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Examining the impact of tourists' hope, knowledge and perceived value on online hotel booking intentions

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ABSTRACT

Research has previously established that tourists assess “attributes” to appraise the value a hotel may offer before booking online. However, this rational approach overlooks the role emotions may play in the decision-making process. This research examines the positive emotion of hope. Study 1 involved an experiment of 259 North American tourists, confirming the causal relationship between “hope” and “perceived value”. Study 2 involved an online survey of 418 North American hotel guests, demonstrating “brand knowledge” moderates the relationship between hope and guests’ perceived value, leading to booking intentions. These findings contribute new knowledge for tourism practitioners and researchers.

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Tourism; hotels; hospitality; online booking; Asia Pacific; emotions

Introduction

The internet has considerably changed hotel guest – brand relationships (Sánchez et al., 2022). Guests now have greater access to price comparative websites that facilitate hotel self-booking (Huang & Lan, 2021; Zhao et al., 2022). The highly competitive online sales channel now accounts for 69% of travel revenue worldwide (Statista, 2022). Therefore, understanding the drivers of guest online booking behaviour and, importantly, booking intentions has become a core challenge for hotel management. Previous research has examined drivers and barriers of online booking intentions, such as brand image and price (Lien et al., 2015), imagery (Shin et al., 2020), discounts and guest ratings (Hu & Yang, 2020), and accreditation and sustainability (Marchoo et al., 2014). Pleasingly, emergent research has begun to examine psychological elements, like choice overload (Guo & Li, 2022), and psychological distance and social influence (Ma & Li, 2022). Extending this

contemporary approach, the current study suggests that fostering positive emotions can increase online booking intentions.

Liu and colleagues (2017) suggest the examination of positive emotions and the role these emotions play is vital to understanding online behaviours. Hope is one such emotion, identified as a positive emotion that motivates individuals facing uncertainty and ambiguity (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Eisingerich et al., 2019). While “optimism” might also motivate an individual toward a goal, optimism, as conceptualised by Scheier and Carver (1985), is the generalised “expectancy that the future will be positive”. Hope, by contrast, lacks this “expectancy”, often materialising when an individual experiences less confidence and less personal control (see Bruininks & Malle, 2005). In an offline setting, a guest can easily engage with a hotel physically, refer to past experiences, and thus appraise the hotel’s value before making a booking (Kim et al., 2023). However, when booking online,

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there remains a degree of uncertainty, and thus hope manifests as a key positive emotional response to that future uncertainty. Individuals regularly focus on future events, imagining diverse possible outcomes (negative or positive), and acting according to those possible outcomes (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). Among future-oriented affective states, hope is considered a powerful psychological asset in the face of uncertainty (Snyder, 2000; Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2019). For example, an individual may be focused on an upcoming business trip and require a hotel with a business centre and meeting room facilities. When searching online for a hotel that meets those goals, a level of uncertainty will emerge – “Will the selected hotel provide the value sought in order for the goal to be achieved?” Hope then emerges as an emotional response to that uncertainty (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Snyder, 2002).

Scholars have suggested that the relationship between “emotions” and “perceptions of value” needs further empirical examination (Mingione et al., 2020), arguing measuring hope in “isolation” may not predict effective brand-related outcomes. Simply, combining both the “value attained” and the “goal realised” (e.g. a business trip), will naturally make a guest more likely to rebook. However, such a simple model may not provide a complete psychological explanation of how guests and hotel brands interact online. Hence, this study also examines “brand knowledge” as a moderator between hope and guests’ perceptions of value to present a comprehensive explanation. Brand knowledge denotes product – or service-related information (i.e. attributes, quality) contained within an individual’s memory (Stanton & Cook, 2019). Literature underscores the contingency effect of knowledge on online consumption experiences (Nepomuceno et al., 2014). In a hospitality context, a guest with greater knowledge of the hotel brand (e.g. Hilton, Hyatt) will be more hopeful that the hotel will offer greater value than alternatives – simply, knowledge will strengthen the hope – value relationship. By contrast, a guest with less knowledge may be more cautious, eroding their confidence and diminishing their perception of value.

This research makes several contributions to travel and tourism marketing literature. First, this study responds to calls to examine how the positive emotion of hope might lead to actions (Tucker & Shelton, 2018). Specifically, Hosany and colleagues (2020) call on tourism researchers to develop and

test models where positive emotions such as hope might impact cognitions or outcome variables, such as intentions. Second, while prior research has examined attributes that drive online booking and booking intentions, such as “brand image” and “price” (Lien et al., 2015), “imagery” (Shin et al., 2020), “discounts” and “guest ratings” (Hu & Yang, 2020), and “accreditation” and “sustainability” (Marchoo et al., 2014), this is the first work to examine the a positive emotional driver, in this case, “hope”. Third, for managers, this study pinpoints how positive individual hope translates into brand-centric outcomes and makes brand-related investments more effective in online accommodation booking environments. It does this through an experimental design that provides evidence that hope influences guests’ “perceptions of value”. Thus, by stimulating hope, hotel management can increase a guests’ perception of the hotel’s overall value – vital insights for the highly competitive tourism and travel market. Finally, from a theoretical perspective, this study applies the affect theory of social exchange (Lawler, 2001) and the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2004), within the travel and tourism context, to explain how hope and brand knowledge influence guests’ perceptions of hotel value and related outcomes.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Lawler’s (2001) affect theory of social exchange articulates how emotions play an important role when outcomes are attained during an exchange. When exchanges fail for partners, negative emotions like regret are experienced by both sides (e.g. guests and hotel management). However, when an exchange succeeds, both experience positive emotions. Hope in the exchange process is further explained by the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2004), which suggests that hope may help exchange partners broaden their affective, cognitive, and social resources, and enhance achievements such as goals (Fredrickson, 2004). The positive perception of the hotel then motivates exchange partners to ensure that the “goals” through an exchange are likely to be achieved. Simply, a guest “hopes” that a hotel’s online content is accurate and will lead to their goal of a weekend away, while the hotel management “hopes” their guest has interpreted the online content correctly, has a pleasant stay, and rebooks.

Theoretically, this suggests that hope will impact a guest's perception of the value of a hotel brand, which then results in goal attainment and booking intentions. Hope is defined as a cognition-based emotional mechanism that may explain individuals' online booking behaviour (Rego et al., 2014). It is envisaged that hope provides strength and willpower to achieve vacation goals (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2018). However, an individual's hope might be mitigated due to a lack of confidence (Lee & Aaker, 2004). For example, a guest with good knowledge of a hotel brand will be more hopeful of attaining their goals (i.e. business travel).

Value creation has been widely discussed in the literature and is often a part of a hotel's objectives, and their vision and mission statements. Perceived value is an individual's overall assessment of the net worth of a product/service based on perceptions of what "is received" and what "is given" (Paulose & Shakeel, 2022; Zeithaml, 1988). An individual's perceptions of value are at the core of exchange activities. According to Woodruff (1997), perceived value is an individual's perceived preference for those product attributes that facilitate (or block) achieving the individual's purposes. A theoretical framework of perceived value has emerged since the early 1980s to include broadly hedonic and utilitarian components (Babin et al., 1994; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Sheth et al., 1991). Conceptually, perceived value is recognised as a multi-dimensional construct that includes quality (or performance), economic (or price), emotional, and social elements (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The present study uses Sweeney and Soutar's (2001) PERVAL (perceived value) framework to determine guests' perceptions of hotels' value. PERVAL has been validated in pre- and post-purchase contexts (Bonnefoy-Claudet & Ghantous, 2013).

Hope and perceptions of hotel value

Imagine a guest booking a family vacation through an online booking site. They seek a high-quality hotel that offers a good range of amenities, activities, and family dining experiences. Naturally, they rely on the descriptions and images presented online, and select an option they believe will fulfil their travel goals (Luo et al., 2021). Despite the advancement of audio and visual online mediums, a guests' decision to book still requires an element of hope. Simply, they hope the descriptors presented are true and accurate. Among future-directed affective states,

hope is of particular interest, because it is considered a powerful psychological asset in the face of uncertainty (Snyder, 2000; Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2019). A guest's perceptions of hotel brand "quality" are defined as their judgement of utilitarian or physical performance (Khalifa et al., 2022), services (Suh et al., 1997), or amenities (Tran et al., 2013). Previous research has also identified that perceived value of service quality positively influences an individual's loyalty (Lai, 2014). In an online context, research illustrates that website "quality" dimensions (flow, usability, images, content, video, testimonials) significantly affect purchasing behaviour (Abou-Shouk & Khalifa, 2017). According to the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, when a guest considers booking a hotel online, they hope their perceptions of value (quality hotel) will be attained, and their goals achieved (family vacation) (Ha & Perks, 2005). Confirmation bias, the tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs, rationalises that the higher a guest's hope is about the "quality" of the hotel when booking, the more the guest will feel their goal has been attained when they arrive. It is hypothesised that:

H1: Guests' hope positively impacts their perceptions of hotel value (quality) in an online environment.

Individuals' perceptions of value (economic) align with the rational approach, whereby value perceptions are linked to the price of the offering under consideration (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Research identifies that price has a substantial direct effect on a guest's perceptions of willingness to buy (Ainscough, 2005). Increased hope and positive brand association have been found to impact the central cognition path that helps individuals to perceive value by assessing price (Bapat & Khandelwal, 2023). Consider a traveller booking accommodation in a new hotel online. While they seek to maximise the economic value of their purchase, they also experience economic risk (see Kim et al., 2009); hence, innately, they hope their transaction delivers value. It is thus hypothesised that:

H2: Guests' hope positively impacts their perceptions of hotel value (economic) in an online environment.

An individual's perceptions of brand value (emotional) refer to the positive feelings that are experienced through engagement with a brand (Yoo et al., 2010). Emotions can enhance (or reduce) an individual's sentiment toward a brand. Positive emotional states

motivate guests to develop a sense of attachment toward specific brands which align with their values (Liu et al., 2020). Thus, emotions trigger guests' affective states, resulting in actions exhibited through repeat purchases (Hsin Chang & Wang, 2011). The relevance of hope in this context is explored by De Mello and MacInnis (2005) by relating it to optimism and affect state. Guests associate hope with positive emotions congruent with goals and avoid anticipated risk during consumption (Chaudhuri, 2002). Simply, when booking a hotel via an online platform, the guest hopes their hotel choice will help them attain quality and economic value outcomes, and they also hope to attain positive emotional value outcomes (attachment). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H3: Guests' hope positively impacts their perceptions of hotel value (emotional) in an online environment.

Finally, an individual's perceptions of value (social) are linked to the social status exhibited by those individuals through the purchase of a brand (Rowley, 2009). Logically, guests will choose hotels that elevate their social status (Chang, 2008). Research has revealed the effect of mental imagery and need for social status on guests' intentions to make a booking after viewing social media photos of luxury hotels (Mou et al., 2019). Naturally, when booking online, guests experience some level of hope that their hotel choice will accomplish their social value goals. Hotels seek to fulfil these guest goals through their delivery of social value. Hope impacts a guest's perceptions of the brand's social value by connecting their "actual" social self and "ideal" social self (Okazaki et al., 2019), thus leading to the following hypothesis:

H4: Guests' hope positively impacts their perceptions of hotel value (social) in an online environment.

The moderating effect of brand knowledge

Individuals will vary in the extent of their knowledge of the value of the offering (Sangtani & Murshed, 2017). Including constructs like "brand knowledge" may advance the explanatory power of models that concentrate on purchasing processes (Bigné et al., 2023). Research has identified that hotel brand knowledge serves as a bridge between positive brand experiences, loyalty, and booking intentions (Manthiou et al., 2016; Xia et al., 2022). Guests with high brand knowledge are expected to be more

competent at processing information about the hotel's features/qualities (Kang et al., 2017). As a result, they feel confident about achieving positive outcomes. Therefore, guests with high knowledge will be more confident that the hotel brand will satisfy their goals. By contrast, when a guest lacks specific knowledge of the hotel, they may also lack confidence in their purchase. This uncertainty affects their hope (makes them less hopeful) about the purchase outcomes. Therefore, the guest may not perceive brand qualities and features positively.

Price represents the amount of money a consumer must forgo to attain the product or service they desire (Zeithaml, 1988). The tenets of utility theory suggest rational consumers seek to maximise their utility, that is, the value they extract from their purchase, by attempting to pay the minimum to attain the most value (Li et al., 2021). Price, as a heuristic cue, is more readily observable when determining value (Yoon et al., 2014). However, guests do not always remember actual prices – instead, they encode prices in way that is meaningful to them. In an online hotel booking context, guests tend to compare the objective prices (price offered by a hotel under consideration) with reference prices (prices offered by other hotels) and then form their perceptions of value (Kim et al., 2012). Logically, when an individual is more highly knowledgeable about hotel brands and the range of prices associated with those brands, they are more hopeful that the economic value of their choice will be attained (El-Said, 2020). On the other hand, when a guest has insufficient hotel brand knowledge of price ranges, it creates uncertainty about the possible outcomes of the purchase, leading to lack of hope, and creating doubt about whether their decision will lead to such a positive outcome.

Knowledgeable guests who cultivate hope about the positive outcome of booking a hotel online will likely develop positive emotions towards the brand (Kang et al., 2017). Knowing more about the hotel brand and its benefits creates hope in an individual's mind that the brand is the best option for attaining personal goals (Liu et al., 2018). This level of confidence in the hotel brand online, and having more interactions online by viewing information, may give guests a sense of hedonic benefits such as anticipated enjoyment and excitement. Hence, guests' perceptions of value contribute to developing their emotions. Finally, extensive brand knowledge instils a sense of optimism and confidence in individuals

who are seeking positive outcomes from their transactions (Zia et al., 2021). Having knowledge of a hotel brand will enable guests to share knowledge across social groups and online via reviews and testimonials, hence positioning them as expert travellers, attaining social value (Javed & Awan, 2023). Therefore, knowledgeable guests are expected to be more hopeful about booking a hotel online (hopeful that the brand will help them achieve social status) and consequently acquiring a positive perception of the social values of their desired brand. Based on the above literature, it is hypothesised that:

H5: Brand knowledge positively moderates the relationship between hope and guests' perceptions of value (quality) in an online environment.

H6: Brand knowledge positively moderates the relationship between hope and guests' perceptions of value (economic) in an online environment.

H7: Brand knowledge positively moderates the relationship between hope and guests' perceptions of value (emotional) in an online environment.

H8: Brand knowledge positively moderates the relationship between hope and guests' perceptions of value (social) in an online environment.

Perceptions of value and goal attainment

Individuals attempt to achieve their goals by mitigating the discrepancies between unfulfilled needs and current desires (Dedeoğlu et al., 2016). According to the disconfirmation of expectation theory (Patterson, 1993), a positive judgement of the quality of a hotel can be made, without actual use or stay, through the expressive dimensions of online content, design, and images (Alrawadieh & Law, 2019; Lin et al., 2023). Individuals' perceptions of quality influence their attitudes toward brands (Kim & Lennon, 2013) and the intention to rebook or revisit (Dedeoğlu et al., 2016). The hotel's quality assessment drives the guest to attain their goals, decide whether the brand will satisfy their needs, and rebook (Chitturi et al., 2008; Lin et al., 2023). Accordingly, it is hypothesised that:

H9: A guest's perceptions of value (quality) impact their goal attainment in an online environment.

Individuals compare the cost of a brand with the benefits they receive. If a guest perceives the advertised price of the hotel as reasonable, they will have a favourable view of the brand, feel satisfied that their goals will be accomplished (Chiu et al., 2014),

and tend to rebook or revisit (Dedeoğlu et al., 2016). However, since a guest can't physically interact with the hotel brand online, they need to be confident that what is displayed online is precisely what they will get for the money spent. In such a risky situation, price fairness can significantly reduce cognitive dissonance and determine purchase intention (Jiang & Rosenbloom, 2005). Therefore, for those who are value – or price-conscious, finding brands with an adjustable price can trigger a sense of goal achievement. It is thus hypothesised that:

H10: A guest's perceptions of value (economic) impact their goal attainment in an online environment.

Online sites will employ emotional cues like music, interface colours, and video to influence individuals on exposure (Mazaheri et al., 2011), thereby creating stimulation, arousal, and positive affect (Richard & Habibi, 2016). Drawing on the stimulus – organism – response theory, when a hotel brand's websites affect an individual's emotions, the individual's behaviour will be directed either toward or away from their goals, that is, an exciting, fun-filled weekend away (Eroglu et al., 2001). It is hypothesised that:

H11: A guest's perceptions of value (emotional) impact their goal attainment in an online environment.

Social needs are a driving force behind an individual's behaviour. Therefore, individuals tend to choose brands with images or personalities they think can improve their social self-image (Bartikowski & Cleveland, 2017). Individuals may be motivated to select and interpret messages that align with their social groups. Accordingly, they form a positive connection with their self-image if their purchased brands are used by their groups (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). For example, many individuals like to purchase from websites that their friends care about, purchase from, and feel affiliation with. This benefit gives them a sense of assurance they will achieve their goal by being affiliated with their favourite groups, and even improves their self-esteem (Prentice et al., 2019). The following hypothesis is offered:

H12: A guest's perceptions of value (emotional) impact their goal attainment in an online environment.

Hotel booking intention

Online purchase intention denotes the probability of purchasing, ordering, or booking from the same organisation after initial consumption (Chiu et al.,

2014), resulting in repeat patronage (Kim & Gupta, 2009). Research has shown that goal attainment can influence purchase intentions through its feedback control nature (Carver & Scheier, 2012), in which individuals assess their goal achievements by comparing actual outcomes with desired ones (Higgins et al., 2020). If their travel goals are achieved, they will have a positive feeling and be willing to rebook; otherwise, they experience negative affect and abandon the brand (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). Therefore, goal attainment can be used as a surrogate cue to assess service performance and as a factor influencing purchase intentions. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H13: Goal attainment positively relates to hotel booking intentions in an online environment.

Combining all hypotheses, the following conceptual model is proposed in Figure 1.

Methodology

Two studies were undertaken to examine the proposed hypotheses. Study 1 employed experiments to examine the impact of guest hope on the four dimensions of perceived value. Scenario-based priming manipulation was used to examine different levels of hope. Study 2 used an online survey to test the nomological network among the constructs of interest. Before data collection, all necessary ethics approvals were obtained (Research Ethics Committee: Number: 2019-137E), and the participants provided their informed consent.

Study 1: Experiment

Participants were primed with a scenario to vary their level of hope to examine its effects on perceptions of

hotel value (see the Appendix). Two hundred and fifty-nine US-based participants (58.3% male, $M_{age} = 39.35$) were recruited through an online market research company (The ORU). A one-factor between-subjects design was employed. Participants received one of the two scenarios about a person making an online hotel booking and were asked to imagine themselves as the person in the scenario (Barros & Botelho, 2012). Following this, participants completed the two manipulation-check questions using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) to measure the extent they felt (1) hopeful and (2) hopeless. Participants then completed the perceived value scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), mood measures (depressed, anxious, happy, and sad), and demographic questions.

Results

Manipulation checks. Both manipulation checks indicated that the hopeful scenario induced a hopeful state ($M_{high-hope} = 5.76$, $SD = 1.17$; $M_{low-hope} = 2.04$, $SD = 1.27$; $t(257) = 24.62$, $p < .001$), and the hopeless scenario induced a hopeless state ($M_{high-hope} = 1.82$, $SD = 1.10$; $M_{low-hope} = 5.71$, $SD = 1.25$; $t(257) = -26.62$, $p < .001$). Other mood states did not differ as a function of the hope conditions ($-2.0 < t_s < 2.0$). *Perceived value (quality).* Hopeful participants ($M_{high-hope} = 5.27$, $SD = 1.33$) perceive that the hotel brand they booked online has more quality benefits than do hopeless participants ($M_{low-hope} = 4.63$, $SD = 1.31$; $t(257) = 2.27$, $p = .048$). *Perceived value (emotional).* Hopeful participants ($M_{high-hope} = 5.55$, $SD = 1.36$) perceive that the hotel brand they booked online has more emotional benefits than do hopeless

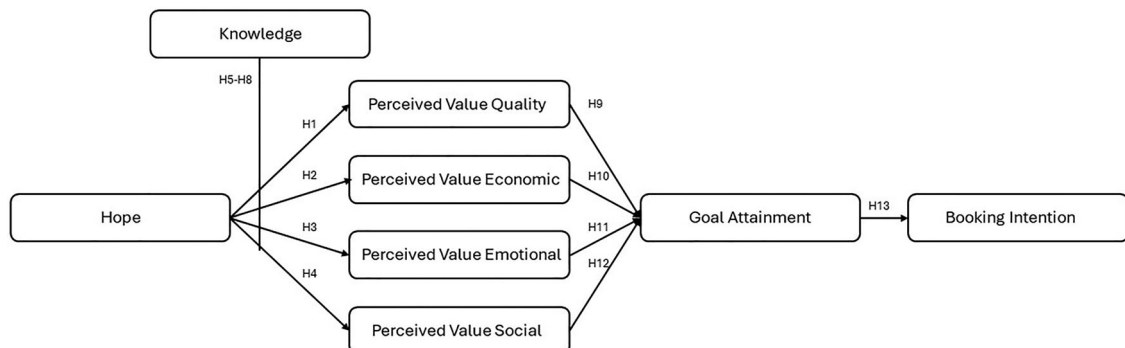


Figure 1. Conceptual model. An image of the hypothesised relationships between guest hope, perceived value, goal attainment, and booking intention, including the moderating effect of knowledge.

participants ($M_{\text{low-hope}} = 5.16$, $SD = 1.41$; $t(257) = 2.27$, $p = .024$). *Perceived value (economic)*. Hopeful participants ($M_{\text{high-hope}} = 5.29$, $SD = 1.17$) perceive that the hotel brand they booked online has more economic benefits than do hopeless participants ($M_{\text{low-hope}} = 4.99$, $SD = 1.28$; $t(257) = 2.02$, $p = .044$). *Perceived value (social)*. Hopeful participants ($M_{\text{high-hope}} = 5.96$, $SD = 1.46$) perceive that the hotel brand they booked online has more social benefits than do hopeless participants ($M_{\text{low-hope}} = 4.09$, $SD = 1.33$; $t(257) = -.159$, $p = .014$).

Study 2: Survey

The nomological network was tested using an online survey. To ensure the quality of responses and to avoid recency bias, screening questions ensured that participants had travelled and had booked a hotel online in the past 12 months. A market research company was again employed to collect data from its panel to ensure the sample was representative of the broader population. A duration check was included to remove participants who answered the survey too quickly, and two integrity-check questions were embedded to ensure the reliability of responses. After cleaning the data, 418 usable responses were attained. The retained data size is higher than the recommended sample size, which is 103, calculated by G-Power software at power of 0.8 and seven predictors. Further, to re-ensure whether our data are sufficient for multivariate analysis, we followed Hair et al.'s (2019) method. Hair et al. (2019) proposed that the sample size should ideally be 10–15 times the number of items of employed variables. Considering we had 27 items, the minimum required sample size

was 405 (15×27). We also analysed the existing literature on online hotel booking, showing that a sample size range of between 300 and 500 provides reliable findings and conclusions (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015; El-Said, 2020; Lien et al., 2015). Table 1 provides an overview of participant demographics.

Measures

Previously well-established, validated scale measures from the extant literature were employed (see Table 2). Measures were evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Hope was measured using three items (Snyder, 1995); perceptions of value (*quality* using three items, *emotional* five items, *economic* three items, *social* three items) (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001); brand knowledge using four items (Lacey et al., 2010); evaluating goal attainment using three items (Elliot & Murayama, 2008); and, finally, booking intentions using three items (Wen, 2012).

Common method variance

The variables employed in this study were scrutinised to detect the existence of common method variance (CMV). First, all items were randomised to ensure respondents' attentiveness. Second, a manual check was conducted to remove any monotonous or consistent responses to items. Third, a Harman's single factor test was undertaken, the result indicating 45.85% of variance was explained by the single factor, which is within the limit, that is, less than 50%. Finally, to confirm the findings of Harman's single factor test (i.e. data is free from CMV), we used the marker variable test (Malhotra et al., 2017). The value obtained for the marker variable technique in the confirmatory factor analysis was lower than that of the common latent factor technique. This outcome exhibits that the current research is not afflicted by any potential issues associated with CMV.

Analysis and measurement validation

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the psychometric properties of variables. The model fit indices fit well with the data (see Table 2). Considering these goodness-of-fit measures, the model adequately fits the data from the sample. The composite reliability values of all the employed variables were above the recommended values (i.e. 0.70), reflecting reliability of the data.

Table 3 shows that the employed variables' average variance extracted value was above 0.50

Table 1. Demographic details.

| Variable | | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------|------------|
| Gender | Female | 214 | 51.19 |
| | Male | 204 | 48.80 |
| Age | 18–25 | 62 | 14.80 |
| | 26–35 | 78 | 18.70 |
| | 36–50 | 119 | 28.50 |
| | 51–65 | 92 | 22.00 |
| | Above 65 | 67 | 16.00 |
| Education | Secondary school or below | 149 | 35.64 |
| | Undergraduate | 156 | 37.32 |
| | Postgraduate | 113 | 27.04 |
| Weekly usage of the internet | Less than 5 h | 27 | 06.46 |
| | From 5 to 15 h | 172 | 41.14 |
| | More than 15 h | 219 | 52.40 |

Table 2. Items, estimates and z-values.

| Construct | Est. | z value |
|---|-------|---------|
| Hope (Snyder, 1995) | | |
| When booking the hotel brand online, I am always hopeful that I shall achieve what I aim for. | 0.718 | 1 |
| I hope that the hotel brand I booked online will benefit me. | 0.720 | 12.22 |
| I hope I can achieve my goals in relation to the hotel brand I book online. | 0.724 | 12.19 |
| Perceived value (quality) (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) | | |
| The hotel brand that I booked online was superior. | 0.856 | 1 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online was of good quality. | 0.816 | 19.91 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online had excellent features. | 0.839 | 20.45 |
| Perceived value (emotional) (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) | | |
| The hotel brand that I booked online made me feel good. | 0.803 | 1 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online is one that made me feel relaxed about staying at. | 0.815 | 16.6 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online made me want to use it. | 0.803 | 16.59 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online is one that I enjoyed | 0.803 | 16.87 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online gave me pleasure. | 0.736 | 16.59 |
| Perceived value (economic) (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) | | |
| The hotel brand that I booked online was economical. | 0.767 | 1 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online offered value for money. | 0.848 | 14.71 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online was reasonably priced. | 0.712 | 13.78 |
| Perceived value (social) (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) | | |
| The hotel brand that I booked online improved my social status. | 0.859 | 1 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online improved the way I am perceived. | 0.861 | 20.83 |
| The hotel brand that I booked online made a good impression on others. | 0.823 | 19.75 |
| Booking intentions | | |
| Next time, I would book this hotel brand online again. | 0.778 | 1 |
| In the future, booking this hotel brand online will fulfil my requirements. | 0.718 | 16.08 |
| In the foreseeable future, I will consider this hotel brand as an option when booking online. | 0.759 | 15.06 |
| Goal attainment (Elliot & Murayama, 2008) | | |
| I think I achieved my goals by booking this hotel brand online. | 0.717 | 1 |
| I believe my goals to get maximum value out of the hotel brand I booked online were achieved. | 0.705 | 15.31 |
| I think booking this hotel brand online gave me a sense of achievement. | 0.756 | 13.78 |
| Brand knowledge (Eggert & Helm, 2003) | | |
| I had previous knowledge of the hotel brand that I booked online. | 0.875 | 1 |
| I already knew about the hotel brand that I booked online. | 0.822 | 20.94 |
| I had familiarity with the hotel brand I booked online. | 0.837 | 19.75 |
| I had experience with the hotel brand I booked online. | 0.721 | 19.75 |

Note: ($\chi^2 = 815.866$ $df = 296$, $\chi^2/df = 2.756$, ($p < 0.01$), CFI = 0.931, IFI = 0.931 and RMSEA = 0.065) ($N = 418$). All item loadings estimates are significant at $p < .01$.

(Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Given the moderately high correlation between the employed variables, this study followed Bagozzi and Yi (1991) and conducted a chi-square to test the discriminant validity. The 95% confidence interval results demonstrate that discriminant validity was achieved. Harman's single-factor analysis and common marker variable test were conducted. Common method bias was not a concern with the one factor that explains 31.3% (< 50%) of the variance in the data.

The hypotheses were tested using AMOS 25. The model fit indices were found to be a good fit (see Table 4). Path analysis revealed that all hypotheses, except H6 and H12, were accepted. Brand knowledge has a non-significant effect on the relationship between hope and perceived economic value (H6). Perceived social value has a non-significant effect on goal attainment (H12).

Indirect effects

An indirect effect test was conducted through bootstrapping at 2,000 samples. Hope significantly indirectly affects guest goal attainment through perceived value. Further, perceived value indirectly affects hotel booking intention through goal attainment (Table 5).

Moderation analysis

As illustrated in Figures 2–4, brand knowledge strengthens the relationship between hope and guests' perceived value (quality, emotional, and social) but not perceived value (economic).

Discussion

The internet has emerged to considerably change hotel guest – brand relationships (Sánchez et al.,

Table 3. Composite reliability, average variance extracted, and inter-factor correlation.

| Constructs | CR | AVE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Booking intentions | 0.796 | 0.566 | 0.752 | | | | | | | |
| 2. Hope | 0.740 | 0.587 | 0.735 | 0.698 | | | | | | |
| 3. Perceived value (quality) | 0.875 | 0.701 | 0.892 | 0.702 | 0.837 | | | | | |
| 4. Perceived value (emotional) | 0.894 | 0.628 | 0.885 | 0.829 | 0.876 | 0.793 | | | | |
| 5. Perceived value (economic) | 0.816 | 0.598 | 0.708 | 0.699 | 0.574 | 0.685 | 0.773 | | | |
| 6. Perceived value (social) | 0.885 | 0.719 | 0.569 | 0.683 | 0.567 | 0.595 | 0.554 | 0.848 | | |
| 7. Goal attainment | 0.736 | 0.583 | 0.948 | 0.909 | 0.916 | 0.975 | 0.820 | 0.566 | 0.695 | |
| 8. Brand knowledge | 0.888 | 0.665 | 0.694 | 0.575 | 0.744 | 0.704 | 0.505 | 0.532 | 0.948 | 0.816 |

CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted. All values of inter-factor correlations are significant at $p < .01$.

2022). Previous research has demonstrated that guests traditionally select hotels based on rational decision-making processes (Guo & Li, 2022; Kim et al., 2019). However, this rational approach overlooks possible emotional mechanisms. Hence, despite the volume of content and information available via online travel sites, guests still require some level of hope that the hotel they book will deliver value and help them achieve their travel goals, which will inspire them to rebook. Therefore, these studies contribute an examination of the complex guest – brand relationship. They do so by developing and testing a model (Study 1) that explains how guests’ hope impacts perceptions of a hotel’s value. The work further examines the relationships (Study 2) between guests’ hope, their perceptions of the hotel’s value, and the impact on their goal attainment, which then leads to their intention to rebook online.

The extent of a guest’s brand knowledge strengthens the relationship between their hope and perceived value, except for economic value.

Both studies confirm that hope influences a guest’s perceptions of hotel value when booking online. A guest’s hopeful state increases their perception that the hotel brand they book online will deliver not just economic benefits, but also emotional, social, and quality dimensions of value. The rationale for the nexus between hope and perceived economic value corroborates the studies that use the equity theory perspective, postulating that individuals optimise costs and benefits during transactions (Davlem-bayeva et al., 2021). Therefore, guests’ hope facilitates the perceptions of equity gained from a hotel brand, due to the hotels’ potential to deliver reduced costs, resulting in confidence and perceived economic value. The positive impact of hope on the perceived emotional value of the brand suggests that hope triggers a feeling of emotional attachment towards the brand (Pleeging et al., 2021; Su et al., 2022). Hope was also identified as having a positive impact on

Table 4. Path analysis.

| Hypothesis | Estimates | <i>p</i> value | <i>z</i> value |
|--|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Hope → Perceived value (quality) | 0.856 | 0.000 | 12.021 |
| Hope → Perceived value (economic) | 0.709 | 0.000 | 9.587 |
| Hope → Perceived value (emotional) | 0.627 | 0.000 | 11.952 |
| Hope → Perceived value (social) | 0.636 | 0.000 | 9.930 |
| Brand knowledge*Hope → Perceived value (quality) | 0.119 | 0.005 | 2.788 |
| Brand knowledge*Hope → Perceived value (economic) | 0.032 | 0.496 | 0.681 |
| Brand knowledge*Hope → Perceived value (emotional) | 0.101 | 0.010 | 2.593 |
| Brand knowledge*Hope → Perceived value (social) | 0.113 | 0.016 | 2.412 |
| Perceived value (quality) → Goal attainment | 0.423 | 0.000 | 6.873 |
| Perceived value (economic) → Goal attainment | 0.252 | 0.000 | 5.790 |
| Perceived value (emotional) → Goal attainment | 0.439 | 0.000 | 6.1223 |
| Perceived value (social) → Goal attainment | 0.026 | 0.443 | 0.766 |
| Goal attainment → Hotel booking intention | 0.675 | 0.000 | 11.394 |

PrC: ($\chi^2 = 720.799$, $df = 239$, $\chi^2/df = 3.016$, ($p < 0.01$), CFI = 0.923, IFI = 0.923, and RMSEA = 0.070).

Table 5. Bootstrapping indirect effects for the meditational model.

| Indirect effects | Point estimates | (95% CI) Bootstrapping (lower bound–upper bound) |
|---|-----------------|--|
| Hope → Perceived value → Goal attainment | .550** | (.498)–(.591) |
| Perceived value (quality) → Goal attainment → Booking intention | .393** | (.226)–(.582) |
| Perceived value (economic) → Goal attainment → Booking intention | .234** | (.133)–(.343) |
| Perceived value (emotional) → Goal attainment → Booking intention | .266** | (.106)–(.227) |
| Perceived value (social) → Goal attainment → Booking intention | .024* | (.048)–(.087) |

$N = 418$. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

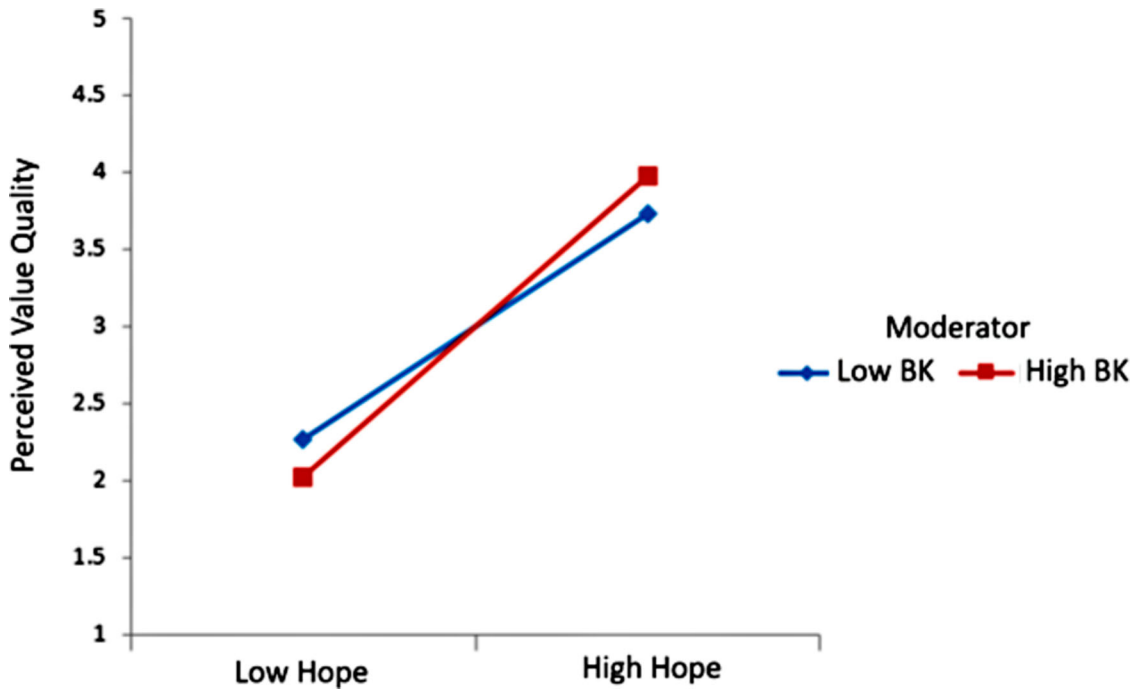


Figure 2. Moderation effect of brand knowledge on hope: Perceived value (quality) relationship. A graph that illustrates how a guest’s hotel brand knowledge strengthens the relationship between hope and perceived value (quality).

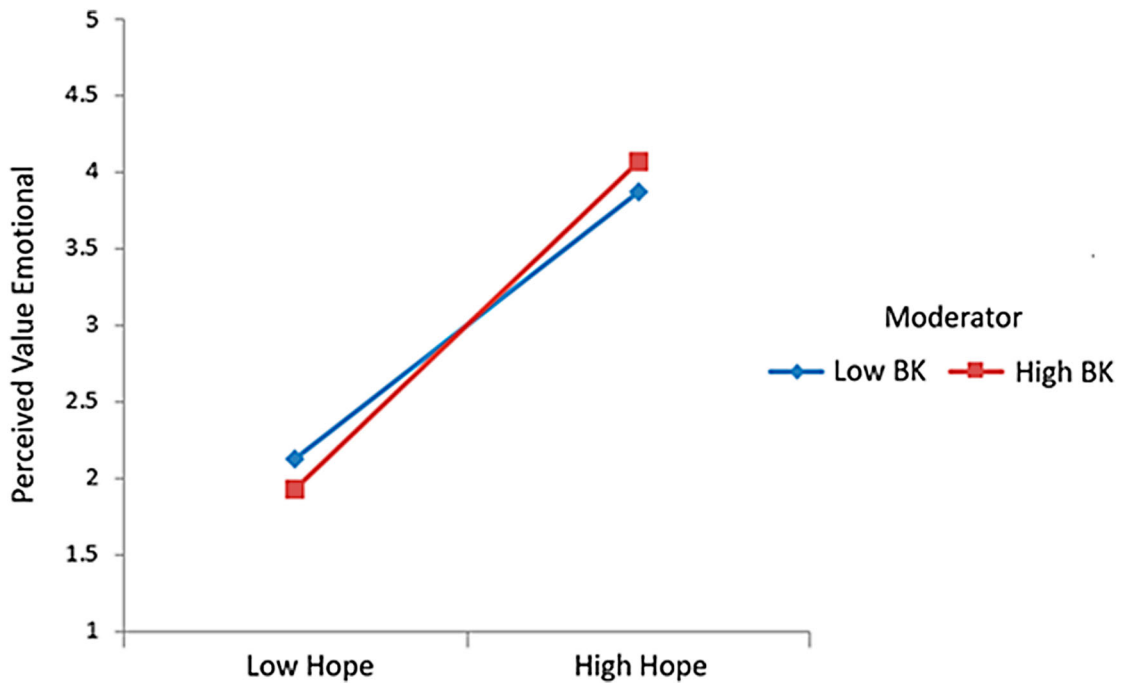


Figure 3. Moderation effect of brand knowledge on hope: Perceived value (emotional) relationship. A graph that illustrates how a guest’s hotel brand knowledge strengthens the relationship between hope and perceived value (emotional).

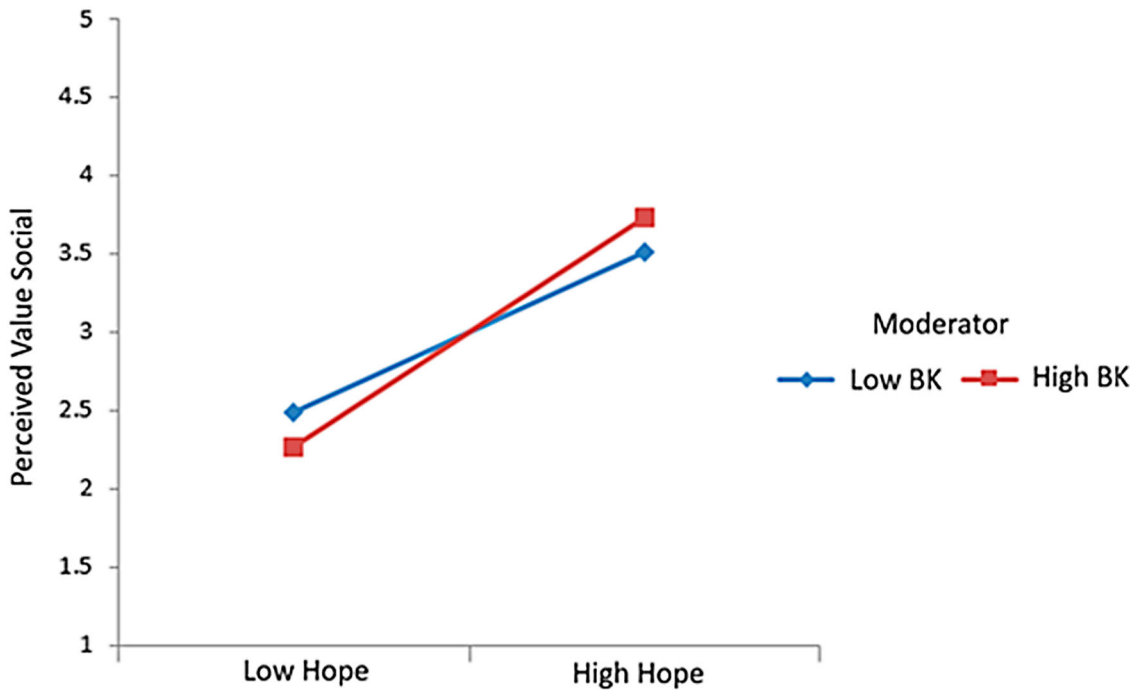


Figure 4. Moderation effect of brand knowledge on consumer hope: Perceived value (social) relationship. A graph that illustrates how a guest's hotel brand knowledge strengthens the relationship between hope and perceived value (social).

perceived social value (Chang, 2008). The more hopeful a guest is that they may interact with like-minded travellers with similar interests and lifestyles, the more likely they will be to experience positive emotional and social value outcomes. Study 2 illustrates the essential role that brand knowledge plays in strengthening the relationship between hope and guest perceptions of values, except for economic value. Naturally, a guest with high brand knowledge would be more competent at analysing online information about a hotel's features/qualities (Kang et al., 2017). The relationship between hope and economic value becomes non-significant when moderated by knowledge. This suggests that having knowledge of prices and therefore the "costs and benefits" of the hotel mitigates the need for hope (Li et al., 2021).

This research finds that guests' perceptions of hotel brand "quality" are associated positively with their goal attainment. This finding supports those studies applying regulatory focus theory (Chitturi et al., 2008), arguing that positive or negative opinions of brand quality shape individuals' attitudes towards the brand online, which drives brand purchase intentions (see Chen et al., 2022; Reimann et al., 2014). It was identified that guests' perceptions of value in terms of price

("economic") have a positive relationship with their goal attainment. This is aligned with the work of researchers positing that individuals build a positive orientation toward a brand that provides higher value for money. Guests' perceptions of the "emotional" value of the hotel brand positively impact their goal attainment. Online brand exposure through an aesthetic website interface may provide guests with a unique transaction experience and emotional enjoyment. This extends support to the stimulus – organism – response theory, which states that brands' websites (stimulus) can enhance the value perceptions (emotions) of guests (organism) and a purchase decision (response) (Eroglu et al., 2001; Wu et al., 2021). However, guests' perceptions of value "social" have a non-significant impact on their goal attainment. This implies that, while social value may be a factor for some guests, it is generally not a dominant influence on their goal attainment. Further, these findings suggest that goal attainment influences booking intention. This result can be explained based on social exchange theory, postulating that individuals tend to reciprocate the benefits (purchase intentions) received online through long-term relationships with the brand. Furthermore, prior

studies suggest that individuals who attain goals are less sensitive to price and have an optimistic viewpoint about their preferred brand online (Blut et al., 2015).

Theoretical contributions

The results of this work deepen extant knowledge in three ways. First, this study establishes how hope translates into brand-centric outcomes and makes brand-related investments more effective in online accommodation booking environments. It does so by offering evidence that “hope” positively influences guests’ “perceptions of value”, and, in turn, their goals and intentions to rebook a hotel online. The work further illustrates the moderating effect of brand knowledge. While previous studies have examined “attributes” that drive online booking and booking intentions (Hu & Yang, 2020; Lien et al., 2015; Marchoo et al., 2014; Shin et al., 2020), this is the first work to examine how positive “emotions”, in this case hope, offer an alternative explanation as to what influences guests’ online intentions to rebook. Accordingly, it responds to calls to examine how the positive emotions such as hope might lead to actions (Hosany et al., 2020; Tucker & Shelton, 2018). Second, this work applies the affect theory of social exchange (Lawler, 2001) and Fredrickson’s (2004) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions to demonstrate how emotions play a critical role during an exchange within a travel and tourism context. This current work provides evidence that the positive emotion of hope motivates exchange partners to ensure that the “goals” through the exchange are likely to be achieved. Theoretically, this study illustrates that hope will impact a guest’s perception of the value of a hotel brand, which then results in goal attainment and booking intentions. Third, the work extends disconfirmation of expectation theory in the context of guest satisfaction with the perceived value of the hotel, their attainment of personal goals, and booking intentions (El-Adly, 2019; Patterson, 1993). This theory is generally accepted by scholars to explain consumers’ satisfaction and their likelihood of making future purchases. Herein, it is evidenced to be an appropriate theoretical lens to explain guests’ behavioural intentions.

Managerial implications

When booking a hotel online, a guest will interpret the descriptions and images available, and select an

appropriate option that they believe will achieve their travel goals, be that a romantic weekend away or a business trip (Luo et al., 2021). Recent research also notes that images combined with testimonials have a greater influence on guests’ decision to book than text alone (Li et al., 2023). However, despite the plethora of online price comparison sites, and advanced audio and visual online mediums, a guests’ decision to book still requires an element of hope. For over a decade, research has noted that when booking a hotel online, negative emotions like scepticism and distrust are heightened (Sakipour & Mansouri, 2014). Therefore, guests’ reliance on hope is vital, as the risks involved in an online environment are higher. In an online setting, managers accordingly need to exert concerted efforts to develop high levels of hope among guests.

One factor that may stimulate hope in the tourism sector is the adoption of blockchain technology. Blockchain, often considered “trust/consensus technology”, is cryptographically secure (Irannezhad & Mahadevan, 2021). For example, UK-based travel company Travelport implemented blockchain to ensure true and immutable reviews, improve coordination of travel activities, and facilitate secure payment (Croucher, 2019). German-based travel company TUI Group used a blockchain-based system to ensure the transparency of their hotels’ facilities, reduce costs for travellers, and increase efficiencies (Marr, 2018).

Clear privacy statements, two-factor authentication security protocols or “assurance seals” may improve guest hope relating to economic value, that is, remove the risk of financial loss (Agag et al., 2019). Improving the platform’s functionality is essential to mitigating time risk, providing greater hope for a quality experience (Inman & Nikolova, 2017). Strengthening guests’ social interactions through the facilitation of online brand communities may increase their brand knowledge and perceived social value (Kitsios et al., 2022). Further, sharing experiences and offering opinions among guest groups (e.g. TripAdvisor) may also provide hedonic benefits in terms of perceived emotional value. As guests online cannot physically interact with the hotel before booking, temporary “pop-up” hotel activations in shopping centres or airports may increase hope by allowing guests to physically engage before booking online. Offering digital inspections, virtual tours of the hotel and its facilities, or virtual reality functionality will offer far more engagement than simple static

images, accordingly, increasing guest hope of positive online booking outcomes (Stappung et al., 2023).

Limitations

As with any study, this research contains limitations that suggest potential avenues for further inquiry. First, this research did not consider prior experience with or frequency of online hotel bookings. Hence, the effect of hope on perceived value may vary based on guests' online interaction levels. Second, cross-sectional data were employed to test our hypotheses. While this approach is not uncommon, it is important to recognise that these findings only relate to a specific point in time. It is finally acknowledged that future studies should examine longitudinal data to obtain more insights into guest hope, perceived value, and brand-related outcomes over time.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix

Hope Manipulation Scenarios (Study 1)

Please carefully read the following scenario and imagine you are the person in this scenario.

High Hope Scenario: “You are a hopeful and hard-working person. After a year of hard work, you are excited about taking a well-deserved holiday. Using an online hotel booking website, you find the perfect hotel. You are highly optimistic this hotel will far exceed your expectations. You have been living frugally and are confident that the money saved will easily allow you to pay for your hotel and holiday. You are completely convinced that you need this holiday, and you feel now is the right time.”

Low Hope Scenario: “You are a hard-working person but often feel a little hopeless at times. After a year of hard work, you are excited about taking a well-deserved holiday. Using an online hotel booking website, you find the perfect hotel. However, you are not highly optimistic this hotel will meet your expectations. Despite living frugally, you are not entirely confident that the money you have saved will enable you to pay for your hotel and holiday. You are really not sure that you actually need this holiday, and you feel maybe now is not the right time.”