The luxury hotel sector is an area of expertise in which Rosen’s College of Hospitality Management’s Dr. Juhee Kang looks at what this means for luxury hotels and what they can do to stay in tune with modern consumers.

A unique experience and being made to feel ‘special’ drives consumers’ feelings of romantic brand love. Uniqueness and hedonic values both play a part in creating feelings of romantic brand love.

The research set out to identify what consumers develop with luxury brands. The hypotheses were based on the premise that romantic brand love is determined by three dimensions of luxury, namely its uniqueness, associated status and the hedonic (pleasure-creating) feelings it generates. The survey covered a range of qualitative statements about perceived value in luxury hotels which guests were asked to measure on a seven-point scale according to whether they agreed or disagreed. The methodology was tested before the survey was carried out.

The largest group of interviewees was aged between 25 and 44, and around three-quarters were Caucasian. Some 70% had one or more people in their household, 16% had an annual household income of more than $150,000.

THE STUDY CONFIRMS THE ROLE OF UNIQUENESS IN CREATING ROMANTIC BRAND LOVE, SUGGESTING THAT CONSUMER’S LOVE TOWARDS A HOTEL BRAND IS STRONGLY AFFECTED BY FEELING SPECIAL.

THE STUDY

Conducted in 2016, the survey was distributed by an online survey company in the USA and targeted guests who had in the last year stayed at hotels belonging to the luxury brands Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, JW Marriott, Hyatt, Fairmont, Conrad and/or Waldorf Astoria. After screening, replies from 412 guests – 53% male and 47% female – were accepted for the research. All had an annual household income of $55,000 and above, and 16% had an annual household income of more than $150,000.

THE FINDINGS

The survey data was analyzed using a statistical technique suited to the variable nature of people’s answers (structural equation modeling). This allowed Dr. Kang to measure how perceived luxury value (i.e., uniqueness, status and hedonic values) affected romantic brand love (i.e., brand passion and brand intimacy) and future consumer behavior.

The results show that the main factor affecting romantic brand love in the luxury hotel sector is uniqueness, and that being made to feel ‘special’ is what drives consumers’ feelings most of all. In more detail, Dr. Kang found that uniqueness and hedonic values both play a part in creating feelings of romantic brand love. Uniqueness is especially important in making people feel passionate about the brand, and things that lead...
Important in Rosen
Research

Dr. Kang’s study pioneers evaluation of the
significance of brand love.

Dr. Kang’s work aims to better understand the relationships we develop with our favorite brands.

Research objectives

References

Key paper

Other background sources

What do you personally value when you stay in a luxury hotel and why?

I look for unique or exclusive experiences that I cannot have elsewhere. To me, it is a getaway from daily life and allows me to explore something new. Such experience remains longer and facilitates the recollection of luxury stays induce great pleasure and happiness after all.

The key is the recognition of consumers’ emotions and gradually strengthening the emotional bonds over time.

Personal response

Dr. Kang concluded: “As brand passion and brand intimacy are the emotional drivers of brand love, marketers should set the goal of marketing campaigns to be converting consumers into loyal customers who frequently and consistently return. For example, advertising and promotion events using consumer passion and intimacy can enhance passionate feelings. The key is the recognition of consumers’ emotions and gradually strengthening the emotional bonds over time.”

Implications

The study has practical implications for those involved in marketing luxury hotels, particularly in helping them to understand the values that influence existing and potential guests. It suggests that hotels should adopt different strategies to meet different consumers’ needs and desires.

For those motivated by uniqueness, they should play to the distinctive and authentic image of their guests, for example by promoting such things as selective private guests’ clubs.

For those motivated by pleasure (hedonic value), they should encourage guests to immerse themselves in the hotel experience, for example by creating pleasurable activities with which people can engage.

The study also suggests that hotels should maintain relationships with consumers after their stay. Guests can be recognized for recommending the hotel to others and helping to spread brand messages and updates. They are also likely to be interested in other brand lines and future promotions, and their interest can be rewarded by being offered valued amenities and loyalty programs.

The study’s third practical implication relates to people’s willingness to pay more for their product. The research suggests that by paying greater attention to benefits that inspire passionate feelings in guests in a love relationship with their brand they can diminish resistance to premium prices.

Finally, the study suggests that marketers of luxury hotel brands should pay greater attention to the potential of consumers who are infrequent visitors.

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Significance

Dr. Kang’s study pioneers evaluation of the relationships between luxury value, romantic brand love and consumers’ future behavior in the luxury hotel setting.

In turn, Dr. Kang found that brand passion has a significant effect on advocacy and people’s willingness to pay more. However, though brand intimacy affects advocacy, it does not directly lead to consumers being willing to pay a premium price.

Interestingly, the statistics showed that status is far less important to consumers of luxury hotel brands. Traditionally it has been thought that status is a key contributor to luxury consumption, but the findings of this study suggest that status does not significantly affect brand love.

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