries (Rudy & Grusec, 2006). Hsu and Huang (2016) identified that Chinese travellers place greater weight on family orientation when making travel decisions. Consequently, when selecting a hotel, Chinese parents with young children prioritize options that offer opportunities for exploration and discovery through hotel activities (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). As China's society and economy evolve, Chinese parents are increasingly recognizing the importance of nurturing young children's social and emotional skills at an early age (Ren & Pope, 2015). This aligns with Carr's (2002) perspective that family vacation behaviour choices are influenced by both sociocultural and personal values. However, it is noteworthy that studies of traditional Chinese culture from a Western perspective may be biased and may overlook the subtle influence of Confucian culture on leisure choices (Sun et al., 2014).

2.6 Expectation-confirmation theory

Expectation-confirmation theory finds application in various domains of the tourism sector and the service industry (Bigné et al., 2005; Tsao, 2013). Serving as a fundamental framework for analysing customer satisfaction and performance in hotels, the theory unveils positive or negative uncertainty gaps between customer expectations and perceived performance (Beldona & Cobanoglu, 2007). Oliver (1980) has offered a comprehensive explanation of the expectation-confirmation concept, highlighting that customers formulate specific service expectations before engaging with a service and subsequently develop perceptions of service performance during the service experience. The confirmation process occurs as customers evaluate by comparing expectations with perceived performance. Negative opinions emerge when outcomes deviate from expectations, whereas positive perspectives arise when outcomes surpass expectations. Oliver suggested that expectation-confirmation theory could be applied to clarify the functional relationship between post-purchase satisfaction and the interaction between customer expectations and perceived performance. According to Oliver, consumer satisfaction depends on pre-purchase expectations of products and services, as well as the disparities between expectations and actual perceived performance (Oliver, 1980).

Anderson and Sullivan (1993) have asserted that, within expectation-confirmation theory, customers' perceived expectations of service significantly influence their satisfaction with the service. This tendency is particularly pronounced in the context of relatively higher quality luxury hotel services, where customers often hold elevated expectations, anticipating swift and high-quality service delivery (Lee et al., 2016). Yüksel and Yüksel (2001) also regarded expectation-confirmation theory as the most promising theoretical framework for evaluating customer satisfaction.

The significance of expectations as a pivotal factor influencing satisfaction cannot be overstated. As highlighted by Boo and Busser (2018), guests' expectations notably

impact a hotel's image and satisfaction levels. Further emphasizing this, Hosany and Gilbert (2010) underscore that when guests' overall expectations are met, their hotel experience becomes satisfying. Pre-stay expectations regarding service quality directly influence satisfaction, as hotels not only extend on-site experiences but also facilitate guests' exploration of tourism support services. This process escalates with increasing demands, highlighting the crucial role of hotels in understanding and meeting expectations to enhance satisfaction (Boo & Busser, 2018; Chaudhary, 2000). Multiple scholars have noted that guest satisfaction originates from the expectation phase (Qazi et al., 2017; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001).

The perceived performance, as actual feedback on guests' experiences with hotel products, exerts a positive influence on their willingness to make repeat purchases in the future (Boo & Busser, 2018; Oh, 2000). Elements such as the hotel's physical environment, staff interactions, and provision of special activities all contribute to the perceived value for customers, which is considered a significant factor affecting customer satisfaction (Ali et al., 2017; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). According to Oliver (1980), guest satisfaction with services is closely intertwined with perceived service performance. The perceived service process is crucial in consumers' establishment of trust in the hotel, affecting their perceptions of the hotel brand, satisfaction levels, and intention to make repeat purchases (Shahid & Paul, 2022).

Motivation serves as the underlying cause of human behavior (Li & Cai, 2012). In the hotel and tourism sectors, there exists a positive and robust relationship between consumers' motivations and intentions. Without understanding consumers' motivations, hotels will be unable to effectively meet their needs (Zhan & He, 2012). Li et al. (2017) indicate that hotels and tourism promoters aiming to cultivate a family-friendly image must understand parents' motivations for family vacations. Due to varying cultural backgrounds, guests' motivations for choosing travel products and accommodations differ. Therefore, hotel practitioners must first understand these motivations to provide

products that cater to unique markets, thus creating strategic advantages (Wu et al., 2021). However, there has been limited research that integrates expectancy confirmation theory with motivation, focusing on exploring customers' genuine needs regarding hotels, including their expectations, motivations, and perceived performance.

Based on the literature reviewed, current research in the hotel industry lacks integration of China's unique cultural background and educational concepts, focusing on the study of consumer demands in Chinese luxury hotels (Yang & Mattila, 2016; Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies on family consumers primarily concentrate on holiday decision-making and behaviours of Western consumers, with limited attention to the needs of children under six years old (Bronner & De, 2008; Wang & Li, 2021). Therefore, this study adopts expectancy confirmation theory combined with motivational factors as its theoretical framework. It delves into the service demands of Chinese parents with children under six in Chinese luxury hotels, considering the influence of China's distinct cultural background and parenting beliefs. The aim is to provide theoretical foundations and practical recommendations for enhancing customer satisfaction in this segment of the Chinese luxury hotel industry.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on elucidating the research methodology. The chapter is broadly divided into three sections. Initially, the explanatory paradigm underpinning the research is expounded upon, with qualitative methods deemed more pertinent for gaining profound insights and conducting context-specific analyses (Creswell & Poth, 2018, as cited in Yang et al., 2020). To achieve this objective, a semistructured interview approach has been employed, delving into three primary dimensions: expectations, motivations, and perceived performance. This methodology established profound connections with the interview participants, facilitating an in-depth exploration of the service expectations and needs of young guests in Chinese luxury hotels. Subsequently, the data collection process is detailed, encompassing discussions on sample and population selection criteria, as well as the demographics of information among successfully interviewed participants. Simultaneously, this chapter delineates the data collection procedure, which employed a snowball sampling method to recruit participants meeting the specified criteria. Ethical considerations in this study which required the proper protection of respondents' rights and privacy throughout the research are outlined. Finally, a meticulous account of the data analysis process, which utilized thematic analysis to gain a profound understanding of the experiences, thoughts, and behaviours of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006), is provided. This approach aimed to offer clear data support for the research findings, enhancing the scientific rigour of the methodology.

3.2 Paradigm and Method

In the preceding literature review, it was observed that research in this domain has often

adopted either an empirical paradigm (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012; Siwek et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2008; Yang & Lau, 2015) for quantitative investigations or an interpretive paradigm (Harkison et al., 2018; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Li et al., 2020; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Yang et al., 2020) for qualitative inquiries. Al-Ababneh (2020) has proposed that the interpretive approach seeks to comprehend the social world through interpretation, deeply rooted in culture and history. In contrast, the empirical approach aligns with the methodologies of the natural sciences, relying on observations considered value-free and objective to uncover universal characteristics of humans, society, and history. This approach aims to provide explanations and lay the foundation for further prediction and control.

As posited by Harkison et al. (2018), the interpretive paradigm seeks to delve into the "world of human experience" and can be used to explore a diverse array of life experiences from the perspectives of individuals, and this paradigm takes the view that researchers serve as the primary data collection tools, fostering deeper engagement in the research process and enhancing the consistency of data collection. Working within this paradigm, researchers can gain clearer insights into the symbols and nuances within textual data, extracting meaning from them (van der Walt, 2020). Moreover, van der Walt suggests that differences among individuals can result in varied experiences and judgments. This implies that the perceptions of different interpreters are complex and distinct, leading each interpreter to generate unique interpretations of the research topic (van der Walt, 2020). This aligns well with the objectives of this study, which aims to integrate China's distinctive parenting concepts and educational culture to explore the services required by Chinese parents when bringing their children to luxury hotels in China.

By using an interpretive paradigm, this study stands to gain a better understanding of the influence of culture on service demands, thereby furnishing the hospitality industry with more targeted and practical insights. Simultaneously, it provides more

personalized and applicable solutions for Chinese families in luxury hotel environments, effectively meeting the expectations and requirements of a diverse customer base.

In prior research on children's service needs during family vacations (Ariffin et al., 2012; Boo & Busser, 2018; Siwek et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2004), there has been a predominant reliance on quantitative methodologies for data acquisition and analysis. However, in recent years, scholars have increasingly recognized the unique value of qualitative research methods in gaining a deeper understanding of the specific context of children's service needs and family vacation behaviours (Creswell & Poth, 2018, as cited in Yang et al., 2020). This recognition is particularly crucial for researchers aiming to discern the specific requirements and typical behaviours of this clientele within the Chinese context.

Hence, this study adopted a semistructured interview approach, a method highly esteemed by professional researchers for its capacity to allow participants the freedom to narrate personal experiences. Semistructured interviews enable researchers to establish profound connections with participants. Through active engagement and guided conversation, researchers can better delve into individual experiences and perspectives. Granting participants more autonomy also aids in obtaining rich information and fostering a deeper understanding (Mooney et al., 2016). This method of in-depth exploration of personal experiences enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the expectations, motivations, and perceived effectiveness of children's service needs and family vacation behaviours in this study.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Sample and Population

In determining the eligibility of interviewees to participate, several criteria were employed. Firstly, they needed to have at least one child under the age of 6. Children of different ages have varying impacts on family vacation choices (Bronner & de Hoog, 2008; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Siwek et al., 2022). Most hotels and resorts offer children's services geared towards the ages of 5 to 12, providing interactive care, while babysitting services are more geared towards children under 4 (Gaines et al., 2004). Selecting parents with children under 6 allowed for a better integration of the needs for both interactive care and babysitting services. In Wang et al.'s (2004) study, children were categorized by educational levels into preschoolers (aged 0-6), elementary school children (aged 7-12), and middle/high school students (aged 13-18), with the finding that the needs of the 0-6 age group significantly influenced the information search and final decision stages in family vacation planning. Within China's educational system, children under 6 are typically considered preschoolers. In alignment with the objectives of this study, the term "children" is defined as encompassing those aged six and below.

Another selection criterion was that participants had accommodated their children in luxury hotels in China in the past five years. This criterion ensured that participants possessed sufficient experience and background to provide detailed information about their experiences staying in luxury hotels. This study employed data saturation techniques (Patton, 2015), and as such, the number of participants was not predetermined. To ensure the quality and depth of the data, the research concluded at the 16th interview, prompted by the emergence of data redundancy during the 15th interview. This approach was used to ensure a comprehensive and profound understanding of the research subjects.

During the recruitment of participants to this study, gender balance was not intentionally pursued. Among the 16 interviewees, there were 12 females and 4 males. The ages of the 16 interviewees were mainly between 30 and 40 years, with one female participant aged between 40 and 50 years. The ages of the children varied from 1 to 6 years. Regarding educational qualifications, 12 participants held undergraduate degrees, while 4 had postgraduate degrees. Additionally, concerning the participants' places of residence, 9 were from first-tier cities in China, while 7 were from second-tier cities, ensuring diverse geographical representation in the sample (See Table 3).

Table 3*Participant Profiles*

Category	Total	N	%
Gender			
Women	16	12	75
Men		4	25
Children's Gender			
Girl	24	12	50
Boy		12	50
Children's Age			
Youngest		1 year	
Oldest		6 years	
Education Level			
Bachelor		12	75
Master		4	25
Resident City			
First-tier		9	56.2
Second-tier		7	43.7
Family Monthly Income			
CNY 9000 - 20000		5	31.2
CNY 20001 - 50000		10	62.5
CNY Over 50000		1	6.2
Occupation			
Finance		3	18.7
Business		6	37.5
Education		2	12.5
Housewife		3	18.7
Hospitality		2	12.5

3.3.2 Data Collection Procedure

Similar to the studies conducted by Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) and Yang et al. (2020), this research employed a snowball sampling technique to recruit and select Chinese

parents who, in the past five years, have stayed with children aged six and below in luxury hotels in China.

Initially, the researcher selected a Chinese mother who met the research criteria as the primary participant. The first contact with this interviewee was through a social media platform (WeChat) where the mother frequently shared her experiences of staying in hotels with her children. During the communication, the researcher ensured her willingness to participate in the research interview and provided detailed explanations regarding the research objectives and procedures. Upon receiving a positive response and consent from the first interviewee, the researcher utilised her assistance to recruit more participants who met the research criteria through her social network and personal connections. To uphold academic rigour, online interviews were conducted, employing an interview guide comprising seven broad questions: (1) Can you share which luxury hotel you have stayed at with young children before? (2) Why did you choose it? (3) What were the reasons for this trip? (4) Is there a luxury hotel you stayed in with your children that impressed you? Why? (5) Have you ever stayed at a luxury hotel that offered children's or parent-child activities that were memorable to you? What kind of activities? (6) Do you have any service suggestions for luxury hotels? (7) What type of activities do you hope the luxury hotel will provide for your child? These research questions were designed to address the core issues of the study while considering practicalities, aligned with the guidance by Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) on obtaining effective data.

Due to the interviewees being Chinese parents and the researcher's native language being Chinese, the interviews were conducted in Chinese. Despite comprising only four questions, the interviews often extended to 60 minutes due to the breadth of the questions. It is noteworthy that three participants voluntarily provided supplementary information in a second session following the initial online interviews, further elaborating on their answers to ensure detailed and in-depth responses. To safeguard

data quality and content reliability, the researcher recorded the interviews with the consent of the interviewees. Additionally, to enhance the accuracy of the interview data, the researcher utilized the real-time transcription feature of the online conferencing software during the interviews as a dual verification of the interview content.

3.3.3 Research Ethics

In accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) in 2020, research must adhere to ethical principles while meeting the minimum standards to ensure research integrity. The core purpose of these standards is to ensure that research has clear objectives, employs an appropriate research design, and holds the potential to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. This aligns with the perspective of Barak and Green (2021), who have asserted that responsible research behaviour contributes to elevating professional standards and advancing knowledge.

Research ethics are not merely a set of regulations to be followed at the onset of a study; they permeate the entire research process (Hudson & Russell, 2009). Throughout this process, the guiding role of research ethics is evident, delineating the codes of conduct for both researchers and participants. This comprehensive research ethics framework ensures the scientific validity and fairness of the research while safeguarding the rights and privacy of participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

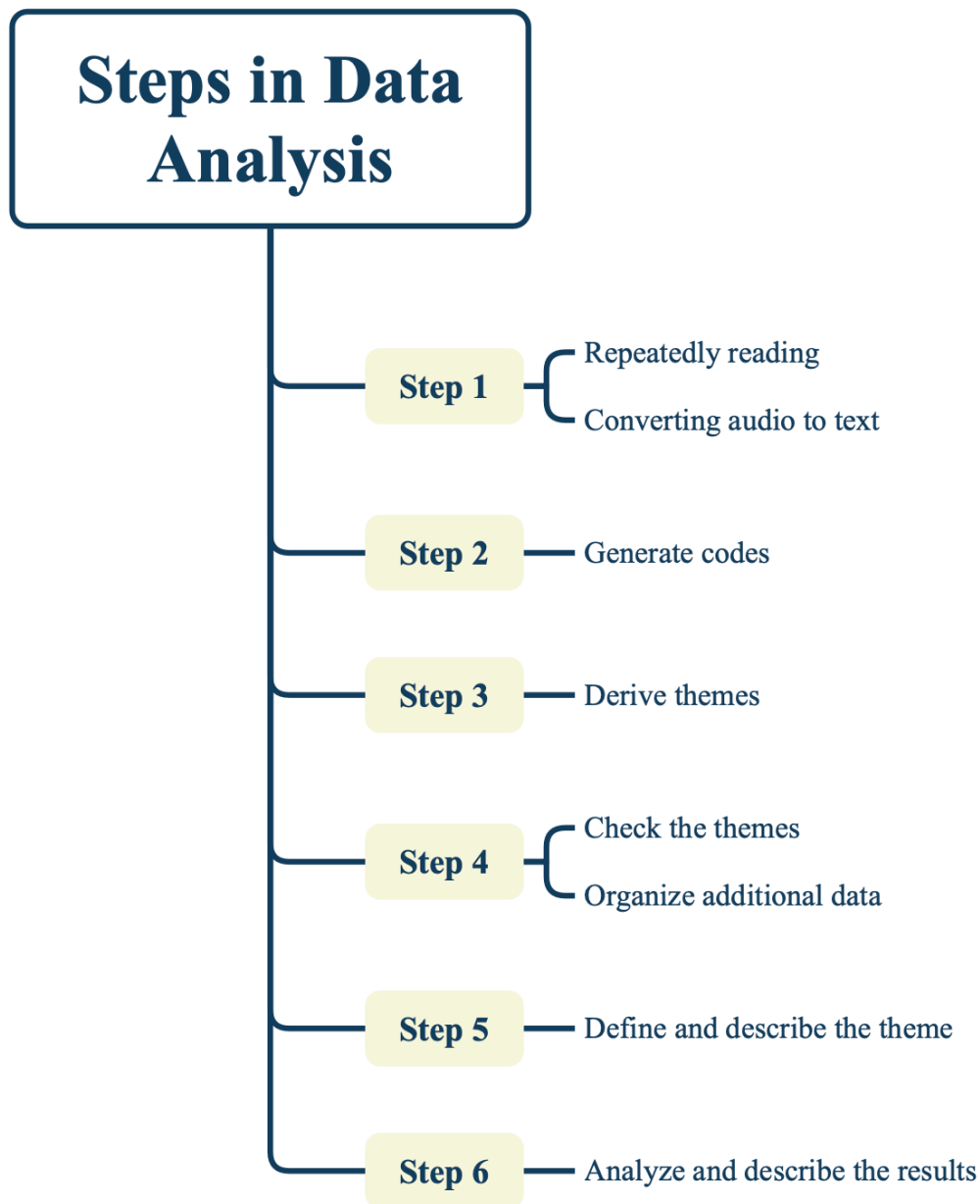
In the data analysis stage, this study adopted the qualitative data analysis process proposed by Li et al. (2020). This process commences with a comprehensive reading of all texts, enabling researchers to familiarize themselves with the entire dataset and formulate a conceptual framework for understanding key themes. Simultaneously

employing the thematic analysis method as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), this approach involves searching across datasets to identify, analyse, and report recurring themes. Thematic analysis provides researchers with significant flexibility, allowing them to summarize and interpret common features across various datasets (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Scholars also view thematic analysis as foundational to other qualitative research methods, particularly within the interpretive paradigm, where it can effectively highlight the social and cultural contexts of individual experiences constructed through the interaction between researchers and participants, facilitating the development of comprehensive knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A theme is an abstract entity derived from information data obtained by researchers from participants, constituting, to a large extent, a dataset integration (Nowell et al., 2017). As articulated by Kiger and Varpio (2020), the theme serves not only as an organizing tool for data classification and labelling but also as way of reconstructing, reinterpreting, and interconnecting data. Thematic analysis not only enables researchers to organically integrate data but also provides an opportunity for a profound understanding and interpretation of the complex relationships underlying the data.

This study employed the six-step thematic analysis process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) for the in-depth examination of textual data (See Figure 2).

Figure 2
Steps in Data Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)



Initially, the online interview audio data underwent meticulous transcription into a textual format. This initial step aimed to guarantee the integrity and accuracy of the data. The researcher then thoroughly familiarized themselves with the complete dataset through repeated comprehensive readings.

In the second step, the researcher developed an initial coding framework, employing an inductive approach to organizing the codes. The coding process was systematically documented to support the credibility of the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the data (Nowell et al., 2017). For instance, participants commonly mentioned, "Engaging in parent-child activities offered by luxury hotels with young children subtly cultivates and promotes various abilities in children." The researcher abstracted this perspective into the code "broadening horizons."

The third step involved deriving themes from the coded data and carefully examining the coding and data extraction to ensure close connections between the identified themes and the original data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Simultaneously, the search was extended to identify more broadly meaningful latent themes such as those related to children, brand effect, and activities for children. The formation of these themes contributed to better organization of the data, enabling the researcher to gain clearer insights into the connections and associations among different codes. After initially organising the themes and coding, the researcher sought to ensure data credibility by presenting the preliminary results to some participants, requesting their validation and approval of the researcher's interpretations.

In the fourth step, the researcher meticulously examined the topic and organized additional data. This process aimed to ensure the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the explored themes. For example, several participants highlighted the impact of age differences among children, noting that the needs of younger children differ significantly from those of older children. They also pointed out the specific service requirements associated with families having multiple children.

In the fifth step, a synthesis of the literature review and thematic analysis was undertaken, delving into the potential implications within these themes. Comprehensive descriptions and definitions were supplied for each theme. This approach contributed

to a deeper comprehension of the research questions and improved coherence with other themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For instance, certain participants expressed the expectation that luxury hotels should provide "rewards." The researcher intricately explored this theme by incorporating insights from the Chinese educational context, elucidating that these expectations arise from the reward systems ingrained in Chinese culture.

Finally, the researcher conducted a thorough analysis of the interview results through meticulous data organization and in-depth examination, as outlined in Chapter 4. As highlighted by Kiger and Varpio (2020), report writing is not a distinct phase from thematic analysis but rather an extension of data analysis. This process, marked by logically rigorous steps, explored the essential themes within the dataset, thereby establishing a strong foundation for the study's conclusions and practical recommendations.

In this study, given that the participants were Chinese, the interviews were conducted in the researcher's native language, Chinese, and following participants' prior consent, were recorded for transcription. To ensure linguistic accuracy, the original language texts underwent coding analysis using NVivo 10 during the data analysis stage. Subsequently, the Chinese transcripts were translated verbatim into English for citation in this study. For instance, the Chinese term *tuoguanfuwu* (托管服务) was rendered in English as "childcare services," and the frequently occurring Chinese term in the context of motivation, *zhangjianshi* (长见识), was translated into English as "broadening horizons." To ensure the quality of the selected themes, their translation, and interpretation, as well as the confirmability of the research, the researcher adopted a consistent coding framework and meticulously documented the entire coding process, including the original data, coding steps, and related records. Additionally, to achieve semantic equivalence, the researcher employed the back-translation method to ensure translation accuracy (Chen & Boore, 2010). Furthermore, the researcher repeatedly

reviewed and proofread the translated texts to ensure consistency. Comprehensive records and notes were maintained during and after each interview. To protect participant privacy, real names were not disclosed in the study; instead, pseudonyms such as Interviewee A1 were utilized.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

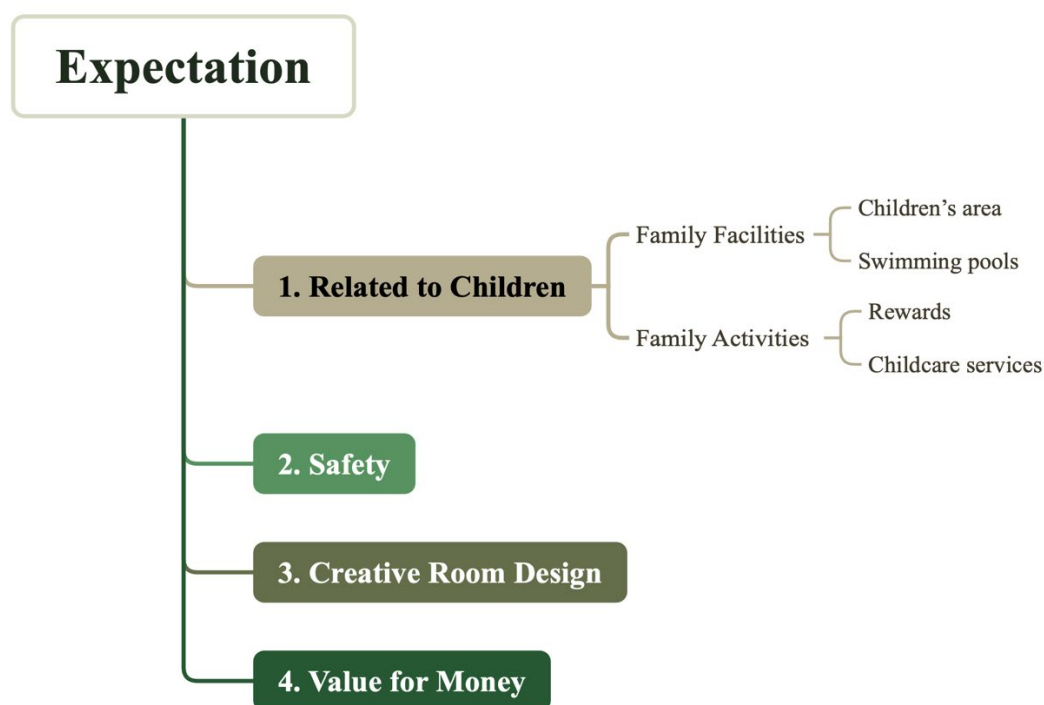
This chapter presents the detailed research findings in four main sections: expectations, motivations, perceived performance, and additional findings, systematically outlining the core outcomes of the study. To commence, the expectations section comprehensively analyses customers' expectations when bringing young children to stay in luxury hotels. Following that, the motivations section concentrates on the factors motivating Chinese parents to choose luxury hotels for stays with their young children. These include brand influence, broadening horizons, creating happy memories, and personal needs, revealing the driving forces and purposes behind this guest market segment. The perceived performance section of the chapter details the actual perceptions of performance of Chinese parents bringing young children to use luxury hotel services. Finally, the chapter delves into unforeseen discoveries that emerged during the research process. Simultaneously, a summary and synthesis of the research findings is provided to offer a comprehensive presentation of the profound understanding of the genuine needs of Chinese parents travelling with young children during their stays in luxury hotels.

4.2 Expectation

In line with expectation-confirmation theory, customer satisfaction is significantly influenced by expectations. Hotels play a crucial role in the tourist experience, acting as an extension of the overall tourism encounter. Therefore, it is essential to thoroughly explore the potential value of tourism support services. Before guests check into a hotel, they already hold specific expectations regarding service quality (Chaudhary, 2000). With increasing customer demands, expectations for accommodation services are on

the rise, surpassing mere lodging. This trend is especially pronounced among guests travelling with young children (Boo & Busser, 2018). Hosany and Gilbert (2010) have asserted that meeting the overall expectations of hotel guests can augment their satisfaction with the hotel experience. Additionally, prior research suggests that customer satisfaction begins to take shape during the expectation formation stage and is significantly influenced by information provided by service providers (Qazi et al., 2017; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001). In this study, the coding process revealed four themes related to expectations (See Figure 3), expectations related to children, safety, creative room design, and value for money.

Figure 3
Expectation Framework



4.2.1 Expectations Related to Children

Family facilities

During the analysis of interview data, two prominent subtopics emerged in relation to children: family facilities and family activities. Parents specifically underscored the significance of facilities and services offered by destination hotels, expressing elevated expectations, especially for luxury hotels marketed as "child-friendly." Notably, this study observed a prevalent emphasis among parents on the requirements of children aged under 6 years for family facilities in hotels, with a particular focus on maternal and child supplies. These needs encompassed a variety of specific facilities and details, such as changing tables, bottle warmers, infant swim rings, strollers, baby diapers, and formula:

I would prefer it if the hotel room had a changing table or a bottle warmer. Also, a small play table for indoor play. (A16)

I hope they can provide more convenient baby services, such as renting or offering baby strollers, or beach carts. If I take my child out, I won't need to bring a stroller myself. I'd be willing to borrow or pay for it. But it seems I haven't encountered such services yet. (A11)

I tend to choose hotels with family facilities, such as providing items like infant swim rings or beach toys. Because I have to buy a set of these things every time I go to a hotel, and I can't bring so much stuff with me. These things aren't very expensive, but if the hotel can provide a set for families with children, it would make customers feel psychologically comfortable, happy, and worry-free. Additionally, I hope the hotel offers some common brand baby diapers or portable formula, disposable bottles. They can offer these as paid services. If they have them, it would be very convenient, and I wouldn't have to bring so many things when going out. (A11)

Especially for children at the age of four or six, I would choose hotels with more family activities, better family facilities, or excellent family services. (A2)

As underscored in the 2020 study by Li et al. meticulous attention to the micro-level details of family-friendly facilities within luxury hotels and resorts is crucial in addressing the requirements of guests with young children. Elements like well-equipped baby rooms and dedicated children's elevators play a substantial role in meeting the expectations set for hotel destinations. Consequently, the provision of more responsive and comprehensive family-friendly facilities emerged as a primary determinant in shaping the expectations of parents who travel with young children, particularly in the context of luxury hotels.

Children's Area

Parents consistently expressed the desire for hotels to offer dedicated children's areas strategically positioned in central hotel spaces like the lobby or restaurants, catering to the needs of families travelling with young children. The creation of these designated areas serves a dual purpose: providing young children with a secure, stimulating, and family-friendly environment to expend their energy and curiosity, while affording parents the opportunity to relax and fully enjoy their vacation. This research finding is in harmony with the conclusions drawn from Li et al.'s (2020) study on the vacation experiences of young children, as parents perceive these children's areas as an essential element of family-oriented amenities:

I hope there is a dedicated area for him, like a children's playground. Because when kids play outside, parents travelling are definitely tired too. So, we hope there is an area where we can free our hands and let the children play with their things on their own, while the parents watch nearby. (A3)

Past research has highlighted a tendency and preference for children aged 6 to 11 to engage in interactive play with peers, while younger children are often at a self-centred developmental stage or the early phase of peer interaction (Li et al., 2020). However,

contrary to this trend, parents in this study expressed the expectation that even for young children, hotels' children's areas should possess social attributes. This suggests that hotels' children's areas should not only facilitate interaction among older children but also cater to the social needs of young children, thereby providing a more comprehensive and inclusive stay experience for families travelling together.

The demand for these social attributes was evident in parents' expectations that their children can interact and make new friends within the hotel. It is noteworthy that a hotel's children's area can be regarded as a space that fosters social growth and interpersonal skills, addressing the needs of both younger and older children. This creates an environment that encourages positive interactions among children of all age groups. Past research has suggested that an increasing number of parents choose to travel with their children primarily to promote the development of their children's social skills (Li et al., 2017). This underscores the potential of the hotel's children's area to meet the diverse needs of children and their parents and offer additional competitive advantages in the hotel industry. As one father expressed when discussing his expectations for a hotel restaurant to provide a children's area:

If the restaurant could have a dedicated children's area where kids could play after their meal, preferably supervised by trained professionals, it would not only put parents at ease but also facilitate their discussions. Additionally, children would have the opportunity to both play and make new friends in the children's area, which is also of significant importance. (A1)

Swimming Pools

In the literature review, it was observed that in Western countries parents express a preference for amenities such as swimming pools during family vacations (Thornton et al., 1997). However, the authors argued that this perspective may not be applicable to the service demands of parents in Asian countries. Notably, parents in our study

consistently articulated their expectations for upscale hotels to feature children's swimming pools, a component considered part of family-friendly facilities. This observation suggests a convergence in the preferences of Chinese family travellers with those of their Western counterparts. This shift is attributed to the younger age of parents and changes in consumer and entertainment preferences:

If I'm travelling with children, the pool is my first choice. If the hotel has an excellent pool and offers a wide variety of amenities for children, it's even better. (A14)

Family Activities

The majority of participants expressed an expectation that hotels would provide family-friendly activities, with a particular interest in activities incorporating educational elements. This finding is in harmony with the pressures prevalent in China's current educational system, as discussed in earlier chapters, and underscores parents' aspirations for hotels to cater to their families' needs. It is crucial to highlight that when participants refer to educational family activities, they are not exclusively focused on traditional academic knowledge. Instead, they placed greater emphasis on fostering their children's life skills, social communication abilities, and self-management skills, among various other qualities. These expectations also mirror the inclination of Chinese parents to seek more educational experiences during their travels, aligning with the trends in preferences of younger parents:

[In activities like those of a 'Junior Butler'] Such as ironing clothes, packing luggage... including polite phone etiquette and communication skills. This actually has an impact on various aspects of their abilities, from their hands to their eyes, mouth, and even their mind. (A14)

It can cultivate a sense of care for animals or rediscover this particular animal. (A11)

Parents have also linked the recent surge in the popularity of traditional Chinese cultural activities within China. They aspire for hotel activities to provide children with distinctive experiences, enabling a profound appreciation of China's rich cultural heritage. The significance of cultural experiences during family trips is progressively rising for Chinese parents, who actively seek opportunities to impart cultural understanding to their children, establishing a deeper cultural background. This inclination aligns with the perspective presented by Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015), which underscored the importance of academic and intellectual achievements to Asian parents. This discovery highlighted a demand in the family travel market for hotels to present family activities with both educational and cultural significance:

Some of the traditional Chinese cultural parent-child activities, like calligraphy, etiquette in speech, and the overall demeanour, are all different. I am definitely inclined towards these activities. (A14)

This way, the children can have a greater experience of Chinese culture, which is helpful for their language and thinking. (A6)

Rewards

In China, distinctive parenting philosophies and educational pressures are evident not only in children's academic pursuits but also extend to the diverse activities they engage in during vacations, even in early childhood. An integral aspect of this cultural context is the longstanding tradition of a reward system within Chinese society. Cultivating a sense of competition from an early age is promoted to instil the concept of “leading” within the competitive landscape of the Chinese education system (Wu, 2008). Many of the participants explicitly stated their expectations for hotels to offer rewards for family activities, aiming to encourage active child participation and foster a competitive spirit. This underscores the specific emphasis Chinese parents place on nurturing their children's competitiveness. They believe that the early development of a competitive

spirit is crucial for their children's future success, even during family vacations:

Some small games with appropriate rewards are quite appealing to children. Even a 1-year-old, from sitting on the ground to taking a few steps, should receive rewards. Children enjoy this. It's not about the value of the rewards, but it instils a sense of competition and deep engagement in the child, which is highly beneficial. I prefer this approach. (A4)

Childcare Services

Participants universally expressed the expectation for luxury hotels to provide amenities like children's clubs or childcare services. These services aim to afford parents valuable leisure time while ensuring professional care for their young children. This aligns somewhat with the discoveries of Li et al. (2017), indicating that parents' expectations for vacation experiences are not exclusively centred on their young children. These services can be considered a crucial feature that luxury hotels should offer, especially to meet the desires of young parents for occasional moments of freedom, while prioritizing the well-being and safety of their children:

Some childcare services are also a priority. I can go for a swim or have a brief soak in the hot springs for about two hours, and I don't have to worry about them. (A11)

Childcare services. This aspect is particularly appealing. When you are busy or enjoying a spa, the hotel provides childcare by a butler who takes the children to the kids' playground. It's essentially a day's worth of time, allowing adults to relax and do spa treatments. It provides a dedicated time to unwind. (A2)

In this context, the expectations of Chinese parents align with the outcomes of previous research on the desired features of family vacations in Western countries. This highlights a dual aspect of the family vacation experience, wherein parents desire both

personal space and valuable holiday time with their children (Gram, 2005).

Surprisingly, many parents exhibited caution towards hotels' childcare services, with their concerns primarily revolving around the actual implementation of this type of service. Safety remained a paramount concern, as parents lacked confidence in the staff's ability to provide adequate security for young vacationers (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). The main concern was that, compared to older children, young children demand more rigorous care. Parents expected hotels to comprehensively address the needs of young children, not only in terms of staffing numbers but also in terms of the expertise of caregivers. This perspective also underscores the necessity for luxury hotels to establish higher standards for childcare services to meet the specific needs of young children and ensure service quality, as stated by three mothers:

If the child is too young, there must be an adult accompanying them. At two years old, they cannot be left alone because it's not feasible to provide one-on-one service. In the kids' area, especially with older children who are quite active, they move so fast that sometimes they bump into the younger ones before anyone can react. (A5)

I'm not very confident about the childcare service, and I'm not very familiar with the qualifications of the hotel staff in this regard. (A7)

Many times, in the childcare areas we've seen, there's often just one person sitting on the side while over a dozen kids are playing inside. Often, this person can't fully manage conflicts between the children, and he may not always notice some accidents involving the kids. (A9)

4.2.2 Safety

Family travellers with young children aspire to create environments that are both

enjoyable and secure for their kids, acknowledging safety as a critical concern for children of all ages (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). Parents anticipated meeting their children's wish to run and play in luxury hotels while ensuring the highest safety standards and supervision. However, a disparity existed between expectations and reality. As mentioned earlier, numerous parents opted not to utilize the hotels' childcare services due to concerns that:

These services do not offer one-on-one care and do not differentiate between older and younger children, making it easy for young children to get injured. (A5)

In the interviews, nearly half of the parents emphasized their expectations regarding safety:

All projects must prioritize from the perspective of parents, and the foremost consideration is not entertainment, but safety! This point is crucial! (A4)

At times, both of my children run around in the hotel room because high-star hotels usually have carpets on the floor, which is safer for kids. If accidents happen, they are more likely to bump their heads. So, I think safety is essential. (A10)

This discovery aligns with the perspectives put forth by Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) in their research. However, it is noteworthy that the participants did not seem to hold expectations for or demand valet parking and expedited check-in services offered by luxury hotels. This discrepancy appears closely linked to consumer preferences generally within the Chinese luxury hotel market and calls for further investigation.

Throughout the interviews, parents not only stressed their expectations for basic safety measures but also expressed their wish for luxury hotels to deliver swift responses in emergency situations. This finding relates to the particular emphasis on addressing the

needs of young children, given their relatively higher vulnerability compared to older children. Moreover, it underscores the imperative for luxury hotels to provide supplementary services to meet the demands of families with young children. As articulated by one father and mother:

In terms of safety, for instance, if a child falls ill or gets hurt, can the hotel promptly provide medication and first-aid supplies? These are crucial. (A1)

Emergency facilities. I believe that when children are young, and their resilience is relatively fragile, having emergency facilities nearby can be vital. (A16)

4.2.3 Creative Room Design

When expressing their expectations of luxury hotels, the majority of interviewees highlighted the importance of decor and room style. They conveyed a desire for thematic or distinctive personalization, asserting that to attract families travelling with young children, the overall decor style of luxury hotels should avoid excessive uniformity or a distinctly corporate appearance. This perspective also aligns with the viewpoint put forward by Li et al. (2015), suggesting that Chinese consumers do not prefer an overly ostentatious and luxurious style in luxury hotels. Conversely, these guests expect hotels to incorporate thematic elements, providing diverse experiences and creating an enjoyable atmosphere, especially for children. As described by the interviewees:

In terms of its decor, the overall style of luxury hotels can be relatively conventional, modern, business-oriented, and quite luxurious. In the eyes of children, these aspects might lack vibrancy. (A14)

I believe many luxury hotels offer executive suites, presidential suites, and the like, but

they should introduce more family rooms with various themes. Children tend to prefer themes related to animated characters and similar elements. (A11)

Throughout the interviews, a more contemporary demand surfaced, that better encapsulates the profound impact of educational culture on family vacations. This demand included the expectation that luxury hotels should offer cultural and creative products. These products should not only address the requirements of educational culture but also align with the distinctive status and significance of luxury hotels in the perceptions of Chinese consumers, as described by an interviewee:

Our children now enjoy collecting theme postcards from various places, trying out local creative ice creams, exploring decorations, capturing memories, and collecting stamps. Hotels can also introduce a stamp collection feature with some local souvenirs. I think that would be quite nice. After spending time in a place, it gives the children a sense of presence and engagement, which I find quite intriguing. (A4)

Luxury hotels can elevate their appeal by introducing innovative family-oriented activities and offering a range of exploratory opportunities. This strategy not only addresses the demand for interactive experiences among families but also cultivates teamwork skills, reinforces familial emotional bonds, and creates enduring memories. Such initiatives not only make luxury hotels more accessible to the public by enhancing their entertainment and experiential value, but also contribute to deepening the hotel brand's influence in the public's perception. Although these exploratory activities may constitute only a small portion of a guest's stay, they become a vital component of the guest's first-hand experience of the hotel's environment. Exceptional service levels undoubtedly leave a lasting impression, making the luxury hotel a preferred choice for returning guests.

Of particular significance is the integration of family-oriented activities with the

historical and cultural attributes inherent in luxury hotels. This integration better caters to the unique educational and developmental aspirations of Chinese parents for their children. Moreover, this integration not only assists luxury hotels in better serving their Chinese clientele but also attracts a broader audience of potential guests, thereby expanding their market share. This finding is of significant importance for the marketing strategies of luxury hotels. The emerging cultural demands provide a potent means for luxury hotels to attract guests, and further research is warranted on how to fully leverage these demands to attract a larger clientele.

4.2.4 Value for Money

It is not surprising to consider value for money as an expectation for luxury hotels. After all, when parents are paying a premium, it is reasonable to expect services and facilities that provide commensurate value. In fact, several participants ranked value for money as one of the key factors in their expectations:

The level of value for money is also a rather important reason. (A1)

From the feedback gathered from several interviewed mothers, a prominent and striking theme emerges: their strong emphasis on hotels offering family-oriented activities and additional services without imposing extra charges. This underscores their particular concern, as family travellers, regarding the operational model of luxury hotels. The controversy over the pricing of luxury experiential products offered by luxury hotels has been ongoing (Heo & Hyun, 2015). Additionally, some participants have referenced the "One price, all included" concept promoted by Club Med Resorts. The interviewees, especially the mothers, exhibited a notably positive attitude towards this concept and were willing to embrace the notion of an all-inclusive value proposition. This proposition evidently holds strong appeal for mothers, as it alleviates concerns related to fee opacity and unexpected additional expenses. As one interviewee explained:

For me, if the hotel package price is reasonable, I will consider it. I prefer bundled packages that include various family activities and services, rather than having to pay separately for each one. Firstly, it's convenient, and secondly, paying multiple times makes it psychologically seem like it's expensive. For example, if the hotel already includes services like a kids' play area, a water park, or even a buffet in the package, even if the price is slightly higher, I am willing to accept it. (A10)

4.3 Motivation

While expectation-confirmation theory does not explicitly address motivational factors, motivation has consistently been deemed the driving force behind human behaviour (Li & Cai, 2012). This perspective is equally applicable to explaining the behavioural motivations of family travellers when choosing hotels. Considering the objective of this study, which was to investigate the service demands for luxury hotels of families travelling with young children, a motivation survey was deemed an indispensable tool for market segmentation (Li et al., 2009).

In a previous study, Li et al. (2017) suggested that motivations for travelling with young children encompass spending quality time with family, creating memories, personal growth and learning, and compensatory factors. However, the study lacked an in-depth exploration of specific hotel preferences. Additionally, Zhan and He (2012) highlighted that Chinese consumers place significant importance on brand recognition and product quality, which influence their preference for luxury brands. Consequently, the brand effect was identified as a motivational factor. Aligned with Li et al.'s (2017) findings, for Chinese parents travelling with young children, there is strong connection between their choice of luxury hotels and the pursuit of learning and personal development. For instance, parents may hope their children can broaden their horizons. This consistent

with the unique educational perspectives discussed in the literature review. It is crucial to note that the evolving needs of the younger generation of parents may differ from those of the older generation. Present-day parents opting for luxury hotels for family vacations are not only focused on their children's well-being (Li et al., 2017) but also on satisfying their own enjoyment needs. In summary, this research categorized motivations into four themes (See Figure 4): brand effect, broadening horizons, creating happy memories, and personal needs.

Figure 4
Motivation Framework



4.3.1 Brand Effect

Chinese luxury consumers are often characterized by their pursuit of perfectionism and heightened awareness of quality (Mo, 2021). Their motivation for opting for luxury hotels is driven by a combination of symbolic social values and a strong commitment to excellence in quality. Specifically, when selecting luxury hotels for family travel, participants primarily considered the brand effect. This aligns with the insights into consumer preferences in the Chinese luxury hotel market outlined in the literature review. Additionally, it underscores the importance for the luxury hotel brands to uphold both service and facility standards to attract and retain this specific customer market segment. Furthermore, addressing the diverse activity and service needs of these

consumers is a crucial factor in gaining a competitive advantage, as highlighted by the interviewees:

I feel that with a brand like Hilton, they have a consistent standard, which is probably globally recognized, and it gives me a better sense of assurance in terms of service quality. (A12)

I believe that various aspects of regulation in chain high-star hotels are generally more stringent. (A7)

Our family's preferred choice for travel accommodation is always luxury hotels. I think they have standardized facilities in their rooms and environment, providing a sense of reassurance regarding cleanliness. (A8)

Why choose a well-known brand? It's because they have already trained their staff thoroughly, and they have these kinds of activities every day, so they must have a lot of experience. With other hotels, if they occasionally organize a family event, I would be hesitant, but with these hotels, they do it every day. (A16)

4.3.2 Broadening Horizons

Chinese parents place significant importance on the educational value of travel activities. This emphasis is evident not only in their expectations for hotels to offer family-friendly activities but also in their motivation to opt for luxury hotels (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). When discussing the rationale behind choosing luxury hotels, some interviewees expressed their desires to expose their children to the outside world from a young age and allow them to experience the unique ambience of luxury hotels. They aspired to kindle a profound interest in their children in the external world and various activities through such exposure. This is substantial evidence for the

educational motivation for family travel. For instance, two mothers elaborated:

We believe that when he visits such places from a young age, it might help him develop a better understanding of the outside world and cultivate his curiosity. When he grows up, he can independently participate in such activities. (A16)

Let the child gain more exposure. Staying in luxury hotels is a process of broadening the child's horizons. For instance, staying in a hotel that costs 3,000 yuan per night and one that costs 300 yuan per night is very different. The experiences and perceptions are certainly distinct. (A4)

Furthermore, a mother working in the hotel industry presented her perspective. She believes that bringing young children to stay in luxury hotels is not just about experiencing the unique ambience these places offer, but it's primarily to help children gain an early understanding of how various industries operate and acquire valuable skills. She explained:

The main goal is to broaden his horizons and expose him to the world. Additionally, I want him to understand the workings of a particular industry in advance and start learning. (A14)

This indicates that the educational motivation is a significant reason for Chinese parents to choose luxury hotel stays for their young children, highlighting the continued relevance of the hotel industry (Li et al., 2017).

4.3.3 Creating Happy Memories

During family travel, parents' paramount concern is ensuring the happiness of their children (Li et al., 2017). They commonly perceive travel not merely as leaving home

but as an opportunity to provide comprehensive growth experiences for their children. Interviewees underscored that choosing luxury hotels serves as a means to broaden their children's horizons and expose them to diverse cultures, customs, and ways of life. This educational aspect holds considerable value in family travel, which is seen as contributing to the overall development of children while fostering family closeness and strengthening emotional bonds. Furthermore, it mirrors the significance of the concept of family to Chinese parents deeply influenced by a collectivist background.

Despite potential age restrictions preventing young children from participating in specific hotel activities, participants maintained the belief that as long as children are with their parents in a different environment, they will experience happiness. For instance, a mother shared the following feedback:

When the kids go out, they are happy on their own. (A10)

Among the young parent participants who were typically around the age of thirty, the majority opted for luxury hotels based on the conviction that these establishments could elevate the enjoyment of travel and create distinctive memories. This belief was anchored in the essential infrastructure and high-quality services provided by luxury hotels, seen as crucial elements in shaping the travel experience. These young interviewees stressed that the furnishings of luxury hotels contribute to an environment marked by opulence, comfort, and exquisite aesthetics—precisely what they expect to provide their children with unique travel experiences and enhance the overall enjoyment of the journey. As articulated by two young mothers:

It's about taking the kids out to play, from my perspective. It's about making the kids happy. (A4)

The primary reason for choosing luxury hotels is to ensure the child's happiness and

take her for relaxation. (A2)

From luxurious guest rooms to meticulously crafted dining experiences, these facilities were perceived to markedly elevate the family travel experience. These young parents highlighted that the decision to choose luxury hotels was geared towards enhancing their enjoyment of their journeys and crafting distinctive memories. They deemed the facilities and high-quality services as indispensable elements for realizing these objectives, a viewpoint that resonated broadly among participants, offering valuable insights for the luxury hotel market. Furthermore, this finding underscores the reality that, for Chinese families travelling with young children, beyond specific educational needs, ensuring their children's happiness and relaxation was a foundational element and motivating factor in their choices of hotels.

4.3.4 Personal Needs

For the new generation of parents, the selection of luxury hotels serves not only to expand their children's horizons and provide experiences in distinctive environments but also undeniably to fulfil their own needs. As highlighted by Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015), a primary motivation for parental vacations is to attain personal relaxation and enjoyment. This perspective was broadly supported by the participants:

Taking care of children is a wholehearted dedication to them, and it's very exhausting. There needs to be a way for parents to relax a bit because children's energy is boundless. (A3)

When we choose a hotel, adults' opinions carry more weight. It's not just for the kids to have fun; adults also want to enjoy themselves. It's hard to take a break, and I also want to go on vacation for leisure. (A9)

This suggests that luxury hotels cater not only to the requirements of young children during family travel but also provide the desired vacation experience for parents. In these environments, parents can leisurely spend their time, enjoying high-quality services and amenities, resulting in a sense of relaxation and holiday enjoyment. Consequently, for the new generation of parents, the choice of luxury hotels extends beyond the well-being of their children to fulfilling their own needs. This dimension is a crucial element in comprehending their motivations for opting for luxury hotels, given the diversity within this market sector.

It is crucial to underscore that the age of the parents significantly influences their motivations and expectations in selecting luxury hotels. Older parents may place a greater emphasis on traditional Chinese family values, aspiring to dedicate more time to accompany their children during their formative years and share quality family moments during trips. This traditional perspective prioritizes parent-child relationships and family cohesion, viewing family travel as an opportunity to foster close parent-child interactions (Li et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, some young parents may be more influenced by globalization and their educational backgrounds, giving greater importance to their own desires for enjoyment (Yang & Lau, 2015). They contended that opting for luxury hotels can satisfy their quest for high-quality services and convenience while also offering childcare services, enabling them to strike a better balance between family and personal needs. For example, a mother approaching 40 elucidated:

My priority is to engage with my child, creating more opportunities to strengthen our parent-child relationship and ensure the child's happiness. However, some parents may hold a different perspective, as seen in my two younger friends. They believe it's optimal for the child to be cared for at the hotel, enabling them to go out and enjoy themselves.
(A4)

This perspective highlights the diversity in family structures and dynamics, underscoring the importance for the luxury hotel industry to accommodate the varied needs of different parents by providing more flexible services. Parents across different age groups harbour distinct motivations and expectations for luxury hotels owing to disparities in their personal backgrounds and values. This dynamic necessitates a heightened level of differentiation within the luxury hotel market.

4.4 Perceived Performance

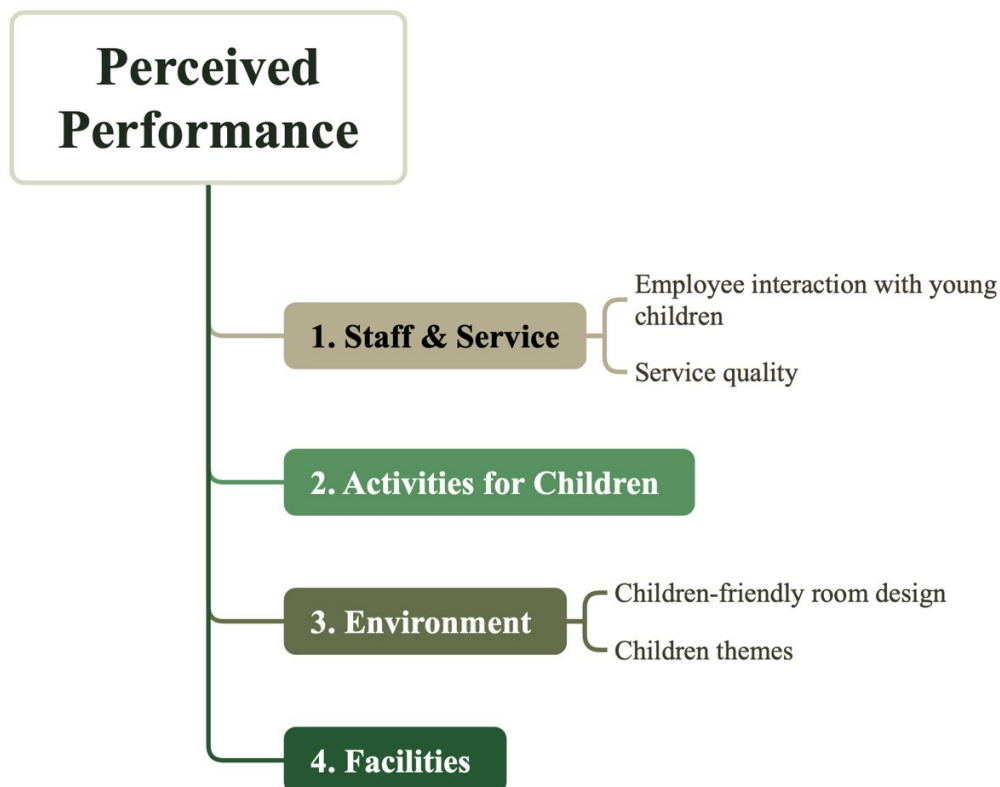
Oliver's expectation-confirmation theory underscores the synergistic interaction between perceived performance and expectations. This dual influence significantly shapes the degree of expectation confirmation, ultimately impacting satisfaction and repurchase intention (Oliver, 1980). The theory asserts that satisfaction is predominantly predicted by perceived performance, indicating a close connection between satisfaction and perceived performance (Boo & Busser, 2018). This perspective finds support in various scholarly works, with studies by Chou et al. (2012) and Hui et al. (2007) both underscoring the substantial impact of perceived performance on satisfaction. The luxury hotel industry mirrors this trend, as evident in Oh's (2000) findings, illustrating a positive correlation between customer satisfaction with the hotel and their purchase intention, particularly within the luxury hotel sector.

The quality of accommodation and the service experience in hotels, considered as products, significantly influence overall customer satisfaction (Žabkar et al., 2010). This impact is particularly pronounced for guests travelling with young children, whose service requirements in luxury hotels are notably unique. Hence, a thorough exploration of customers' genuine perceptions regarding the products, services, and environment provided by hotels becomes crucial (Boo & Busser, 2018). Moreover, the level of

customer satisfaction with the physical and social aspects of hotel environments directly affects the hotel's revenue source (Ali et al., 2017). The viewpoints of these scholars integrating expectation-confirmation theory further underscores the importance of perceived performance in comprehending customer satisfaction. Therefore, within the luxury hotel industry, research on cognitive performance holds vital significance for enhancing the hotel's competitiveness and fostering customer loyalty.

According to Tung and Ritchie's (2011) study, the successful hosting of special events in hotels has the potential to create unforgettable experiences for customers, considered one of the ultimate goals pursued by consumers. In the luxury hotel sector, these unique experiences play a pivotal role in significantly enhancing emotional connections with customers, thereby further elevating satisfaction and loyalty. Loureiro's 2010 study also underscores the importance of creating enjoyable experiences such as cultural activities, which can substantially increase the likelihood of customers recommending the hotel or choosing the hotel again. These research findings underscore the critical importance of focusing on customer experiences and meeting customer needs in the luxury hotel industry to ensure ongoing business success and profitability. Regarding perceived performance, four main themes emerged during the coding process (see Figure 5): "staff and service," "activities for children," "environment," and "facilities."

Figure 5
Perceived Performance Framework



4.4.1 Staff & Service

Employee interactions with young children

In the present study, parents provided positive assessments of the interactions between hotel staff and children, widely acknowledged as a significant determinant in improving the child-friendliness of luxury hotels. These positive evaluations distinctly highlight the crucial role of employees in enhancing the stay experience for family travellers, especially for young guests. These interactions contribute to creating enjoyable and memorable vacation experiences, thereby strengthening the hotel's appeal and fostering guest loyalty. For instance, some interviewees pointed out that their children were particularly drawn to these specially attired staff members, displaying significant interest in them:

Some staff members will dress up as clowns or princesses, perform shows for the children, give them small gifts, and make art balloons. Our preschool-aged children enjoy these activities. (A12)

There are some themed characters in the hotel that guests can interact with and take photos. During our breakfast, these cartoon characters perform in the dining area, and it's very appealing to us. (A6)

There are staff members wearing mascot heads who interact with children at specific times on weekends and holidays. (A10)

Service quality

Travelling with young children often entails many challenges, making the special services offered by hotels a noteworthy aspect for some participants. These services materialize as the proactive provision of child-friendly tableware and personalized services specifically tailored to young children. Offering such services not only enhances the competitiveness of luxury hotels but also underscores the hotel's elevated attention to customer needs, especially those with young children. One respondent's experience vividly illustrates this:

The hotel's service is exceptional. They can deliver breakfast to your room in the morning. Sometimes, because the children may not want to eat out or they wake up late, you can tell them the number of people for breakfast and your preferences. They will have breakfast delivered to your room. If you say one child wants soy milk, another wants porridge, some want fried dough sticks, and others prefer a Western or Chinese style breakfast, the butler categorizes and customizes breakfast according to your taste and requests, delivering it to your room. (A2)

Moreover, interviewed parents stressed the significance of the service attitude and interaction style exhibited by hotel staff towards children. They specifically highlighted the importance of warmth and friendliness, as well as the respect shown by staff towards young children. These aspects not only symbolize the excellence of luxury hotel services but also constitute the essence of enjoyable family travel experiences. The friendliness and respect displayed by hotel staff not only make children feel welcome and special but also instil greater confidence in parents about the proper care of their children in an unfamiliar environment. Collectively, these factors shape the hotel's image, enhance its reputation, and attract more families, thus heightening the appeal of luxury hotels among this customer group. As another interviewed respondent aptly stated:

A good impression is when they are very polite to customers with children, asking if there are any special needs, and trying their best to assist if they can. When taking him to the restaurant, they also proactively provide a child's high chair and tableware. If there are requests like not adding salt to the children's meals, they will do their best to accommodate. (A3)

This finding further highlights the crucial role of staff in shaping delightful family travel memories, while also emphasizing the critical importance of service in meeting the needs of guests with young children. Even though the interviewees did not delve into service details when discussing their expectations of luxury hotels, in their responses regarding perceived performance, service consistently took a leading role. This indicates that personalized and high-quality service not only resonates with family travellers but is also a crucial factor profoundly affecting their satisfaction.

4.4.2 Activities for Children

Based on unanimous participant feedback, it is recommended that upscale hotels place

increased emphasis on offering diverse activities for young children. A plethora of children's activities serves to harness the energy of young guests, thereby facilitating a more streamlined travel itinerary for parents. This approach is deemed a considerate gesture on the part of the hotel towards families with young children. Not only do such activities effectively occupy children's time, but they also significantly augment parental enjoyment throughout the vacation. This proactive measure allows parents to better structure their leisure time, leading to heightened satisfaction during their stay. The interviewees elucidated their perspectives as follows:

There is an indoor playground with a ball pit. They regularly organize parent-child art and baking activities on weekends. Since most hotel check-ins are in the afternoon, if you're staying for just one night, these activities are sufficient to pass the time. On the second day, you can take the children elsewhere to play, but on the first day, you can stay inside the hotel without having to go out. (A10)

A full day's schedule from morning to evening would be more enriching. If the hotel doesn't provide it, I would have to plan it myself, figuring out what activities and dining options are available around the hotel and where to take the children. This way, it's a bit more convenient. (A5)

The emphasis on children's activities serves not only to draw in a larger demographic of family-oriented customers but also encourages them to extend the duration of their stay at the hotel. This, in turn, creates additional business opportunities and nurtures long-term customer loyalty. Accordingly, within the framework of this study, parents exhibited a specific interest in and provided positive evaluations for hotels that provide an extensive variety of children's activities. A particular instance is a detailed account given by one mother regarding their experience at a hotel offering a diverse array of activities:

Parents can enrol their children in a full-day program, allowing adults to explore other places while the children are engaged throughout the day. For instance, in the morning, children can participate in crafts and games, and in the afternoon, they may go swimming or learn rock climbing. There are also instructional components to teach them new skills and knowledge. In the evening, there might be a song or dance performance arranged, concluding with a party where the children can showcase their talents. It feels very enriching. (A16)

4.4.3 Environment

Child-friendly room design

Parents travelling with young children are increasingly articulating novel viewpoints concerning hotel accommodation (Siwek et al., 2022). Many luxury hotels, for instance, now provide dedicated family rooms featuring decor and furnishings tailored around a child-centric theme, incorporating vibrant wall colours. Despite these efforts, such designs may elicit dissatisfaction. A case in point was a father who reported that the excessively strong room colours induced feelings of anxiety and unease in his son:

There was a hotel with rooms decorated in a princess theme, all in pink, which was a bit too stimulating for my son when he went to sleep or woke up at night. That colour made the child very uncomfortable. (A13)

Lighting, a crucial component in shaping the overall atmosphere of a hotel, is frequently neglected within the hotel industry. In luxury hotels, lighting is predominantly employed to elevate the perception of luxury, often with minimal attention to the practical requirements of families travelling with young children. Much like the caution against prolonged exposure to intense light for young children, introducing a subtle night light has the potential to alleviate the tension and fatigue experienced by young travellers during their journeys:

Sometimes, children are afraid of the dark, so having a warm light on while sleeping eliminates the feeling of tension. (A13)

In addition to considerations regarding lighting and interior decor, parents contended that luxury hotel services should address the inquisitiveness and environmental engagement of young children. For example, arranging tents can establish a feeling of spatial privacy, providing a distinctive and enjoyable experience that enhances the overall quality of family travel. A mother affirmed her support for this concept:

Children suddenly find themselves in a different environment with their own private space, and they are very happy. (A4)

These considerations not only address the practical requirements of these travellers but also contribute to cultivating a more inclusive and inviting hotel environment. This perspective has prompted a more profound examination of hotel settings concerning the needs of family customers with young children. While the design of family rooms aims to appeal to family travellers, attention should also be directed towards the sensitivities of children. Intense colours and overly bright lighting may induce discomfort in some young children; consequently, hotels should offer a range of options to accommodate the diverse needs of various families.

Child-friendly themes

This resonated with the expectations of parents who anticipate hotels meeting distinct stylistic preferences. In terms of perceived effectiveness, specific hotels distinguished by unique features consistently captivated the interest of parents, with children being particularly drawn to these distinctive attributes. Some establishments even integrate educational elements, meeting parents' cultural aspirations while simultaneously fostering an engaging atmosphere for children. Comments from participants vividly

depicted an encounter at a horse-themed hotel:

We stayed at a horse-themed hotel. The hotel is located within a horse farm and features a horse culture museum, and a world-famous horse exhibition area, which was truly eye-opening for the children. They also offered explanations about horses. (A11)

4.4.4 Facilities

Similarly, in accordance with anticipated preferences, amenities for children hold particular importance for families travelling with young children. Beyond frequently mentioned facilities like children's bathtubs, swimming rings, and changing tables, participants consistently underscored the significance of small stools positioned next to the sinks in the hotel:

The restroom always provides a small stool for children to step on while washing their hands. This detail is crucial. (A5)

Another respondent affirmed:

There is a small stool placed next to the sink, allowing the child to step up and wash their hands on their own. (A13)

This underscores that, for luxury hotels to cater to the needs of customers with young children, meticulous attention to details in the furnishings is crucial. This is because suitable amenities for such guests are often overlooked by hotels (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015).

Need for up-to-date facilities

Another aspect that was of particular concern to parents was the age of luxury hotels.

Numerous participants have expressed that, when travelling with young children, they meticulously consider the age of luxury hotels, as it often correlates with the condition of the facilities. The perception is that if a luxury hotel has been in operation for an extended period, the children's facilities might be somewhat outdated, posing challenges in catering to the needs of young children and potentially adversely affecting family vacations. As one mother articulated:

I stayed at a Westin hotel that had been renovated in 2020. Despite its spaciousness, the facilities were quite antiquated, with even loud toilet flushing noise, making it less appealing than a budget hotel. (A2)

This emphasizes the expectations of family travellers regarding facility enhancements and up-to-date amenities. They expected access to top-notch facilities and services commensurate with the expected standards of a luxury hotel, especially when accompanied by young children. This highlights the imperative for hotel management to consistently update and maintain their facilities to meet the escalating expectations of family travellers. Maintaining modern high-quality standards for these amenities will assist in attracting and retaining this pivotal clientele, thereby fostering the financially sustainable development of the luxury hotel industry.

4.5 Additional Findings

The coding process revealed four distinct additional themes (See Figure 6), covering the impact of differences in children's ages, the impact of travel for various purposes, the service requirements for families with multiple children, and the ramifications of COVID-19 on the service needs of family travellers. To augment customer satisfaction, it is imperative for hotel management to delve into the requirements of this customer segment and anticipate potential shifts in demand prompted by government policies or

other factors. This proactive approach will contribute to enhancing the service quality of luxury hotels, aligning them with the evolving needs of family travellers.

Figure 6

Additional Findings Framework



4.5.1 The Impact of Differences in Children's Ages

Aligned with the initial hypothesis of this study, age disparities among children significantly impacted the service preferences of parents when selecting luxury hotels. As discussed in the literature review section, prior research has predominantly concentrated on older children or treated children of different ages as a homogeneous category. This approach not only obscures the service needs of family travellers but also impedes the luxury hotel industry's comprehension of this demographic's specific requirements. Parents consistently emphasized that the needs of young children differ from those of older children across various dimensions, encompassing details related to food, accommodation quality, and furnishings, as well as distinct requirements for the hotel's provision of family activities. For example, one mother expressed that her son finds it challenging to stay focused at his age:

Between the ages of three and six, it is important to engage his free time effectively. This need is quite significant as he tends to get easily bored and loses focus quickly after concentrating on something for a while. He is prone to constantly shifting his attention, so there is a requirement for more diverse and stimulating activities to

capture his focus and channel his energy. (A7)

This perspective is consistent with the findings of Li et al. (2020), which indicate that younger children tend to become impatient and face challenges concentrating on activities that do not capture their interest. Such tendencies can profoundly influence the decision-making processes of parents regarding family vacations. Even when involving children in family activities, there are variations in the levels of acceptance among younger children:

Older children tend to be more accepting and cooperative. However, for children like ours, who are under two years old, we hope there are more things for little ones to play with. (A6)

Furthermore, young children do not have fixed preferences when it comes to family activities and the entertainment facilities provided by hotels. Their needs may vary over time, depending on the context and individual differences:

For family activities, I think for the little ones, they are not very picky and selective. For young kids, they are still in a stage where they are very interested in everything. Give them anything, and they will find it particularly novel and interesting. (A2)

The emergence of this perspective implies that children across different age groups may require distinct types of services and facilities, challenging the notion of a one-size-fits-all service model. Consequently, hotel management should provide a range of options tailored to this diversity, addressing the needs of various families and enhancing the overall family experience. Additionally, given the increasing number of young parents, it is imperative for the hotel industry to pay heightened attention to comprehending the needs and expectations of those accompanied by young children. This calls for further research and exploration in the future to aid the hotel industry in better adapting to the

evolving market and the requirements of family travellers, thereby elevating customer satisfaction.

4.5.2 The Impact of Travel for Various Purposes

A debate exists among some parents regarding the choice to travel with young children and stay in luxury hotels. One father contended that every outing is an adult decision, dismissing the need to consider the child's preferences. He further asserted that children are too young to form specific memories before the age of six:

There are no memories before the age of six. (A9)

Contrary to this viewpoint, several parents took a different stance. They strongly contended that experiences in luxury hotels and on family travels possess the potential to forge distinctive memories for children and play a role in their overall development and education. Illustratively, one mother articulated her stance in this discourse:

Many people believe that such young children may forget as they grow up. While it's true that over time, they may forget some details of the trip, within the year following a particular journey, they hold a very vivid impression of it. Young children, because of this trip, will look forward to the next one. (A10)

Although young children may encounter limitations in engaging in activities, each experience, nevertheless, introduces them to new sensations and contributes to their development. This accumulation of growth and experiences plays a pivotal role in their overall developmental process. As elucidated by a mother:

Although my baby is quite young, I can clearly feel that going to different places, especially large places like Chimelong Safari Park or Shanghai Disneyland, has a

noticeable stimulating effect on his language development and overall growth. Especially when we went to Chimelong Safari Park, it happened to be around the time of his language developmental surge at the age of two. After he returned, what he could express was noticeably broader, and the things he saw provided him with very strong sensory stimulation. (A12)

This aligns with the conclusions drawn by scholars, suggesting that sensory experiences carry greater importance than visual enjoyment for young children during family vacations (Gram, 2005). Consequently, exposing young children to a stay in a luxury hotel not only enriches their sensory perceptions but also fosters their logical thinking and social skills. A different mother, who regularly travels to different countries with her children, offered a vivid illustration of this:

He may come to understand the distinctive features of different regions or countries, cultivating a cognitive awareness from an early age. This can also enhance his ability to interact with strangers, including his English skills. (A16)

4.5.3 Multi-child Family Needs

An additional distinctive requirement uncovered in the study pertains to the growing number of children per families. This primarily stems from the relevant policies of the Chinese government, as elucidated in a preceding section. Surprisingly, the researcher notes that many luxury hotels have not proportionately adjusted their provision of family services to align with the implementation of these policies. This encompasses aspects such as room size, family room discount policies, and the provisions made for second and third children. Some parents with two children in their families have voiced concerns that numerous luxury hotels fall short in catering to the needs of multiple children. This shortfall has resulted in disappointment and has adversely impacted the overall experience of family travel. For instance, a parenting blogger who focuses on

family travel once concluded:

I think hotels and all related industries in the tourism sector should consider this point. Regular high-star hotels typically allow only one child, but now there are many families with two children, and there are also many opportunities to travel with them. If I book a suite, the bill will be twice as expensive. (A10)

Parents want hotels to provide more flexible room configurations to accommodate the increasing number of family members. Their expectation is to ensure adequate privacy within the same room without incurring excessively high fees. Moreover, parents seek hotels offering tailored options for dining and parent-child activities for families with multiple children. This ensures a satisfying and comfortable experience for every family member during the journey. This perspective merits attention from the luxury hotel industry. Implementing these enhancements will significantly augment the attractiveness of luxury hotels among Chinese family travellers, aligning with the genuine needs of families with multiple children and thereby raising overall customer satisfaction.

4.5.4 The Impact of the COVID-19 on Demand

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a certain impact on family travellers with young children (Wen et al., 2021). In addition to the impact of the pandemic and related travel policies, it also includes how the pandemic has affected parents' demands and expectations for hotel services. For example, a mother explained:

After the relaxation of pandemic policies, I generally have modest expectations for hotel activities because my primary purpose of going out is to tour a specific city. Regarding hotels, my only hope is that they can excel in their essential services, as I am certain to explore other destinations. The demand for hotel services has evolved during and after

the pandemic period. (A12)

While the main focus of this study is not on the impact of the pandemic on Chinese family travellers, the emergence of this perspective also indicates that since the outbreak of the pandemic, Chinese parents' demand for hotel-based parent-child activities has changed. They are now more inclined to let their children venture beyond the hotel and experience the world outside (Fan et al., 2023). This also sends a clear signal to the luxury hotel industry; simply offering traditional parent-child activities is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of today's parents. Hotels could consider including activities in collaboration with external companies, such as camping or educational tours. These activities are not confined to the hotel's internal environment. Doing so would not only meet the educational and entertainment needs of parents but also enhance the visibility of luxury hotels, bringing the hotel brand closer to the public and catering to the diverse needs of different customers.

4.6 Summary of Findings

Researchers have extensively examined the requirements of Chinese parents with young children, delving into their criteria for choosing luxury hotels and assessing their satisfaction based on expectations, motivations, and perceptions (See Figure 7). Foundational elements such as luxury hotel services, staff attitudes towards children, and safety assurances have been identified as fundamental factors in these analyses. These aspects highlight various areas in the luxury hotel industry that can be enhanced and refined.

Figure 7

Summary of Findings Framework

Satisfaction

Expectation

1. Related to children
 - Family facilities
eg. changing table, bottle warmers
 - Children's area
 - Swimming pools
 - Family activities
eg. cultivate children's abilities and social attributes
 - Reward
 - Childcare services
-ensuring safety and professionalism
2. Safety -safety assurance and capability to handle emergencies
3. Creating room design
eg. a variety of themed styles, cultural and creative product's
4. Value for money -no additional expenditure

Motivation

1. Brand effect
-high-standard facilities and services
2. Broadening horizons
-inspiring interest in learning
3. Creating happy memories
-strengthening family bonds
4. Personal needs
-parents' pleasure-seeking needs

Perceived Performance

1. Staff & Service
-respect and interaction with children
2. Activities for children
-offering more activities for young children
3. Environment
-paying attention to details such as lighting and color
4. Facilities
-facilities for young children in public areas

Additional Findings

1. Impact of differences in children's age
2. Impact of travel for various purposes
3. Multi-child needs
eg. room size, family room discount policies
4. Impact of the COVID-19 on demand

In general, the target clientele seeks services and hotel products that align with the standards of luxury hotels. They desire activities and spaces for children that promote both relaxation and educational experiences, along with a range of personalized services such as high-quality childcare and suitable facilities catering to children's needs. Building upon these foundations, the hotels' goal is to create a highly educational and uniquely enjoyable family vacation atmosphere. The expectation is that their stay at the hotel will deepen the family bonds particularly valued by Chinese parents and allow them to enjoy precious moments with their children.

Moreover, the luxury hotel industry should pay greater attention to understanding the varying needs of children of different ages. The emphasis in this study on children under six years old aligns with the recommendation of Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015). This focus has not only thrown light on a segmented market but also underscored the need for luxury hotels to meet diverse family needs. Furthermore, hotel service providers must closely monitor changes in government policies and societal trends to cater to the diverse needs of families. Particularly when considering families with multiple children, adjustments in strategies are necessary to ensure the delivery of a high-quality experience for all customers.

Therefore, to attract the expanding family market in China, the luxury hotel industry should dedicate more efforts to understanding the preferences of young children and the corresponding service demands of Chinese parents. This is crucial because the new generation of parents tends to focus on entertaining their children during vacations while expecting relief from parenting responsibilities to enhance their ability to relax (Li et al., 2020).

Chapter 5 Conclusions

5.1 Research Questions

The primary objective of this study was to comprehensively analyse the actual demands of Chinese parents with children under six in China luxury hotels. Through systematic coding and in-depth analysis of the interview data, the research revealed the expectations, motivations, and perceived performance for this unique customer group of luxury hotels in China. Additionally, unexpected insights into specific viewpoints on service requirements have been obtained, providing novel and profound insights for the Chinese luxury hotel industry. In this study, a comprehensive application of expectation-confirmation theory was employed to systematically interpret the service demands of this specific customer group, to assist the Chinese luxury hotel industry in enhancing overall customer satisfaction.

1) What are the expectations of Chinese parents travelling with children under 6 years old regarding the services provided by luxury hotels in China?

By integrating the research findings, it became evident that the expectations of Chinese parents primarily revolve around parent-child facilities and educational activities. This trend aligns with China's unique educational perspectives and highly competitive environment, profoundly influencing their expectations when choosing luxury hotels. Parents expect these hotels to offer a parent-child space that incorporates educational elements, serving not only as a place for their children to rest and engage in recreational activities but also as a platform for nurturing a variety of skills.

It is particularly noteworthy that, unlike the studies by Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) and Schänzel and Yeoman (2015), which emphasised that Chinese parents primarily value educational opportunities during vacations, the educational philosophy of Chinese parents has gradually evolved. They no longer focus solely on traditional

knowledge education but increasingly emphasise the comprehensive development of their children's abilities and social attributes. They seek not just a place for respite but rather a vacation destination that facilitates the growth and cultivation of various skills in their children. In practical terms, young parents are increasingly concerned about whether hotels offer a range of educational activities geared towards enhancing young children's life skills and self-management abilities.

These findings not only highlight the unique demands of Chinese parents when travelling with young children but also reveal differences in their travel and accommodation needs compared to parents in Western countries (Bronner & de Hoog, 2008; Siwek et al., 2022). For example, in Western societies, parents tend to favour engaging in activities that foster independent thinking and problem-solving skills in their children. In contrast, Chinese parents tend to place a greater emphasis on educational events hosted by hotels, aiming to enhance their children's knowledge through participation in such activities. Furthermore, the parents who stay in luxury hotels underscored distinctions in service expectations compared to those staying in regular hotels (Buzlu & Balik, 2022). Guests in luxury hotels tended to perceive furnishings and childcare services not merely as general expectations but as foundational and critical features of luxury establishments. These research outcomes can not only guide the luxury hotel industry but also offer practical recommendations for service design and enhancing customer satisfaction.

2) What motivates Chinese parents with children under 6 years old to choose luxury hotels in China?

The finding showed that the primary motivation for Chinese parents to choose luxury hotels for stays with their children is the brand influence of these hotels. Their pursuit of quality furnishings and brand services explains the rationale behind this choice. Additionally, their desires to expose their children to the unique atmospheres of luxury hotels, engage with the outside world, and stimulate interest in exploring and learning

new skills were other significant motivations for parents. It is evident that the motivations for Chinese parents to stay in luxury hotels continue to revolve around educational factors, aligning with the results of previous studies (Li et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2021). Another major motivation for Chinese family vacations revolves around the establishment and strengthening of family bonds (Hsu & Huang, 2016; Pearce et al., 2013; Wang & Li, 2021; Zhang & Tse, 2018). The desire to create more joy and memories from family stays in luxury hotels is a fundamental motivation and driving factor for Chinese parents' choices. As Mo (2021) noted, the collectivist nature of Chinese culture leads parents to place great importance on family values. Spending on luxury hotels not only enhances family relationships but also offers educational benefits.

However, it is worth noting that in the consumption and parenting perspectives of the new generation of Chinese parents, beyond facilitating their children to experience more of the world, there is a noteworthy emphasis on their own enjoyment needs and a desire for an ultimate vacation experience. This discovery contrasts with the majority of previous research, as earlier studies have frequently emphasized that Chinese parents tend to make sacrifices for their children's needs (Wang & Li, 2021; Xu et al., 2005). Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that there are significant age-related differences among parents in their motivations for choosing to stay in luxury hotels.

3) How do Chinese parents travelling with children under 6 years old perceive the performance of luxury hotels in China?

The research findings indicated that Chinese parents particularly pay attention to the respect and interaction shown by hotel staff towards their children. Additionally, parents paid close attention to furnishings and environmental details, including lighting, the spatial experience, and educational elements. This observation also addresses a gap highlighted by Zhang and Zhao (2019), and indicates that Chinese consumers, influenced by Confucian culture, have a tendency toward family-oriented consumption.

From this perspective, customer behaviour in the Chinese luxury hotel market continues to emphasize the value of customized services and hotel products, especially when travelling with young children. This viewpoint aligns with previous research findings (Le & Quy, 2021; J.Y. Tsai et al., 2011). Hotel services were not explicitly mentioned in discussions of expectations and motivations, as participants universally considered services as fundamental elements of luxury hotels. However, in reality, the parents exhibited strong opinions about the services offered by luxury hotels.

Furthermore, parents' consideration of the richness of activities for children and families indicates the emerging demand from the new generation of parents for their own enjoyment of vacations and luxury hotel experiences. Luxury hotels can capitalize on this trend to extend customer stays and create additional business opportunities.

4) How can luxury hotels in China enhance the satisfaction of Chinese parents travelling with children under 6 years old?

The conclusions drawn from this research offer insights into how luxury hotels in China can enhance service satisfaction by meeting parents' dual expectations for relaxation and educational fulfilment. Luxury hotels should uphold high-quality standards of service, ensuring child safety and providing essential hardware facilities to meet children's needs, such as changing tables, and bottle warmers. Therefore, whether in China or other countries, when parents stay at luxury hotels with young children, additional care and meeting the basic needs of the children are crucial factors in enhancing satisfaction. This finding aligns with previous research by several scholars (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Liu & Filimonau, 2020; Siwek et al., 2022; Therkelsen, 2010).

Meanwhile, creating a warm parent-child environment and offering entertainment activities that deepen family bonds, combined with the hotel's brand, and planning educational and culturally valuable activities, contribute to crafting a perfect hotel

journey for such guests. Additionally, luxury hotels aiming to attract this clientele should provide a versatile and multifunctional experience space for children, such as rooms with different colours and toys designed with more intricate details. As Siwek et al. (2022) discovered, the more hotel service providers meet the needs of children, the greater the satisfaction and relaxation experienced by parents.

The research findings are consistent with Oliver's (1980) expectation-confirmation theory, which posits that consumer satisfaction is influenced by pre-purchase expectations and the disparity between those expectations and actual perceptions. Consequently, luxury hotels can enhance their family-friendly image by understanding Chinese parents' desire for joy and educational value, and by providing personalised services that demonstrate warmth and meticulous attention to detail. Furthermore, incorporating research on these guests' motivations and consumption intentions can further improve the ability to meet the unique needs of family customers and enhance overall satisfaction.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

Existing research on consumer preferences in the luxury hotel market and the needs of family travellers has predominantly focused on luxury hotels in Western countries and family travellers in those regions (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018; Liu & Filimonau, 2020; Seraphin & Yallop, 2019; Siwek et al., 2022). However, this concentration has resulted in a research gap concerning the service requirements of family travellers in the Chinese market. The present study addresses this gap, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of family travellers in the context of the Chinese market, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the luxury hotel industry.

Considering prior research indicating the relatively short history of the luxury hotel industry in China and the inadequacies in its domestic development (Chan et al., 2016b; Yuan, 2010), this study contributes robust theoretical support to the process of achieving localization for luxury hotels in the Chinese market. Through an in-depth investigation into the Chinese luxury hotel market, this research not only fills knowledge gaps regarding the preferences of Chinese consumers and family travellers but also establishes a concrete theoretical foundation for the improved domestic localization of the luxury hotel industry in China. This contributes to advancing the development of luxury hotel brands in the Chinese market and provides substantial theoretical backing for the successful implementation of domestic localization strategies.

Research on Chinese luxury hotels has often conceptualized consumers based on their Confucian cultural backgrounds and preferences in luxury consumption. For instance, it has been commonly assumed that the hedonistic characteristics associated with luxury hotels were not applicable to Chinese consumers, especially family travellers (Xu et al., 2009; Zhang & Kim, 2013). Alternatively, it has been suggested that the key motive for Chinese consumers choosing luxury hotels was to convey social status, emphasising the concept of "face" (Li et al., 2012; Li et al., 2016; Zhan & He, 2012). However, these conventional assumptions do not align with the current dominant consumer group for luxury hotels, including the new generation of parents. They consciously choose luxury hotels for their own enjoyment and are also inclined to opt for these establishments due to the more professional, meticulous, and high-standard childcare services they offer. In contrast to previous assumptions, this demographic does not associate luxury hotels with traditional values and symbols of social status. Instead, their focus is on whether a hotel can meet their needs when travelling with family, providing specialized and attentive childcare services to ensure the entire family enjoys a pleasant, safe, and comfortable stay.

In terms of theoretical significance, this study integrates expectation-confirmation theory into the realm of luxury hotels by combining the preferences of Chinese luxury hotel market customers with their unique educational perspectives. It aims to provide distinctive insights for the Chinese luxury hotel industry. For the first time, it comprehensively explores the service demands of the new generation of Chinese parents regarding luxury hotels through the lenses of expectations, motivations and perceived performance. While customer satisfaction is influenced by factors such as expectations and perceived performance, a profound understanding of their behavioural motivations is crucial for better comprehending the underlying reasons for satisfaction and further enhancing overall satisfaction and encouraging repeat purchases. Hotel managers' in-depth understanding of guests' travel purposes and behaviours can significantly elevate overall customer satisfaction (Boo & Busser, 2018).

Furthermore, this study contributes to the development of expectation-confirmation theory's application in research into the luxury hotel industry, particularly in understanding customer satisfaction and exploring customer service needs. By establishing a more comprehensive theoretical model, it offers a broader perspective for comprehending the luxury hotel industry, addressing gaps in prior literature that has delved into customer satisfaction solely through motivation and expectation studies (Li et al., 2017; Oh et al., 2022).

There are inconsistencies regarding the motivations for hotel selection compared to previous research. While existing studies have highlighted the emphasis of Chinese parents on the educational function of travel activities and their contribution to strengthening family bonds (Li et al., 2017; Wang & Li, 2021; Zhang & Tse, 2018), these investigations have primarily underscored academic knowledge development. In contrast, with the increasing trend of younger Chinese parents, there is a growing expectation that hotels will provide educational parent-child activities that cultivate a diverse range of life skills, social communication abilities, and self-management skills

in their children.

Finally, the existing research tends to homogenize the needs of children of all ages (Ben Lahouel & Montargot, 2020; Hemmington, 2007). Moreover, studies on family travellers' service demands of luxury hotels are scarce, with most studies having a primary focus on resort hotels and standard city hotels (Gaines et al., 2004; Siwek et al., 2022). Therefore, this study not only enriches the literature on children's service demands in hotels but also contributes to the broader literature on luxury hotels. It provides hotel service providers with specific information regarding the service expectations, behavioural motivations, and perceived performance for this client group, enhancing providers' understanding of the service demands and satisfaction assessments of luxury hotels for such customers.

5.3 Practical Implications

Findings of this study offer valuable insights for practical application. Firstly, from the perspective of the hotels, this research not only provides profound market insights for the luxury hotel industry but also offers new suggestions for exploring innovative children-friendly programs tailored to current Chinese parents of young children. Siwek et al. (2022), suggest that chain hotel brands are more inclined to tailor their offerings to specific customer segments, often overlooking services for families with children. Therefore, to meet the needs of such guests, luxury hotels in China should provide more thoughtful family facilities, such as changing tables, bottle warmers, baby diapers, and formula. Establishing facilities in public areas to address the need for family spaces and providing space for social interactions, such as play corners and toddler pools, can also be beneficial. Luxury hotels can leverage brand effects, integrate local culture, and create distinctive, China-themed parent-child educational activities. Examples include traditional Chinese studies, vocational experience activities, and nature education

activities. By fully utilizing the educational attributes and cultural values of hotel settings and spaces, luxury hotels can meet the strong educational demands of Chinese parents, establishing a unique and culturally relevant identity.

It is crucial to recognize that parents choose luxury hotels not only for leisure but also to seek support services that alleviate parenting responsibilities during their stay (Boo & Busser, 2018). Therefore, hotels should give equal priority to the needs of parents with young children by offering professional and secure full or partial day-care services. Enhancing the professionalism of childcare staff to ensure service quality is of paramount importance. Moreover, safety remains a fundamental requirement for hotels (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Liu & Filimonau, 2020). This includes not only safety concerns related to the hotel environment and facilities but also extends to the hotel's ability to handle emergency situations, through access to medical services and safety supervision.

Furthermore, the typically opulent style of luxury hotels not only contradicts the preference of Chinese consumers for less ostentatious designs but also creates the problem of overly uniform and business-oriented room styles. Luxury hotels should break away from stereotypical impressions, reposition themselves, and shift their service focus from a singular business clientele to a more diverse customer base which includes families, for instance, by designing engaging rooms for children and offering family rooms with a variety of colours and themes.

Most importantly, luxury hotels should not perceive children as a single undifferentiated group (Siwek et al., 2022). It is crucial to recognize the needs of children at different ages and provide diverse facilities and spaces for this customer group. To achieve this, hotels can offer parent-child activities, childcare services, and toddler-friendly menus specifically designed for younger children. Additionally, luxury hotels should adapt to societal changes by responsively adjusting marketing and service

policies to meet the needs of families with multiple children, offering more customized options, for example, providing flexible check-in and dining arrangements and tailoring services based on family size.

Then, on the practical front of the tourism industry, this study unveils unique trends in the service demands of Chinese parents, particularly those travelling with young children, within the luxury hotel sector. Luxury hotels can better cater to the emerging family tourism market by adjusting service strategies and facility offerings. For instance, incorporating amenities such as a kids' club tailored for young children, educational parent-child activities, and professional childcare services can enhance the overall service experience for families. This also provides practitioners in the tourism industry with new perspectives, contributing to a more family-oriented approach in tourism services and elevating the overall service standards of the industry.

Finally, the findings of this study may offer a fresh perspective for education providers, particularly scholars dedicated to researching the impact of family tourism on children's education. It provides new angles for future research and educational practices, contributing to a better understanding of the positive influences of family tourism on children's education. This, in turn, can facilitate further advancements in research within the realm of convergence of education and tourism.

5.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study is not without limitations. Initially, due to geographical constraints, interviews could only be conducted online, potentially leading to limitations in the richness of the data (Li et al., 2020). The absence of face-to-face interaction may have hindered a comprehensive understanding of participants' emotions and experiences. Additionally, the online format might have increased the likelihood of participants

concealing information.

This study employed a qualitative research approach, indicating that the observed behaviours in the study derive credibility solely from the foundation established in quantitative research. This implies the necessity for further quantitative investigations to substantiate the findings obtained in this study.

The interviewees exhibited similar backgrounds, with most living first-tier cities in China, and having higher levels of educational attainment. This may have resulted in the acquired educational and consumption ideologies of participants differing to some extent from those of individuals in other regions or with lower educational levels. It is acknowledged that the individual backgrounds and upbringing of the participants will have significantly influenced their perspectives on child-rearing philosophies and their demand for luxury hotel services (Zhonglu & Zeqi, 2018). Disparities in family cultural resources could impact motivations and choices during family vacations.

Lastly, it is essential to note that this study concentrated on the luxury hotel market in China. However, due to the lack of a globally standardized hotel star rating system, different countries and regions employ varying evaluation systems. Consequently, China's star rating system may place greater emphasis on the opulence of furnishings and the practicality of services (Mao & Yang, 2016). In contrast, certain international rating systems might prioritize a hotel's innovation and environmental sustainability. Therefore, the conclusions and insights of this study may primarily apply to the luxury hotel industry in China.

Future research could enhance understanding by comparing the service demands of parents with different cultural backgrounds and consumption ideologies when staying with toddlers in luxury hotels. This approach would delve into the impacts of cultural factors on these demands. Additionally, investigating the contrasting perspectives of

parents with children under six years old and those with older children could uncover differences in the unique needs of families in different age groups. This exploration would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of service expectations within families, thereby enriching the informational foundation of the luxury hotel industry.

Moreover, the research could extend its scope to include other Asian countries and Western nations and investigate the service demands of parents from these regions staying in Chinese luxury hotels. This expansion would offer the Chinese luxury hotel industry a more diversified and multiperspective dataset. Conducting crosscultural comparisons would aid in identifying the impact of cultural differences on service demands. Furthermore, it would provide valuable insights for the hotel industry to formulate more specific and customized service strategies.

Furthermore, future research could employ quantitative analysis methods, utilizing large-scale data collection and statistical analysis to enhance the rigour of the research outcomes. Quantitative analysis could furnish the study with more quantifiable evidence, further deepening our understanding of the service demands of families with young children in luxury hotels. This approach would bolster the scientific validity of the research and contribute to the formulation of more actionable practical recommendations.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study's primary contributions to the hotel literature are focused on the service demands and motivational factors of Chinese parents with young children in luxury hotels. By integrating expectation-confirmation theory and investigating motivational factors, the study provides a detailed description of the specific

dimensions that lead Chinese parents to choose luxury hotels for family vacations. To some extent, overlapping expectations and motivational factors were identified in studies related to family vacations and hotel services for families with young children. This is because, regardless of the duration of the stay, all parents share common demands in certain aspects of hotel services (Siwek et al., 2022).

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on families with children under the age of six, adopting a more granular perspective. At the same time, the research integrates the service demands for child-parent activities in luxury hotels within the context of the educational philosophies of the new generation of Chinese parents and their traditional cultural background. Moreover, most participants, when describing the success of luxury hotels in meeting the service needs of toddlers, revealed a lack of attention from hotels toward this particular group, distinguishing this study markedly from studies that have homogenized the needs of children of all ages (Ben Lahouel & Montargot, 2020; Hemmington, 2007). This distinctiveness is also evident in comparison to studies analysing resorts or regular urban hotels (Gaines et al., 2004; Siwek et al., 2022).

To enhance the satisfaction of Chinese parents in luxury hotels and attract more family travellers, luxury hotel service providers should seek a deeper understanding of the preferences and expectations of families with toddlers. Taking a motivational perspective, it is crucial to prioritize the enjoyment needs of the parents as well as the educational and developmental needs of toddlers. As parents increasingly focus on the needs of young children, meeting these requirements will contribute to their enhanced satisfaction and relaxation during vacations, allowing them to better enjoy the services offered by luxury hotels (Curtale, 2018; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015).

For luxury hotels, utilizing child-parent activities as a marketing strategy is an effective means to promote the hotel brand and enhance guest satisfaction. This approach not

only contributes to breaking the traditional stereotypes associated with luxury hotels but also positions them as versatile experiential spaces. Luxury hotels can cater not only to business-oriented guests but also capitalize on significant opportunities for future development. In the era of the experience economy, integrating diverse formats, attracting a broader market audience, and leaving a profound impression in the minds of family customers with different cultural backgrounds and emerging needs will establish the hotel brand as their preferred choice for future family travels.

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Appendix A: Ethics



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

29 August 2023

Pola Wang
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Pola

Re Ethics Application: **23/236 Exploring the service needs of customers with children under the age of three years in Chinese luxury hotels**

Thank you for your responses to AUTEC's conditions.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 29 August 2026.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please reconsider the use of a USB as a long-term data storage option as they can be unstable. If you do change the device, please update the Information Sheet.

Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC unless requested but must be completed before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: vxp3901@autuni.ac.nz

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Regarding Motivation

Q1: Can you share which luxury hotel you have stayed at with young children before?

Q2: Why did you choose it?

Q3: What were the reasons for this trip?

Regarding Perceived Performance

Q4: Is there a luxury hotel you stayed in with your children that impressed you? Why?

Q5: Have you ever stayed at a luxury hotel that offered children's or parent-child activities that were memorable to you? What kind of activities?

Regarding Expectation

Q6: Do you have any service suggestions for luxury hotels?

Q7: What type of activities do you hope the luxury hotel will provide for your child?

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

21.7.2023

Project Title

Exploring the service needs of customers with children under the age of three years in Chinese luxury hotels

An Invitation

Dear participants, thank you very much for your interest in participating in my research. My name is Yunke Wang and I am a graduate student in hospitality management at AUT University, New Zealand. As a hospitality management student, I have observed that while previous studies have researched the service needs of children in the hospitality industry, there has been limited in-depth research on the service needs of luxury hotels when catering to young children under the age of three years. As a result, the service experience and desired service needs of such guests during their stay in luxury hotels are not being adequately met. I hope this study will provide a deeper understanding of the expectations of this group of guests regarding their service needs in Chinese luxury hotels.

What is the purpose of this research?

As China's economy and tourism industry continue to grow, there has been a significant increase in demand for luxury hotels. However, there is still a lack of research on localised service demands within the industry. Additionally, while there have been studies on the impact of family vacations with children on the hospitality industry, there is limited in-depth research on the specific service needs of parents traveling with young children aged three years. Moreover, the influence of Confucian culture in China leads to different consumer behavioural preferences and parenting attitudes, compared with Western countries, further impacting the service demands of Chinese parents. Therefore, the main research question addressed in this study is: What are the service needs of Chinese guests with young children under the age of three years in luxury hotels in China? The study will adopt a constructionism paradigm and utilise qualitative research methodology to explore the service needs of guests with young children in Chinese luxury hotels.

The results of this study will contribute to my Master's thesis at Auckland University of Technology

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

It all started with an advertisement, which you had the opportunity to read and became interested in. You meet specific criteria, and this is why you are invited to participate in the study: you have taken your young children under the age of three years and visited a luxury hotel in China within the last three years. We would like to know more about your experiences staying at these luxury hotels and investigate your special requirement of services especially with a young child/children.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Firstly, you need to add the researcher to be your friend in your WECHAT account. The researcher will then be in contact and provide you more information about this study. By scheduling an interview time with you and obtaining your agreed oral consent form, you will be considered as a valid participant in this study. Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary, and your decision to participate or not to participate will not have any advantages or disadvantages on you. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time before the completion of the data analysis. If you choose to withdraw from this study, you will be given the option to have any identifiable data associated with you removed and deleted permanently, or you may choose to allow its continued use. However, it is important to note that once the findings have been produced, it may not be feasible to delete your data.

What will happen in this research?

Participants who meet the criteria outlined above will be asked to signal their agreement to an oral Consent Form prior to their participation in the study. The interviews will take place online for a duration of one hour (more or less) using DingTalk in Chinese language. The interview will be recorded. The interview questions cover a number of research areas such as accommodation, dining, activities.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Based on the topics being discussed and the interview questions, there should be no or minimal discomfort or risks. Since no identifiable information will be collected such as name, phone number, or addresses, the participants should feel no discomfort or risks against their private information.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

The researcher will assure them of the protection of their privacy and that the interviews will be conducted in Chinese. Participants also have the right to choose to withdraw if they feel uncomfortable during the interview. Based on experience, the researcher will display respect and care during the interviews, avoiding questions that might make participants uncomfortable. Adequate breaks will be provided during the interview process to prevent participants from feeling tired.

What are the benefits?

Participants: The research findings will provide valuable insights for luxury hotels to enhance their services, resulting in an improved guest experience for families with young children. Additionally, participants will receive a 100 RMB shopping card for their time and effort into this study.

Community and Hospitality Industry: The study's results will have broader implications for the community and the hospitality industry in China. The findings will offer valuable marketing and management insights specifically tailored to the luxury hotel industry. Hotel managers will be able to understand the service needs of guests with young children within the context of China's unique childcare philosophy and traditional culture. This understanding will enable them to provide more detailed and personalised services that cater to this specific guest segment. Ultimately, the study's recommendations could lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, benefiting both the hotels and the guests. Moreover, the research findings can serve as valuable suggestions for marketing strategies aimed at attracting and retaining this particular category of guests.

How will my privacy be protected?

The right to privacy and confidentiality will be respected, codenames will be used in the study in place of participant identities and no individual participant details will be provided in the results. The researcher will ensure the confidentiality of all information. All data collected will be securely stored on a USB stick in the office of the primary supervisor, AUT University, New Zealand WH515 (data will be deleted after six years) to prevent unauthorised interception or misuse. The researcher will adhere to the provisions of the Privacy Act (2020), and all information will be used exclusively for research purposes.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Potential participants will be required to spend one hour of their time of preference to complete the interview online using DingTalk.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Potential participants will be given one month to consider (from August to end of September 2023).

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. The researcher will summarize the findings and send them to the participants' email provided.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any questions about the nature of this project can be directed to Pola Wang, the Project Director. pola.wang@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6544.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet for your future reference. You are also able to contact the Research Team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Yunke Wang, vxp3901@autuni.ac.nz, WeChat ID: WoO-15

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Pola Wang, pola.wang@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6544.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 29.08.2023, AUTC Reference number 23236.