

## Hotel image and reputation on building customer loyalty: An empirical study in Macau

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### ABSTRACT

The relationship between corporate image and reputation has not been well investigated because most studies only analyze corporate image or reputation separately. This study aims to evaluate the roles of hotel image and reputation by examining their influences on the processes that create customer loyalty toward a hotel. It involves the examination of the interrelationships between hotel image, service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, hotel reputation, customer commitment, and customer loyalty. The data collected from 442 respondents is analyzed by using structural equation modeling analysis. The Sobel test is employed to examine the significance of mediation effects related to hotel image and reputation. The results of this study indicate that hotel image is an antecedent of hotel reputation, and all the above factors play a significant role in building customer loyalty. These findings help hotel marketers to formulate an appropriate image for establishing a reputation for enhancing customer loyalty.

### 1. Introduction

Corporate reputation theory was initially developed in the 1950s when the concept of corporate image emerged (Bennett & Kottasz, 2000). From a marketing perspective, corporate reputation was defined as the customers' accumulated impression of a firm resulting from their interactions with the firm (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990); whereas corporate image is built on communication programs such as advertising (Chun, 2005; Gray & Balmer, 1998). Depending on the research focus, researchers only separately tested either corporate image or corporate reputation in their studies. Thus, the relationship between corporate image and reputation has not been well examined. Since corporate reputation has an impact on the corporate success (Sageder, Mitter, & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2018) and good corporate image may enhance corporate reputation, so there is a need to investigate their relationship. In order to study the relationship between corporate image and corporate reputation, we can examine the different influences they have on the processes that create customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel sector.

Revealing from hospitality literature, some studies have indicated that corporate image significantly influences perceived value and satisfaction, and that simultaneously influences loyalty (Ryu, Han, & Kim, 2008); some scholars have stated that superior customer value and high customer satisfaction have an impact on the firm's reputation, ulti-

mately leading to customer retention (Hu, Kandampully, & Juwaheer, 2009; Jani & Han, 2014; Kandampully & Hu, 2007); and some studies have indicated that customer commitment affects the customer's behavior intention to revisit the same hotel (Mattila, 2006). Therefore, for studying the consequences of corporate image and reputation, this study attempts to investigate the effects of corporate image and reputation, with the above factors, on customer commitment and loyalty in the hotel sector.

Among the hospitality industries, the hotel sector is the one that invests a lot in building its image and reputation. Thus, this study investigates the relationship between corporate image and corporate reputation in a hotel setting. This study attempts to contribute a model that incorporates different attitudinal factors (service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction) and explores the underlying mechanism for an understanding of how hotel image and reputation build relational benefits (commitment and loyalty). Although some researchers have studied the relationships between hotel image and other variables (Christou, 2003; Hu et al., 2009; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000, 2003; Loureiro & Gonzalez, 2008), no study has considered hotel image and reputation as separated constructs in research and identified the relational flow of the seven constructs. An appreciation of this connection can enable hotel marketers to develop the appropriate marketing strategies to promote a given hotel's image and to enhance its reputation to underpin customer commitment and loyalty.

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## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Corporate image and reputation

Reputation is the stakeholders' influences, assessments, and perceptions of the business based on its past performance (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006; Tucker & Melewar, 2005). It is the judgment about a company from the customer's perspective (Fombrun & van Riel, 1997; Villena-Manzanares & Souto-Perez, 2016), so the estimation of a firm's reputation is based on customers' own direct perception related to past actions of the firm (Park, Lee, & Kim, 2014; Tang, 2007). Therefore, corporate reputation is an intangible asset that firms build up over time (Wang, Yu, & Chiang, 2016) and represents what is actually known (by both internal and external stakeholders) (Walker, 2010).

According to Gray and Balmer (1998), the corporate image comprises the immediate mental picture that audiences have of an organization. Corporate image is designed by a company (Villena-Manzanares & Souto-Perez, 2016) for making up public emotional feelings towards the company from external sources of information (Barich & Kotler, 1991), so previous studies on the corporate image have generally focused on the effects of advertising (Winters, 1986) and social media (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Therefore, the corporate image can be described as the desired image for which an organization would like people to think about it (Walker, 2010).

In the previous studies, the terms image and reputation are still often used interchangeably (Chun, 2005). When studying corporate image, some researchers considered corporate reputation as a measure or dimension of corporate image (e.g., Kou & Tang, 2013; Yadav, Dokania, & Pathak, 2016) and vice versa (e.g. Cian & Cervai, 2014; Loureiro & Gonzalez, 2008). Walker (2010) distinguished that corporate image refers to desired stakeholder perceptions and corporate reputation refers to actual stakeholder perceptions. Thus, the hotel image as a corporate image in this study is as guests' emotional perceptions and feelings towards a hotel from external sources of information, and the hotel reputation as a corporate reputation is defined as the guests' believe or feel about a hotel from their real experiences.

### 2.2. Service quality, perceived value, and satisfaction

Service quality can be considered to be a kind of global judgment (Zeithaml, 1988) on the superiority of a given service and thus is considered to be an intangible cue influencing customer satisfaction and post-consumption attitudes (Brady & Robertson, 2001). However, Cronin and Taylor (1992) stated that service quality can be viewed as an attitudinal construct that a customer rates its service context. So, it is a customer's subjective judgment (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994). Thus, service quality in this study is considered as customers' assessment of services offered by a hotel. Some researchers have identified service quality as a consequence of hotel image (Chen & Chen, 2014).

Perceived value is a discrepancy between what a purchase has contributed to the 'getting' and what costs have been involved in the 'giving' (Moliner, Sanchez, Rodriguez, & Callarisa, 2007; Zhang, Li, Wu, & Li, 2017). Therefore, this study defines perceived value as the customer's perception of the benefits of a given service and the costs of acquiring that service. Gallarza and Saurab (2006) considered perceived value as essentially a monetary issue. Thus, in this study perceived value can be measured by evaluating the value for the price, the value of service, and the worth of money.

Customer satisfaction is an individual's satisfaction based on the outcome of a service experience (Pizam, Shapiro, & Ellis, 2016). It is a customer's fulfillment response that is either pleasant or unpleasant (Oliver, 1997). Because an assessment process is an essential aspect of customer satisfaction (Back, 2005), therefore this study defines customer satisfaction as an emotional assessment of customer experience in a hotel. Some researchers indicated hotel image as an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Lahap, Ramli, Said, Radzi, & Zain, 2016).

### 2.3. Customer commitment and loyalty

Customer commitment is defined as an enduring desire to maintain an attachment to a company (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992). Different researchers categorized commitment into different components (Bansal, Irving, & Taylor, 2004; Keiningham, Frennea, Aksoy, Buoye, & Mittal, 2015; Shukla, Banerjee, Singh, 2016). However, marketing researchers frequently employ affective commitment in a number of different contexts (e.g., channels, sales, services) (Jones Fox, Taylor, & Fabrigar, 2010). In this study, customer commitment is an emotional attachment to a hotel.

Customer loyalty is a series of behaviors that systematically favor one entity (Watson, IV Beck, Henderson, & Palmatier, 2015). It can be evaluated in a behavioral manner through an understanding of repeat purchasing and the purchasing sequence (Hallowell, 1996). Also, loyal customers would like to create referrals, offer reference, and provide word-of-mouth (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998). Thus, customer loyalty is described as the intention to speak favorably about a hotel, to recommend it, and to return to the hotel in the future.

### 2.4. Research on hotel image and reputation in the hotel sector

Recent studies in service research indicated corporate image and reputation to be important determinants of customer loyalty in different service sectors. Table 1 shows recent empirical research on hotel image and reputation in the hotel sector.

Some studies of hotel image employed emotional dimensions (e.i., has a good image) to measure hotel image and concluded that hotel image is the precursor to customer satisfaction that ultimately affects customer loyalty (Loureiro & Gonzalez, 2008). On the other hand, some scholars used operationalized based dimensions (i.e., physical facilities, interior design, staff performance, and reputation) to measure customers' post experience as hotel reputation and got phenomenon by which high customer satisfaction enhances hotel reputation (Hu et al., 2009; Kandampully & Hu, 2007). Furthermore, some have identified service quality as an antecedent of hotel reputation (Kandampully, Juwaheer, & Hu, 2011). Recently, some researchers studied the effects of hotel brand image and reputation on hotel performance (Foroudi, 2019; Lien, Wen, Huang, & Wu, 2015; Silva, Gerwe, & Becerra, 2017). However, few studies have examined how hotel image and reputation affect the different attitudinal factors that ultimately influence guest loyalty in the hotel sector.

## 3. Research method

### 3.1. Conceptual model

The conceptual model of this study consists of seven constructs. However, some relationships among them have already been tested before. For example, Lai (2015) has evaluated the relationships between service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, customer commitment, and customer loyalty. Therefore, this study only focuses on hypothesizing the new theoretical relationships around hotel image and reputation that have not been examined in the hotel sector before. For clearly justifying the articulation of proposed hypotheses, a table is established to show the gaps in studying hotel image and reputation with the five constructs in the hotel sector. Table A1 (in Appendix) summarizes the literature and shows there are no studies about the effects of hotel image on perceived value and hotel reputation. Furthermore, the relationship between hotel reputation and customer commitment is not confirmed.

In this study, hotel image is a pre-experience of a hotel created by marketing media. The corporate image may be regarded as a kind of information that enables customers to assess the value that they have received (Aaker, 1991). Thus, hotel image synthesizes a set of characteristics of a hotel and provides a signal about the value that the hotel

**Table 1**  
Empirical research on corporate image and reputation in the hotel sector.

Author	Sample size	Country	Analysis method	Results	Remark
LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996)	409	Canada	Regression	Physical environment, corporate identity, service personnel, quality of services, accessibility → corporate image	Prestigious hotel
Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000, 2003)	106	New Zealand	Regression	Hotel image, customer satisfaction → customer loyalty	#1
Nguyen and Leblanc (2002)	238	Canada	Regression	Physical environment, contact personnel → corporate image	
Christou (2003)	177 + 395 + 222	UK, Greece, and Germany	Regression	Corporate reputation, image → guest loyalty	
Kandampully and Hu (2007)	1500	Mauritius	N/A	Service quality, satisfaction → hotel image → customer loyalty	#1
Faullant, Matzler, and Fuller (2008)	6172	Austria, Switzerland, and Italy	AMOS	Satisfaction, image ratings → loyalty	
Loureiro and Gonzalez (2008)	344 + 335	Spain and Portugal	PLS	Image → perceived quality, satisfaction, trust, loyalty Quality → satisfaction, loyalty	Rural lodging
Clemes, Wu, Hu, and Gan (2009)	580	Taiwan	Regression	Trust → loyalty Service quality → perceived value, image Customer satisfaction, image → behavioral intentions	
Han, Hsu, and Lee (2009)	371	U.S.A.	AMOS	Image → green behaviors	#1
Hu et al. (2009)	1500	Mauritius	LISREL	Service quality, perceived value → customer satisfaction	
Kandampully et al. (2011)	1450	Mauritius	LISREL	Service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction → corporation image	#1
Tanford, Raab, and Kim (2012)	535	U.S.A.	Factor analysis, t-test, average rating	Perceived value, corporation image → consumer retention	
Wu, Liao, Hung, and Ho (2012)	222	Taiwan	ANOVA test	Quality of service → image → customer loyalty	#1
Ozturk, Cop, Yilmaz, and Sami (2013)	312	Ankara	Kruskal Wallis test	Utility, price, amenity, brand, image, green → customers' purchase decisions	Full-service vs limited-service hotels
Jani and Han (2014)	529	Korea	SEM	Corporate reputation has a moderating effect on the relationship between service guarantee type and the perceived quality and perceived risk	
Kim, Lee, and Prideaux (2014)	626	Korea	SEM	Six dimensions of reputation scale → respondents' perceptions on them.	#1
Chen and Chen (2014)	708	Taiwan	Hierarchical regression	Extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism among the big five personality factors → satisfaction	
Dedeoglu, Kucukergin, and Balikcioglu (2015)	366	Turkey	AMOS	Satisfaction → hotel image, guests' loyalty	
Lien et al. (2015)	366	Taiwan	AMOS	Trust in celebrity → corporate image, corporate credibility, corporate loyalty	
Lahap et al. (2016)	225	Malaysia	Regression	Corporate credibility → corporate loyalty	
Su, Swanson, Chinchachokchai, Hsu, and Chen (2016)	486	China	AMOS	Relationship marketing, service quality → corporate image	
Yadav et al. (2016)	220	India	AMOS	Servicescape perceptions → value, image, pleasure	
Kim and Kim (2017)	487	U.S.A.	SEM	Image and value perceptions → behavioral intentions	
Foroudi (2019)	379	UK	AMOS	Brand image → perceived price, trust, value, purchase intentions Perceived price → value, purchase intentions Trust → value Value → purchase intentions Brand image → customer satisfaction Perceived corporate reputation → overall customer satisfaction, customer-company identification Overall customer satisfaction → customer commitment, repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth intentions Green/eco-friendly activities, corporate communication of green practices, green image → corporate image → intention to visit Corporate social responsibility, corporate ability → customer satisfaction, customer trust → corporate reputation (moderating by transparency) Brand signature & logo → brand awareness Brand signature & logo, brand awareness → brand attitude → brand reputation → brand performance	#1

Remark: #1 - Reputation is a measurable item of image.

will provide. Hotel guests who received a good pre-experience (hotel image) may desire to obtain a good value of services from a hotel.

This study distinguishes hotel image and reputation by customers' pre- and post-experience on a hotel. Walker (2010) explained this pre- and post-action as that post-experience is based on the pre-experience. Therefore, hotel reputation as a post-experience is a projection of the hotel image (pre-experience). Then, a good hotel image may help to build a good hotel reputation.

A successful corporate reputation encourages customers to form a strong sense of attachment to a given firm (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). This sense of emotional attachment can be viewed as a form of affective commitment. Thus, once a good hotel reputation is built after gaining a good post-experience at a hotel, hotel guests may be more likely to become committed to the hotel.

**H1.** Hotel image has a positive effect on the perceived value of hotel services.

**H2.** Hotel image has a positive effect on hotel reputation.

**H3.** Hotel reputation has a positive effect on customer commitment.

Based on the results of previous studies shown in Table 1 and above hypotheses, a model integrating hotel image and hotel reputation with other five constructs is constructed and is shown in Fig. 1.

According to the research model, five mediating hypotheses are extended. These hypotheses are related to the effects of hotel image and reputation on other constructs.

**H4.** Service quality partially mediates the relationship between hotel image and hotel reputation.

**H5.** Perceived value partially mediates the relationship between hotel image and hotel reputation.

**H6.** Perceived value partially mediates the relationship between hotel image and customer satisfaction.

**H7.** Customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between hotel image and hotel reputation.

**H8.** Customer commitment partially mediates the relationship between hotel reputation and customer loyalty.

### 3.2. The survey site

The subject of this study is Macau, the former Portuguese colony that returned to China in 1999 as a Special Administrative Region (SAR). In 2007, Macau became the world's premier gaming centre, outstripping Las Vegas in terms of casino gaming revenue (USD10.4

billion). There are 111 hotels offering 37,100 hotel rooms in 2018. Most of the 4- and 5-star hotels (26/32 hotels) are running with casino enterprises, including many famous ones such as Banyan Tree Macau and Four Seasons etc. The statistics concerning annual visitation are also impressive with 32.6 million people visiting Macau in 2017 (Macau Tourism Data Plus, 2018). Since there are constraints for casinos in placing advertisements in public media, so they indirectly promote hotels. Many world-class hotel brands have established their hotels in Macau such as Hilton Hotel and Resorts (Conrad Macao Cotai), Hyatt Hotel Corporation (Grand Hyatt), InterContinental Hotels Group (IHC) (Holiday Inn, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn Express), and Marriott (JW Marriott, Sheraton Grand, St. Regis). Also, there are some international casino brands (such as Wynn, MGM, and Venetian) and local brands (such as Lisboa). Half of the 5-star hotels are associated with international brands. Thus, Macau is a highly suitable location to evaluate the relationship between hotel image and reputation of hotels and their roles in the processes of creating customer loyalty toward a hotel.

### 3.3. The survey instrument

Table 2 shows the measurable items of the seven constructs and their sources. Some measurable items were revised for suiting the survey environment. In this study, hotel image is something that comes to the customers' mind when they hear the name of a hotel based on external information (such as advertising or agent advice) (Nguyen, 2006; Wang, 2010) where they have not visited before. The hotel reputation is built through the credible actions of management and reliable service offered by employees over time (Herbig, Milewicz, & Golden, 1994). In order to reduce the likelihood of common method variance, 6 dummy questions about destination environment such as traffic and crowded conditions were inserted in between 7 constructs as recommend by Chang, van Witteloostuijn, and Eden (2010).

The questionnaire comprises of four sections. Five questions about hotel image will be asked in section 1. Section 2 contains 15 measurable items for the 5 constructs outlined in the research model. Sections 1 and 2 are measured with a 7-point Likert-type scale (from 1. Strongly disagree to 7. Strongly agree). Section 3 is used to measure hotel reputation. It is 11 scales, with 0 set as zero marks and 10 set as a full mark. Using different scale types can reduce the likelihood of common method variance (Chang et al., 2010). This setting also helps to minimize the response bias for preventing the tendency to rate the same scale in both hotel image and reputation. Section 4 is used to gather contextual general background information.

In 2017, 90.3 percent of travelers in Macau were Chinese (Macau Tourism Data Plus, 2018), so the English questionnaire was translated into Chinese. For ensuring the equivalency of the questionnaire, back-translation was done to assess any discrepancies (Mullen, 1995). Then,

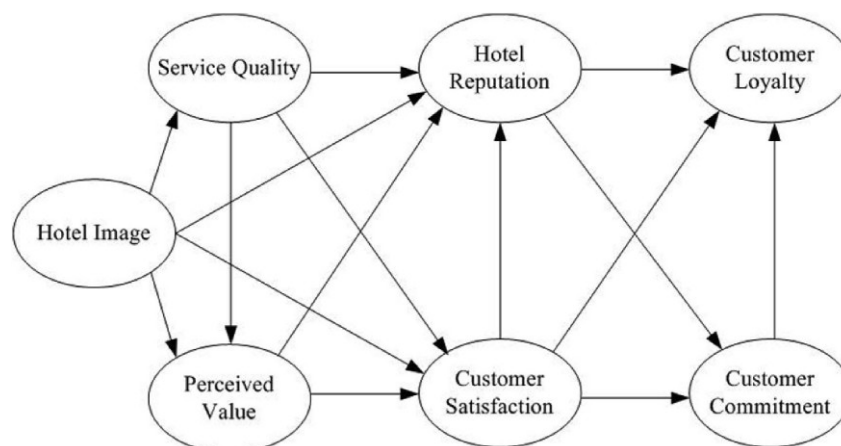


Fig. 1. Research model.

**Table 2**  
Descriptive statistics.

Measured Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Factor Loadings
Hotel Image (HI) – adapted from Wang (2010)	5.262				
HI1 From the external sources of information (such as advertising or agent advices), this hotel is innovative and pioneering.	5.249	1.042	-0.282	0.254	0.828
HI2 From the external sources of information, this hotel is successful and self-confident.	5.333	1.067	-0.390	-0.259	0.838
HI3 From the external sources of information, this hotel is persuasive and shrewd.	5.244	1.023	-0.185	-0.331	0.821
HI4 From the external sources of information, this hotel does business in an ethical way.	5.251	0.986	-0.250	0.016	0.849
HI5 From the external sources of information, this hotel is open and responsive to consumers.	5.231	1.097	-0.302	-0.325	0.828
Service Quality (SQ) - adapted from Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000)	5.293				
SQ1 This hotel delivered excellent overall service.	5.276	1.109	-0.482	-0.145	0.819
SQ2 This hotel maintained superior service in every way	5.290	1.138	-0.725	0.349	0.859
SQ3 The servings of this hotel were of high quality.	5.312	1.146	-0.605	-0.013	0.874
Perceived Value (PV) - adapted from Ryu et al. (2008)	5.011				
PV1 This hotel offered good value for the price.	5.007	1.089	-0.447	-0.213	0.914
PV2 The overall value of lodging at this hotel was high.	5.095	1.133	-0.441	-0.327	0.881
PV3 The lodging experience on this hotel was worth the money	4.930	1.188	-0.287	-0.399	0.890
Tourist Satisfaction - adapted from Bloemer and Odekerken-Schroder (2002)	5.219				
CS1 I was fully satisfied with the service in this hotel	5.247	1.026	-0.445	0.292	0.841
CS2 My expectations of service in this hotel had been met.	5.176	1.143	-0.496	-0.188	0.856
CS3 Compared to other hotels, the level of satisfaction had been high.	5.235	1.110	-0.465	-0.095	0.881
Hotel Reputation (HR) – adapted from Chun (2005)	6.964				
HR1 From my experience in the lodging, this hotel is well managed.	6.790	1.537	-0.234	0.818	0.899
HR2 From my experience in the lodging, this hotel has good employees.	7.059	1.597	-0.479	0.724	0.907
HR3 From my experience in the lodging, this hotel is customer focused.	7.043	1.709	-0.190	0.281	0.909
Customer Commitment (CC) – adapted from Fullerton (2005)	4.787				
CC1 I feel a strong sense of identification with this hotel.	4.826	1.160	-0.190	-0.448	0.888
CC2 I feel emotionally attached to this hotel.	4.896	1.187	-0.190	-0.519	0.889
CC3 This hotel has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	4.640	1.201	-0.424	0.116	0.784
Customer Loyalty (CL) – adapted from Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996)	5.192				
CL1 In the future, I will speak favorably about this hotel to others.	5.251	1.179	-0.464	-0.282	0.862
CL2 In the future, I will recommend this hotel to my relatives and friends.	5.269	1.192	-0.540	-0.167	0.930
CL3 I will come back to this hotel in my next visit.	5.057	1.229	-0.521	-0.060	0.841

**Table 3**  
Reliability, validity, and latent variable correlations.

	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	HI	SQ	PV	CS	HR	CC	CL
Hotel image (HI)	0.918	0.919	0.694	<i>0.833</i>						
Service quality (SQ)	0.887	0.887	0.724	0.741	<i>0.851</i>					
Perceived value (PV)	0.921	0.924	0.801	0.654	0.742	<i>0.895</i>				
Customer satisfaction (CS)	0.893	0.895	0.739	0.718	0.794	0.770	<i>0.859</i>			
Hotel reputation (HR)	0.930	0.931	0.819	0.760	0.772	0.722	0.760	<i>0.905</i>		
Customer commitment (CC)	0.889	0.891	0.731	0.620	0.631	0.709	0.728	0.689	<i>0.855</i>	
Customer loyalty (CL)	0.905	0.910	0.772	0.652	0.683	0.719	0.779	0.754	0.793	<i>0.878</i>

Remark: AVE - average variance extracted, CR - construct reliable, Italic front – square-root of AVE.

the content of the questionnaire was examined by two researchers in hospitality, and pilot testing was carried out among 30 respondents to check for content validity. The pilot testing showed that the respondents would shortly complete the questionnaire (within 8 min). Since time pressure to complete a survey related non-response biases exist (Vercauteren, Roose, & Van de Putte, 2011), the current questionnaire design could minimize the non-response bias due to time pressure.

### 3.4. Collection of survey data

From September to October 2014, three research assistants administered the survey on the streets at different periods of time near fifteen different hotels and in three major attractions (Senado Square, A-Ma Temple, and Ruins of St. Paul's) in Macau. The two filter questions, “Are you a tourist?” and “Are you lodging in a hotel which you have never been?” were asked to ascertain whether or not the respondent qualified for the study. The second filter question is used to secure the hotel image of a hotel that the respondent perceived is from external sources of information rather than his/her past experience. A systematic sampling technique was employed in 18 locations. From the sampling frame, a starting point of each location was chosen at random

(by using a random generator), and choices thereafter were at regular intervals (15 min). A total of 442 sets of the usable questionnaires were collected. The sample size-to-parameter ratio is more than 10:1, so the data is sufficient for analyzing the research model (Bentler & Chou, 1987). Table A2 in Appendix shows the background of the respondents. Their main purpose of the trip was for vacation (86.9%). 42.1% of visitors whose income was USD5000 or above. 91.2% of visitors were Chinese from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The sampling distribution is closer to the population of visitors to Macau.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Test validity and reliability

As shown in Table 2, the factor loadings for items are higher than the recommended level of 0.7. Table 3 shows that the values of Cronbach's alpha for all 7 components exceed the recommended level of 0.7. The lowest values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Construct Reliability (CR) are above the recommended standards (50% and 0.8 respectively). These results fulfill Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson's (2010) guidelines. Table 3 indicates all correlations are statistically significant and the inter-construct correlations are lower than the

**Table 4**  
Structural model fit estimates.

	Null model	Uncorrelated factors model	One-factor model	Measurement model	Structural Model
Chi-square	9603.032	2777.531	2591.411	561.921	584.3024
df	253	230	230	209	215
Chi-square/df	37.957	12.076	11.267	2.689	2.716
CFI	0	0.728	0.747	0.962	0.961
RMSEA	0.298	0.158	0.153	0.062	0.062

Hypotheses		Path estimates
H1	HI → SQ	0.741***
	HI → PV	0.232***
	HI → CS	0.205***
H2	HI → HR	0.322***
	SQ → PV	0.572***
	SQ → CS	0.353***
	SQ → HR	0.244***
	PV → CS	0.390***
	PV → HR	0.189**
	CS → HR	0.186**
	CS → CC	0.511***
	CS → CL	0.305***
	HR → CC	0.304***
H3	HR → CL	0.253***
	CC → CL	0.391***

Note. HI = hotel image; SQ = service quality; PV = perceived value; CS = customer satisfaction; HR = hotel reputation; CC = customer commitment; CL = customer loyalty; \*\*\* p-value < 0.001; \*\* p-value < 0.01.

square-root of the AVE. It shows the satisfactory discriminant validity of the scales (Gefen & Straub, 2005). However, some magnitudes of correlations are larger than 0.7, so a calculation of the values of the variance inflation factor (VIF) for predictor latent variables (by using SPSS version 16) is performed to check any possibility of multicollinearities issues. The results of VIF (shown in Table A3 in Appendix) indicate that there is no collinearity since all the values of VIF are smaller than 3.3 (Kock & Lynn, 2012).

4.2. Model fit

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis is conducted for assessing the appropriate fit of the proposed models. Table 4 shows the fit indices for the measurement and structural models. The results of confirmatory factor analysis (measurement model) provide further evidence of the construct validity of the altered attributes (Lai & Hitchcock, 2015). The Chi-Square of the structural model is 584.302

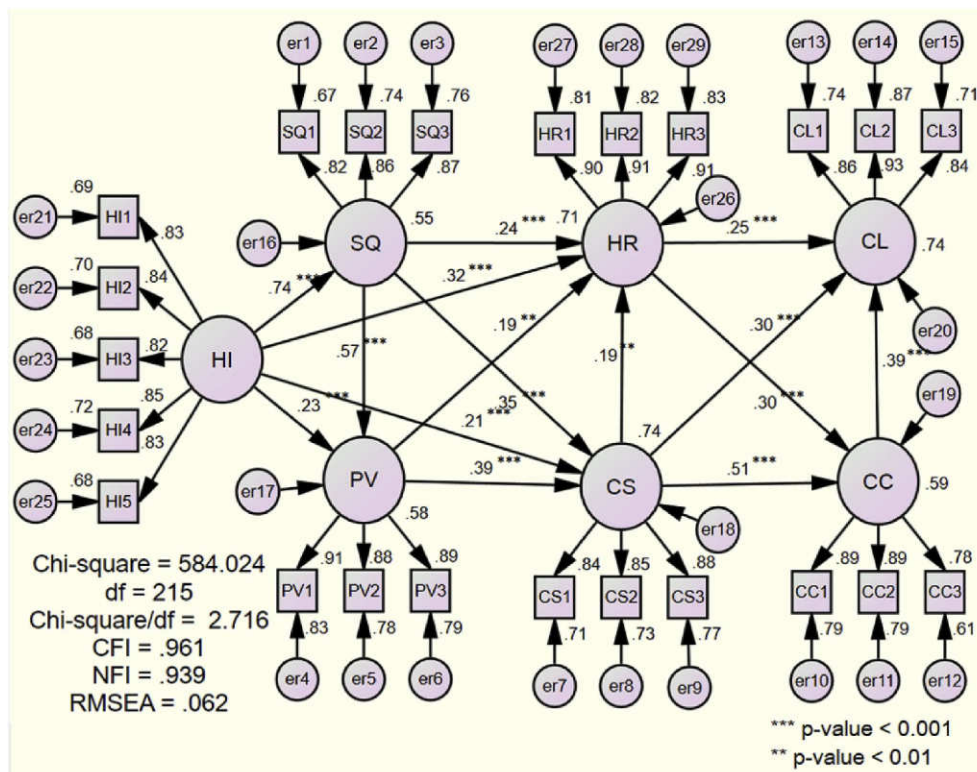


Fig. 2. Results of SEM analysis.

with 215 degrees of freedom; the p-value is < 0.001. The relative/normed Chi-Square ( $X^2/df$ ) ratio is 2.716. It is within the acceptable range of 3:1 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value of 0.961 indicates the model is a good fit and is thus acceptable (Bentler, 1990). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.062. It shows a good model fit for the structural model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). As shown in Table 4, the value of Chi-square of the one-factor model (=2591.411 with 230 degrees of freedom) is worse than the Chi-square value of the measurement model (=561.921 with 209 degrees of freedom, so the common method bias, in this case, is not a serious threat (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986).

4.3. SEM analysis

The analytical results of the structural model are shown in Table 4 which indicates that hotel image (HI) significantly influences perceived value (PV) and hotel reputation (HR); and HR significantly influences customer commitment (CC). Therefore, all the hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) indicated above are valid. Fig. 2 shows the SEM analysis results of the structural model. All paths are significant at the p-value < 0.01 level.

4.4. Nested model comparisons

In order to judge and infer which model is the best model for explaining the complex relationships among variables, nested model comparisons are performed (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The results of nested model comparisons in Lai’s (2015) study in the restaurants indicate that the model of “SQ → PV → CS → CC → CL” is superior to other models which consist of four or fewer variables. So this study compares the model fit estimates started from the model in Lai’s (2015) study as shown in Table 5. The values of  $X^2/df$  and RMSEA of the structural model is the best compared with models A, B, and C. These results indicate that structural model can provide the best explanation of the roles of HI, SQ, PV, CS, HR, and CC in the effects of building CL.

4.5. Mediation and Sobel test

In this study, the Sobel test is employed to examine the significance of individual mediation effects (Sobel, 1982). The Sobel test only works well in large samples, so PLS using bootstrapping was performed for analyzing individual mediation effects because bootstrapping offers a much better alternative that imposes no distributional assumptions (Preacher & Leonardelli, 2010). The PLS analysis was performed using the SmartPLS v.3.2.6 package (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). The results of PLS analysis were input to an online Sobel test calculator (Preacher & Leonardelli, 2010). Table 6 shows the results of mediation tests in PLS using bootstrapping (with 442 observations per subsample and 5000 sub-samples) and Sobel tests. For assessing the strength of the mediation, Table 6 also reports the direct, indirect, and total effects of five mediation models. The values of statistics for all Sobel tests are larger than the critical value (1.96); the values of statistics for all the paths (direct and indirect effects) of five mediation models are also larger than 1.96; the values of variance accounted for (VAF) of five mediation models are between 0.2 and 0.8; the direct effects are statistically significant; and the indirect effects are strong (accounted from 38.05 to 46.64 percent of the total effect). Following with Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt’s (2017) mediator analysis procedure in PLS-SEM, these five models can be clarified as partial mediation models. These results indicate that all mediation hypotheses H4, H5, H6, H7, and H8 are valid.

Table 5  
Nested model comparisons.

	Model A		Model B		Model C		Conceptual Model	
	SQ → PV → CS → CC → CL	HI → SQ → PV → CS → CC → CL	HI → SQ → PV → CS → CC → CL	SQ → PV → CS → HR → CC → CL	SQ → PV → CS → HR → CC → CL	HI → SQ → PV → CS → HR → CC → CL	584.024	215
Chi-square	273.902	447.644	338.145	338.145	338.145	584.024	584.024	584.024
df	83	160	124	124	124	215	215	215
$X^2/df$	3.300	2.798	2.727	2.727	2.727	2.716	2.716	2.716
CFI	0.967	0.963	0.971	0.971	0.971	0.961	0.961	0.961
RMSEA	0.072	0.064	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.062	0.062	0.062

Note. HI = hotel image; SQ = service quality; PV = perceived value; CS = customer satisfaction; HR = hotel reputation; CC = customer commitment; CL = customer loyalty; df = degree of freedom;  $X^2/df$  = relative/normal Chi-square; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

### 5.1. Contributions to theory

This study contributes the knowledge in corporate reputation theory. As mentioned above, in many studies, the concepts of corporate image and reputation have traditionally been combined and thus been viewed as a single construct, so most researchers only tested either corporate image or corporate reputation. Although Walker (2010), in his literature review, has pointed out that corporate reputation is the sum total of all identities (based on the perceptions of internal stakeholders) and images (based on the perceptions of external stakeholders), little studies have empirically verified this argument. This study successfully evaluates the relationship between hotel image and hotel reputation. When a guest experiences a good quality of service from a hotel with a good hotel image, he/she will perceive everything well as expectation and impress a good hotel reputation. Therefore, a good hotel image is a major source of a good hotel reputation. The clarification of hotel image and reputation could explain their roles and would provide a significant contribution to the hospitality literature.

This study develops a research model that helps researchers and practitioners understand the complex relationships (antecedents, mediation, and consequences) among seven constructs in the hotel sector. The previous study confirmed the flow of service quality to customer loyalty (Lai, 2015). The hypothesis testing results indicate that hotel image is an antecedent of perceived value and hotel reputation, and customer commitment is a consequence of hotel reputation. Good hotel image can enhance customers' pre-experience thereby pleurably driving customers emotionally to obtain a good value. Good hotel reputation built from post-experience strengthens customers' an emotional bond with the hotel. Then, customers will have a stronger emotional attachment with the hotel which has a good reputation. By validating the hypotheses, this study establishes the relational flow from hotel image to customer loyalty via hotel reputation and its relational elements (HI → SQ → PV → CS → HR → CC → CL). This result can be understood because fresh (first-time-visit) guests may initially be impressed with the hotel image through marketing media before enjoying and satisfying the services. Hence, a good hotel image can enhance perceived service quality, perceived value, and satisfaction with the well-branding hotels. This satisfied experience helps to build a good

reputation for the hotels, drive the guests to promise a commitment, and enhance customer loyalty. It can be concluded that hotel image is the primary source for enhancing customer loyalty.

Finally, by using Sobel test and PLS-SEM mediator analysis, this study clarifies the mediating effects related to hotel image and reputation in five mediation models. The hypothesis testing of mediation in this study is to 'explain' the intervening process of the mediator on the relationship between two constructs. As a guest who already recognizes a good image of a hotel from advertising media, he/she will perceive a higher service quality and good value offered from the hotel and become more satisfied with the hotel, these lead to building a higher reputation of the hotel in his/her mind. The indirect effect for each mediation path (H4, H5, & H7) counts about one-third more of the total effect (as shown in Table 6). As one feels a good image of a hotel, one will perceive more value, and then, one becomes more satisfied. This mediating effect (H6) is high (indirect effect = 46.6% of the total effect). A guest will have a higher level of commitment when he/she perceives a good reputation of a hotel. Then, the guest will become more loyal. The indirect effect (H8) counts for 43.7% of the total effect. After validating above mediation models, the intervening process of how hotels translate their image into higher loyalty among their customers is explained, and the interrelationships among the components of the model could be better established. This study also provides an integrated research model for researchers to further investigate in other hospitality industries.

### 5.2. Implications for practice

For gaining customer loyalty, hotels should attempt to improve their image. Hotel image is developed through the impacts of advertisement and promotion (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2003). Since hotel image differentiates hotels in the marketplace, hotels need to create the appropriate marketing strategies to promote their image. Hotels should design its advertising which helps portray a positive perception. For example, hotels can show how they adopt innovative ideas to make a hotel room more comfortable. The advertising can be done via official websites and online social media such as Facebook.

As service quality has a direct and positive effect on customer satisfaction and hotel reputation, so hotel managers should focus on providing outstanding services to their guests. The hotel managers

**Table 6**  
Mediation and Sobel test.

Path	Direct effect			Indirect effect	Total effect	VAF	Sobel test	
	Beta	Statistic	Std. Error				Statistic	Std. Error
Mediation Model 1: HI → SQ → HR								
HI → HR	0.4277	7.980	0.0534	0.2772	0.7049	0.3932	7.445	0.0372
HI → SQ	0.6688	20.595	0.0325					
SQ → HR	0.4145	8.029	0.0519					
Mediation Model 2: HI → PV → HR								
HI → HR	0.4638	9.553	0.0484	0.2414	0.7052	0.3423	7.773	0.0311
HI → PV	0.6154	18.325	0.0336					
PV → HR	0.3923	8.630	0.0457					
Mediation Model 3: HI → PV → CS								
HI → CS	0.3511	9.058	0.0387	0.3069	0.6580	0.4664	11.353	0.0270
HI → PV	0.6160	18.507	0.0332					
PV → CS	0.4982	14.378	0.0347					
Mediation Model 4: HI → CS → HR								
HI → HR	0.4363	8.804	0.0495	0.2680	0.7043	0.3806	8.626	0.0311
HI → CS	0.6555	19.157	0.0343					
CS → HR	0.4089	9.675	0.0423					
Mediation Model 5: HR → CC → CL								
HR → CL	0.3935	10.765	0.0366	0.3056	0.6991	0.4371	11.378	0.0269
HR → CC	0.6260	20.295	0.0309					
CC → CL	0.4882	13.742	0.0355					

Note: VAF = variance accounted for.



should develop service-oriented strategies to deliver superior customer services in order to increase customer satisfaction and enhance a company's reputation. Frontline staff interacts closely with guests to deliver service quality and to co-create the experience. In order to improve and maintain staff attitude and perception, the development of on-going service-oriented training program is essential. Furthermore, hotels can create a service plan which includes policies, procedures, and methods for frontline staff to perform customer services in all the situations.

The hotel managers need to decide how to integrate the strength of their company's famous reputation with their customer relationship program in order to ensure their customer commitment. Hotels should enrich their VIP programs to cover a series of VIP services as well as provide some personalized services. For example, the VIP services include extended check-out time and room upgrades, and personalized services include concierge services. Furthermore, hotels should establish long-term relationships with their guests through daily thoughtful interaction and connections (Chen & Chen, 2014). For example, hotels can keep in touch with members through online social media to release their promotions for maintaining members' emotional connections with the hotels.

### 5.3. Research limitations

Firstly, there is a limitation in the research modeling. It was

## Appendix

Table A1  
Research gaps in studying hotel image and reputation in the hotel sector

	Previous study
HI → SQ	Loureiro and Gonzalez (2008)
HI → PV	NIL (H1)
HI → CS	Clemes et al. (2009); Loureiro and Gonzalez (2008)
HI → HR	NIL (H2)
SQ → HR	Kandampully et al. (2011); Kandampully and Hu (2007)
PV → HR	Hu et al. (2009)
CS → HR	Hu et al. (2009); Kandampully and Hu (2007); Jani and Han (2014)
HR → CC	NIL (H3)
HR → CL	Christou (2003); Hu et al. (2009); Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000, 2003); Kandampully et al. (2011)

Note. HI = hotel image; SQ = service quality; PV = perceived value; CS = customer satisfaction; HR = hotel reputation; CC = customer commitment; CL = customer loyalty.

Table A2  
Summary of respondent background (n = 442)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	210	47.5
	Female	232	52.5
Age	18–20	12	2.7
	21–30	138	31.2
	31–40	158	35.7
	41–50	108	24.4
	Over 50	26	5.9
Education	Secondary school level	136	30.8
	Undergraduate level	258	58.4
	Postgraduate level	48	10.9
Income (Monthly)	Less than USD500	17	3.8
	USD500-999	18	4.1
	USD1000-1999	175	39.6
	USD 2000-2999	27	6.1
	USD3000-4999	19	4.3
	USD5000 or above	186	42.1
Main purpose	Business	31	7.0
	Visit relatives	26	5.9
	Vacation	384	86.9
	Other	1	.2

(continued on next page)

assumed that hotel image is based on customers' perceptions shaped by advertising and other promotional materials and corporate reputation is based on customers' experience. Further development of the research model by adding other constructs is suggested. For example, trust is affected by reputation in Han, Nguyen, and Lee's (2015) study. It can extend our body of knowledge in the impact of corporate image and reputation on customer attitudes and behaviors in different hospitality industries.

Furthermore, this study was conducted in Macau, and the majority of Macau visitors are Chinese, so the study may not be completely generalizable and whether the findings of the model can be applied more widely needs to be treated with caution. Therefore, further research is recommended to test the model in other countries for investigating any cultural differences between China and Western countries.

### Conflicts of interest

I have no conflict of interest to declare.

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There is no financial interest to disclose.

Table A2 (continued)

		Frequency	Percent
Lodging in	Guesthouse	15	3.4
	2-star hotel	27	6.1
	3-star hotel	83	18.8
	4-star hotel	174	39.4
	5-star hotel	100	22.6
	5-star deluxe hotel	43	9.7
Country	Mainland China	260	58.8
	Hong Kong	111	25.1
	Taiwan	32	7.2
	Overseas	39	8.8

Table A3  
Collinearity statistics

Dependent	Independent	Collinearity Statistics	
Variable	Variables	Tolerance	VIF
CL	CC	0.521	1.918
	HR	0.467	2.140
	CS	0.441	2.266
CC	HR	0.518	1.929
	CS	0.518	1.929
HR	HI	0.476	2.101
	CS	0.375	2.665
	PV	0.420	2.379
	SQ	0.390	2.564
CS	HI	0.508	1.967
	PV	0.491	2.035
	SQ	0.435	2.300
PV	HI	0.554	1.805
	SQ	0.554	1.805
SQ	HI	1.000	1.000

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