

# Hotel Reservation Service, Customer Expectations, Brand Attachment, and Brand Loyalty: Effects of Package Product Reservation\*

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## Abstract

**Purpose** - This study examines various reservation service components that would increase customers' brand attachment and loyalty, while discussing how reservation service components would affect the customer behaviors.

**Research design, data, and methodology** - This study theoretically analyzed the hotel package product reservation system, the customer expectations, the brand attachment, and the brand loyalty, while reviewing previous studies.

**Results** - This study analyzed the distribution channels of the hotel package products from various angles and, as for more extensive research, the study explained the different results caused by each different reservation system type that may be preferred by each individual customer.

**Conclusions** - It was confirmed that, of the hotel reservation service components, the convenience factors, the reliability factors, the information factors, and the other factors other than the human factors, have a significant influence on the customer expectations. Further, the study also revealed that the customer expectation has an important effect on the brand attachment. In addition, the study improved the prevailing understanding on the relation between the brand attachment and the brand loyalty.

**Keywords:** Hotel Reservation Service Components, Customer Expectation, Brand Attachment, Brand Loyalty, Package Product.

**JEL Classifications:** M31, M10, M39, L38.

## 1. Introduction

According to the research performed on May 2012, individual Internet usage in South Korea was 78.0%, with wireless usage specifically being 87.0%. Smart device penetration rate (when considering smart phones only) was recorded 90.0%, which is a 30.0% increase from 60.0% in September 2011. The increasing rate of the Internet usage has brought more people to use the Internet as the means of commercial transactions, and has initiated activation of the new distribution structures (Lee & Lee, 2001; Kim, 2008).

Along with the emerging trend of rapid increase in Internet and smart phone users, service industries especially in the hotel sector have developed new distribution structures. HOTELNJOY, a hotel reservation website, has created a mobile application in 2010 that provides users the experience of not only booking hotel rooms with ease but also of making payments through an automatic process. BENEKIA, the largest South Korean tourist hotel chain operated by the Korea Tourism Organization, has also recently introduced a mobile booking system on a smart phone app. As such, mobile reservation has emerged and increased its scale in the reservation market (Kim, 2013).

As mentioned above, the development of the Internet has significantly affected the product distributing hotels, its consumers, related travel agencies, as well as the hotel product distribution structures (Ko, 2009).

Indeed, hotel product consumers are able to make reservations by personally selecting the desired hotels or travel agency employees, and by accessing its many related kinds of Internet websites or smart phone apps. They can also take advantage of their financial or credit card firms' partnership programs with hotels to access their products without having to necessarily make reservations. Likewise, people are now able to select many different ways to reserve and/or use hotel services and products without having to sacrifice their time and space. However, not many empirical studies have been performed on its multi-dimensional relationship of the distribution reservation service, its major components, consumer expectations, brand attachment, and brand loyalty. Therefore, in order to strategize marketing tactics specific to hotel products and services, it is

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necessary to examine the aforementioned relationship.

This research seeks to examine the relationship between product attributes and consumer expectation depending on different reservation methods and services provided respectively. Moreover, it will further examine the significance of the reservation system in influencing its consumers, by analyzing the relationship among the following variables: consumer expectation, brand attachment and loyalty. Finally, this study will develop a strategic marketing plan for the hotel reservation service, which, in turn, will strengthen customer loyalty retention. For this purpose, extant literature was first examined to identify hotel reservation service components, consumer expectation, brand attachment and brand loyalty. Possible potential variables were then identified and analyzed for their mutual effects. To compare different relationships between the preferred reservation methods and influence, a covariance structure analysis was performed herein via structural equation modeling.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Hotel Package Products

A package refers to the perceived and/or actual increase in value when two or more products or services are combined, as opposed to having existed individually. Thus, package does not merely refer to a combination of products or services, but what appears to be an increase of value and utility as a result of the combination (Kim, 2008). This method is widely practiced by the tourism or hospitality businesses (Song, 2005)."

As the needs and requirements in the packaged services and products market have increased since the mid-20th century, the term "package" has also experienced changes in its definition (Song, 2005). In service products, "package" does not merely refer to its technical functions as product protection and communication promotion. Instead, it is ultimately the source of attraction to various different services and the consequent need to develop more consumer-oriented products (Song, 2005).

Packages in hotels are defined as a means of sales promotion (Kim, 2010), by which hotels offer different combination of products and services such as lodging, food and other special amenities to the financially qualified individuals (Kim, 2008; Kim, 2010).

While the early hotel package products were originally intended to only maximize revenue during the off seasons (Yoo, 2007), they are now a marketing strategy designed to stimulate consumer curiosity and to fulfill their needs (Kim, 2008). Due to the changes in hotel business environments, packages have developed in many different forms, each tailored to different needs of the different consumers' socio-economic statuses, although they were once designed to only increase the sales without taking the consumer's backgrounds and the needs into consideration (Cho, 2005; Kim, 2010).

From the hotel industry's perspective, package products can integrate and provide a variety of services as a whole.

Furthermore, through the interdependence and compatibility of the products, package can be expected to increase demand of the main goods and also that of the auxiliary goods, which in turn, can create a synergy effect (Lee, 2013). In addition, from the consumer's perspective, package allows them to purchase various services at a relatively low price, including access to facilities and services that are normally too difficult to attain (Jeon, 2012).

Hotel package products can be classified in various forms such as: components perspective, complex perspective, and consumer-participation perspective.

Kim(1999) classifies the products into two types: primary and secondary. Primary product is offered based on the characteristics of the hotel facility, which changes depending on its principal elements, such as the hotel's rooms, foods, beverages, and appurtenant facilities. The consequential package products (Secondary product) are the ones offered by the partnership between the hotel and its third parties, such as other hotels and tourism companies.

In addition, Song(2005) further divided the classifications, suggesting new perspectives involving: components, target market, selling season, and the length of stay (Song, 2005). Lee(1996), on the other hand, classified hotel package products into two perspectives: Conventional Ready-Made Package and Custom Made Package. The existing tourist product package (CRMP: Conventional Ready-Made Package) offers a fixed set of accommodations, transportations, dining and shopping, which limits consumers from their free will. The second is the customer-participation type package (CMP: Custom Made Package or DIYP: Do-It-Yourself Package), which promotes active consumer participation and involvement in creating the package deals.

### 2.2. Distribution Channel of Hotel Package Products

The basic function of distribution is to efficiently deliver the goods to the market and to deliver the market information back to the producer. This is due to the usual disparity in wealth between the producer and the consumer in the modern day society (Lee, 2013). Thus, the distribution channel has to assess the needs and desires of the other side of the financial perspective, and to help the producers develop goods that meet those demands at the right time and at the right place.

From a marketing perspective, a distribution channel is a chain of intermediaries involved (Kim, 2011) in delivering products and services from the producers to the end-users (Park, 2005).

Rosenberg (1997) defines a distribution channel as "the set of institutions which participates in the marketing activities undertaken in the movement of goods and services from the point of production to the point of consumption." In the same vein, Kotler (1980) defines it as transferring ownership of a particular product or service, further conceptualizing distributors as marketers, buyers, sellers, agents, and middle men.

On the other hand, a service distribution channel means delivering service from its provider to the customer through the firm's service delivery system (Lee, 2013). Since services re-

quire direct customer involvement, they generally do not have a complicated set of distribution channels as do the tangible goods (Lee, 2013). Lee (2011) argue that service distribution channels as such are comprised of the following three key features: flow of information, flow of negotiation, and flow of products.

However, tourism services undergo a distinctly different distribution process in comparison to that of other sectors. Since they offer intangible products such as experience and the right to participate, production and consumption of these goods do not occur in a sequential manner. Therefore, travel service products are defined by the linkage between its distribution channels and the management structure (Han, 2004).

Hotel package products are generally distributed through the following service product distribution channels: direct, indirect, or the combination of both.

Through the direct distribution channels (e.g., the hotel's sales department, room reservation department, web booking system, reservation headquarters, and in-person selling), customers can personally influence the quality and the nature of service, and the hotels can thus better understand the needs and demands of the consumers as well as their views on the competitors. However, there is a certain limit to maximizing its benefits (Shin, 2011). Therefore, indirect distribution methods (e.g., both on and offline travel agencies, airlines, credit card companies, and web portals), are incorporated to complement the needs of the direct channels.

### 2.3. Reservation Service Components

Service property, which is comprised of service quality, satisfaction, and selection (Kim, 2012), is an important variable affecting consumers' product preference, choices, and post-purchase satisfaction (Suk, 2008; Kim, 2012). Service quality is the level of consumer satisfaction of all of the aforementioned properties (Cho, 2005).

According to Kotler (1990), service quality is the consumer's overall perception of the brand trustworthiness, which is an intangible process, not being owned by any one side (Kim, 2012).

According to the existing studies, service quality is most likely to be determined by the comparison between expectation and performance, which is because quality is evaluated by the consumer's subjective judgment (Lee et al., 2010).

Indeed, Parasuraman, Zeithmal & Berry (1985) understand that service quality is an abstract and elusive construct and it cannot be measured objectively unlike the tangible goods. Instead, the appropriate approach for assessing the quality of a firm's service is to measure consumer's perceptions of quality. Cronin and Taylor (1992) argues that "paralleling the recognition of the importance of service activities is a growing awareness that strategic management must be approached from a framework of quality assessment and enhancement."

Likewise, service quality can be summarized by the following five characteristics:

First, it is difficult to measure consumer's perceptions. Second, it leaves stronger impressions than do the tangible

goods (Joo, 1999; Sho, 2011). Third, it is a long-term multi-dimensional construct that is similar to attitude (Zeithaml, 1988), which is operationalized as a comparison between different variables (Zeithaml, 1985). This perspective implies that the consumer's perception on service quality dynamically changes over time (Drew et al., 1993). Fourth, consumers tend to perceive higher potential risks on services than do on tangible goods, because service quality is often dependent on one's physical involvement and experience (Eom, 2010). Consequently, consumers rely on the experiences of others before committing to a particular service (Nelson, 1970; Lewicon, 1989). Lastly, as previously mentioned, service quality is measured by the comparison between expectation and recognition, where recognition is defined as the consumer's level of credence of the service experienced (Kim, 2005).

Although service quality components are defined in various ways depending on the researcher, they can be summarized into three major types: first is the service provided by human labor; second, by accommodations; and third, by system (Kim, 2008, Lee, 1996; Park, 2009).

Gronroos (1984) theorized that service quality is determined by the following two major variables: expected service and the actual service. Based on the these variables, he then created the following six sub components: 1) professionalism and skills, 2) attitude and behavior, 3) accessibility and flexibility, 4) reliability and trustworthiness, 5) recovery and 6) reputation and credibility (Gronroos, 1984). Garvin (1984), on the other hand, identified eight dimensions as a framework for evaluating the basic elements of product quality: performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perceived quality.

Lee (2013) introduced a survey instrument called SERVQUAL in order to measure the quality of service (Park, 2009) that is otherwise difficult to quantify (Cho, 2005). SERVQUAL measures and manages service quality by assessing both the expectations of the consumer and the relative performance of the service providers (Lee, 2013). SERVQUAL can be classified into the following 5 dimensions: physicality, guarantee, reliability, usability, and relatability (Lee, 2013).

<Table 1> 5 Configuration level of SERVQUAL

Five kinds of dimensions	Definition
Tangibles	Provision of physical facilities, equipment, staff and communication materials
Reliability	Ability to provide trustworthy and accurate service
Responsiveness	Will to help customers and provide fast service
Assurance	Employees' knowledge and politeness, ability to stimulate trust and security

Empathy	Easy accessibility, good communication and personal interest and affection to understand customers well
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Sources: The author reconfigured Parasuraman, Zeithmal & Berry (1985).

## 2.4. Customer Expectation

Customer expectation is the predetermined standard of perceived-value that customers seek to gain from the purchase of a good or service (Lee, 2004). Miller (1977) proposed that there are four types of consumer expectations, including: ideal, minimum tolerable, expected, and deserved.

Ideal expectation refers to a maximum standard of what the consumer believes the quality should be. Minimum, on contrary, is the lowest level of the anticipated quality that one can tolerate. Expected level of performance is a prediction of service performance depending on the consumer's reflection on his or her past experiences. Deserved expectation is based on the equity and costs. Likewise, consumers who demand a higher compensation for their investment would also have higher expectations for the service. Therefore, the quality of the service depends on the consumer's attitudes and perceptions (Lewis, 1983).

Yang (2006) identified that customer expectation is a multi-dimensional matter that can be classified into the following two concepts: desired service and adequate service. Desired service reflects what customers want (Yang, 2006) and adequate service is the given standard that consumers are willing to accept and tolerate (Lee, 2004).

Kurtz and Clow (1998) introduced the difference between the desired service and the level of service as the zone of tolerance, which is the extent to which customers are willing to accept variations in service in different situations. According to Xu(2012), the current studies on consumer satisfaction and their purchase decisions are performed with the basis of consumer expectation.

Indeed, assessment of the level of consumer expectation helps to further explain and predict the consumer's level of satisfaction, financial activities, as well as its effect on the consumer's interpersonal relationships (Jeon, 2012).

## 2.5. Brand Attachment

According to Bennet (1998), "brand" is a feature a seller uses to differentiate itself from its competitors. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines it as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and service of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition" (Kotler and Keller, 2010).

"Brand attachment" on the other hand, refers to a construct that describes an emotional bond connecting the consumer with the brand after a significant amount of brand exposure

(Thomson et al., 2004).

Thomson et al. (2004) further define this phenomenon as an emotional attachment that transcends its existence among persons to brands. Indeed, Park et al. (2006) argues that brand attachment evokes powerful emotions within the consumers, thus being an essential foundation to successful marketing and brand management. According to Ahn and Lim (2008), consumers experience an emotional connectedness as brands satisfy their need for self-expression (e.g., a woman wearing luxury clothing brands when she wants to look sophisticated and wealthy). Han (2012) further defines brand attachment as an emotional bond that also entails the consumers' perception of brand credibility as well as their interest and concern for the brand.

Moreover, brand attachment is founded on the fundamental assumptions underlying the attachment theory. Meaning, its basis is rooted in the cognitive processes of its constituents. Therefore, brand attachment, through many different cognitive channels (e.g., attitude), can significantly influence the consumer's level of brand loyalty (Ahn et al., 2009; Yoon, 2013).

Consumers who exhibit attachment in a particular brand also tend to express anxiety when detached from their attachment figure. Also, they often exhibit extreme behaviors such as recklessly investing in the brand's products, or resisting external influences that interfere with their attachment to the brand (Thomson et al., 2004). Fournier et al. (1998) further elaborated on the brand attachment concept as an interactive relationship, which consists of the following six qualities: love, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, and brand partner quality.

Additionally, Han (2004) classified brand attachment into the following three factors: emotional connectedness, brand knowledge, and interest. Attitudes such as brand credibility, personalization, reliance and such were measured to determine the level of consumer's emotional connectedness; knowledge of the brand was assessed by the consumer's expectations on brand competence; finally, their level of interest was measured by the consumer's behaviors toward the brand.

Thomson et al. (2004) also proposed a measure of brand attachment, which entailed the following three assessment criteria: affection, passion, and connection.

## 2.6. Brand Loyalty

Loyalty is a tendency a consumer to continue buying and using a particular brand's product or service, rather than those of its competing brands, generally due to the consumer's satisfaction with and credibility of the chosen brand (Kim, 2008).

Loyalty can be classified into two subgroups: customer loyalty, and brand loyalty. Customer loyalty is defined by the consumer's commitment to a brand simply due to its offers rewards (e.g., discounts and rebates), whereas brand loyalty is defined by the consumer's favorable perception of the brand itself (e.g., Apple over Nokia) (Sheth et al., 1999). Although these two concepts are seemingly different (Oliver, 1997), they are still closely related to each other in that they both conceptualize the likelihood of previous consumers to continue buying at the partic-

ular brand.

Brand loyalty cannot be established unless the consumer has previously experienced the specific brand's products and services. (Aaker, 1991). According to Reichheld et al. (2000), loyal customers are more likely to repeat their purchasing behavior at a particular brand, as opposed to their counterparts.

Likewise, Jacoby & Chestnut (1978) defined this brand loyalty as: "The biased, behavioral response, expressed over time, by some decision-making unit, with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes." Oliver(1997a, 1997b, 1999) describes it as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior."

Moreover, brand loyalty can be classified into either behavioral or attitudinal perspectives. Behavioral loyalty refers to an act of repeatedly making purchases at a particular brand, whereas attitudinal refers to the psychological attachment of the consumer to the brand (Jin, 2007).

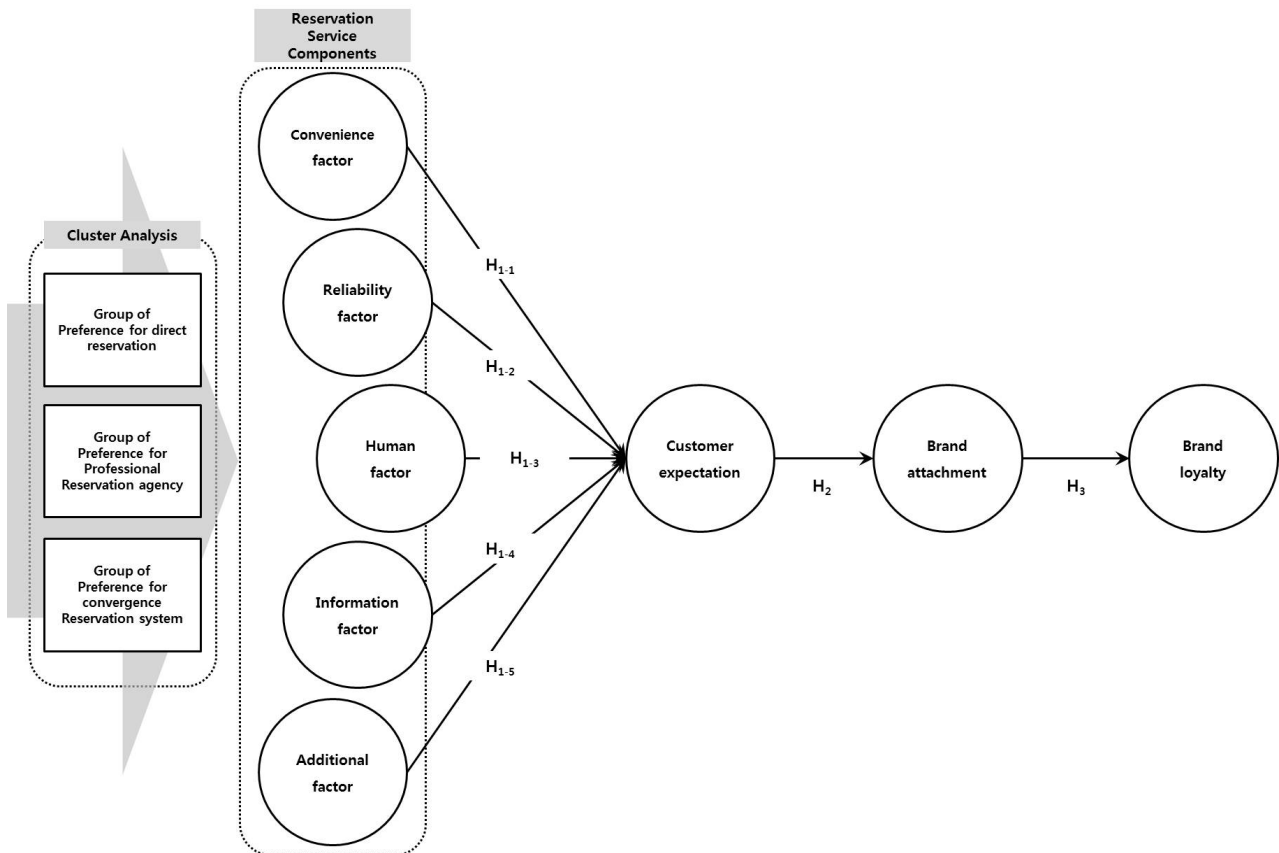
More specifically, from the behavioral perspective, brand loyalty is constructed by the consumer's constant buying behavior

during a particular period, which is measured by variables such as: the act and its frequency of repeated purchases, and the probability of choosing the specific brand over others (Tellis, 1988). From the attitudinal perspective, customer loyalty is determined by the consumer's brand preference and commitment (Boulding et al., 1993), willingness to make future purchases (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) and to pay premium (Zeithmal & Bitnen, 1996), and their resistance to the competing brands (Narayandas, 1996).

### 3. Research Model and Hypothesis

#### 3.1. Research Model

This study will analyze the different hotel package reservation methods and its effects on consumers, as well as the consequent change in consumer expectations and its influence on brand attachment and brand loyalty. In short, we will examine the multi-dimensional relationship of the variables listed above. <Figure 1> will help explain the aforementioned purpose of the study.



<Figure. 1> Research Model

### 3.2. Operational Definition and Measurement Variable

The operational definition of the measurement variables is as follows:

The distribution channel for the hotel package products is characterized as a middleman that works to satisfy both the hotel and its customer by providing and satisfying the needs of both parties. Meaning, distribution channels help improve the management of hotel businesses as well as to increase their sales, which ultimately helps to create services that satisfy the consumer demands. For the hotel package products, its distribution channel is classified as a combination of the following two channel categories: direct (e.g., the hotel's sales department, room reservation department), and indirect (e.g., airlines, travel agencies). Therefore, based on the existing study by Moon (2002) and Yang (2009), this study will reexamine the combination channel (of direct and indirect), and further classify them into the following 7 categories to better accommodate our proposal: 1) hotel website, 2) reservation website, 3) online and/or offline travel agencies, 4) smartphone applications and/or social commerce webpages, 5) tourism websites and/or portal sites, 6) hotel sales department and/or reservation department, 7) and lastly, airlines and credit card companies.

In this study, we will define reservation service as the major influencers of consumer's purchase patterns, including services offered by the human or material resources as well as both direct and indirect systematic services, which are then delivered to the consumers through their respective distribution channels. And based on the existing studies on the SERVQUAL scale and its five dimensions performed by Moon (2003) and Kim (2012), the previously confirmed variables have been redefined to better accommodate this research. That being said, we introduce the following 5 major factors: convenience, reliability, interpersonal, and informational, as well as 15 other variables that were measured by a 5-point Likert Scale.

For the purpose of the study, customer expectations will be defined as a standard by which consumers refer to when assessing the quality of services. Its perceived standard varies widely depending on the attitudes and values of the individuals. Customer expectancy is also one of the major determinants of the consumer's likelihood of making future purchases and their level of satisfaction. To measure the level of customer expectations, we have reconfigured the variables that have previously been tested and confirmed by Yang (2006), in their studies. We have thus them into the following 5 segments: human service factors, physical environment factors, reliability factors, and the unexpected factors, and identified a total of 17 variables. A 5-point Likert Scale was used as a measurement scale.

Brand attachment is defined as an emotional attachment that transcends its existence among persons to brands, powerful enough to motivate the consumers to form an intimate partnership founded on trust and care. To measure the consumer's level of brand attachment, we have identified emotional attachment and trust as the two main factors and 7 other variables, measured by the 5-point Likert Scale, as based on previous studies performed by Kim(2008) and Kim(2009).

Brand loyalty is defined as the consumer's steadfast commitment to a particular brand, which is characterized by the consumer's unwillingness to comply to the competing brands' persuasive tactics, as well as the individual's continued support for the brand even when it provides a low-quality service. To measure brand loyalty, we have reconfigured the previously established variables assessed in the studies by Kim(2008) and Kang(2012), and divided them into the following three major factors: willingness to spread the word, willingness to revisit or to repurchase, and the behavioral intention, and further extracted 9 variables. This was also done on a 5-point Likert Scale.

A summary of the measurement variables is displayed on a chart below <Table 2>.

<Table 2> Measurement variable and measurement factors

Factors	Measurement variable
Hotel package product distribution channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel Web-site or hotel reservation professional website</li> <li>• On Line or Off Line travel agency</li> <li>• Smart phone Apps or Social Commerce</li> <li>• Tourist information site or Portal</li> <li>• Hotel promotion unit or room reservation register</li> <li>• Airlines(Korean Air, Asiana Airlines)</li> <li>• Finance and card companies (Hyundai Card, Samsung Card)</li> </ul>
Reservation service property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convenient service</li> <li>• Reliable service</li> <li>• Human service</li> <li>• Informational service</li> <li>• Additional service</li> </ul>
Customer expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human service</li> <li>• Physical environment</li> <li>• Reliability</li> <li>• Unexpected service</li> <li>• Other service</li> </ul>
Brand attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional attachment</li> <li>• Reliability and interest</li> </ul>
Brand loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral intention</li> <li>• Willingness to spread the word</li> <li>• Willingness to revisit or to repurchase</li> </ul>

### 3.3. Research Hypotheses

#### 3.3.1. Relationships between reservation service components and customer expectation

Lee et al. (2005), in their study 'The Impacts of Recognized Service Quality in the Airline Industry on Service Attitude, Expectations, Perceived Value and Customer Loyalty', analyzed a positive linear relationship between product quality and customer expectations.

However, in his research 'The Expectation Differences of Travel Service among customer, tour conductors and managers,' Baek (2008) found that even when customers expressed high expectations of the tourism products and services, the quality of actual performance turned out to be low, which implied the

prevalence of a gap between expectations and performance.

Kang(2013), in his research 'An Influence of the expectation accordance between the education service quality and the result of education', identified that among the four dimensions of service quality (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and reliability), responsiveness, assurance and reliability were found to have a positive linear relationship with customer expectancy.

Based on the aforementioned research findings, we have established the following hypotheses:

H1: Components of the reservation service will have a significant influence on customer expectation.

H1-1: Convenience factors will have a significant influence on customer expectation.

H1-1-a: Influences will vary depending on the following preferences: direct reservation method, group reservation method, and a convergence method.

H1-2: Reliability factors will have a significant influence on customer expectation.

H1-2-a: Influences will vary depending on the following preferences: direct reservation method, group reservation method, and a convergence method.

H1-3: Human factors will have a significant influence on customer expectation.

H1-3-a: Influences will vary depending on the following preferences: direct reservation method, group reservation method, and a convergence method.

H1-4: Information factors will have a significant influence on customer expectation.

H1-4-a: Influences will vary depending on the following preferences: direct reservation method, group reservation method, and a convergence method.

H1-5: Additional factors will have significant influence on customer expectation.

H1-5-a: Influences will vary depending on the following preferences: direct reservation method, group reservation method, and a convergence method.

### 3.3.2. Relationship between customer expectation and brand attachment

The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of the reservation service components on customer expectations, as well as the relationship between the consumer's experience with the hotel package services and their level of brand attachment and brand loyalty. Therefore, we further define customer expectancy as an important factor influencing the quality of service, consumer's level of satisfaction, and their likelihood of making future purchases.

Shin (2011), in the research 'The Influence of Incentive Travel on the Job Satisfaction and Job Performance,' discovered

that the perceived travel product quality is positively correlated with the overall travel experience. Based on their research, Kent & Joseph (1972) reported that consumers tend to form perceptions depending on the methods they utilized to obtain certain information and consequently develop a consumer behavior that entails credibility and loyalty of the particular hotel. According to Thomson et al. (2005), consumer's satisfaction of and positive attitude toward the brand are considered the antecedent variables of brand attachment.

Based on the aforementioned research findings, we have established the following hypotheses:

H2: Customer expectation will have a significant influence on brand attachment.

H2-1: Influences will vary depending on the following preferences: direct reservation method, group reservation method, and a convergence method.

### 3.3.3. Relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty

According to Thomson et al. (2005), brand commitment (or loyalty) is the consumer's willingness to continue his or her relationship with the particular brand. Kim (2005), in the study 'Brand Personality, Self-Congruity and the consumer-Brand relationship,' demonstrated that once customers feel an emotional attachment (e.g., love, dependence) to the brand, they would exhibit a strong brand loyalty.

On the other hand, Wang (2013), discovered that consumer's attitude has a stronger influence on the level of consumer loyalty than the consumer's attachment to the brand in his study of 'The Effects of Chinese five-star hotel experience on brand attitude, brand attachment and brand loyalty.'

Based on the aforementioned research findings, we have established the following hypotheses:

H3: Brand attachment will have a significant influence on brand loyalty.

H3-1: Influences will vary depending on the following preferences: direct reservation method, group reservation method, and a convergence method.

## 4. Positive Analysis and Hypothesis Verification

### 4.1. Sample Characteristics

Through convenience sampling, we have gathered a sample of hotel package service users staying at K Hotel in Seoul, Korea, and A Hotel in Miyazaki, Japan, between the dates of Aug 20 and Oct 2, 2013. The participants completed a survey that asked the respondents to answer a total of 220 questions. 54 of them were eliminated, and only the remaining 150 were taken into analysis. The major characteristics of the participants are as displayed below in <Table 3>, and the average usage

behavior of a particular hotel package products are shown in <Table 4>.

<Table 3> Respondents' characteristics

Division	Item	Frequency (Persons)	Rate (%)
Gender	Men	103	68.7
	Women	47	31.3
Age	Under 20	27	20.0
	Thirties	49	32.7
	Forties	41	27.3
	Fifties	22	14.7
	Over sixties	11	7.3
Marriage Status	Married	89	59.3
	Single	61	40.7
	Other	1	0.7
Occupation	Self Employed	18	12.0
	Management/manager	31	20.7
	Professional/freelancer	26	17.3
	Production/technology worker	6	4.0
	Sales/Marketing worker	15	10.0
	Educational worker	16	10.7
	Officials	1	0.7
	Company worker	32	21.3
	Housewife	3	2.0
	Students	2	1.3
Monthly average income	Less than 2 million won	17	11.3
	2.01 - 2.99 million won	36	24.0
	3.00 - 3.99 million won	52	34.7
	4.00 - 4.99 million won	34	22.7
	More than 5 million won	11	7.3
Background education	High school graduate or less	16	10.7
	Student or graduated from college	68	45.3
	Student or graduated from university	50	33.3
	Student or graduated from the graduate school	16	10.7

<Table 4> Average Use

Division	Item	Frequency (person)	Rate (%)
Types of hotel package product	Summer package	25	16.7
	Winter package	32	21.3
	Business package	36	24.0
	Vacation package	28	18.7
	Long-term stay package	7	4.7
	Affiliate (VIP) package	9	6.0
	Theme package	12	8.0
	Other	1	0.7
Selection reason of hotel package product	Reputation of package product	11	7.3
	Contents of package product	56	37.3
	Advertise of package product	40	26.7
	Price of package product	21	14.0
	Conditions of the destination	5	3.3
	Introduction of acquaintances	9	6.0
	Suggestions of affiliates	6	4.0
	Experience of the past	2	1.3
Channel of securing information about hotel package product	Acquaintances	13	8.7
	Media	29	19.3
	Internet	67	44.7
	Hotel publicity, promotion gift	7	4.7
	Travel agency	10	6.7
	Airlines	14	9.3
	Finance and card companies	10	6.7
Using form of hotel package product	Personal	16	10.7
	Family trip	61	40.7
	Friend trip	60	40.0
	Business trip	13	8.7
Number of using hotel package product	At first	22	14.7
	Once in 2 months	40	26.7
	Once in 4 months	43	28.7
	Once in 6 months	20	13.3
	Once in 12 months	23	15.3
	other	2	1.3

#### 4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis using AMOS 2.0 was conducted to analyze the validity of the measured variables. These results are shown in <Table 5>. In order for the measures to be



deemed valid, the CMIN value must not be significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) and the CMIN/DF should not exceed the value of 5. Although other scores (reported by the indices other than CFI) did not meet the ideal value (0.9), they still met the accepted value (0.8) (Etezadi-Amoli & Farhoomand, 1996; Heo, 2002; Kim, 2005; Yang, 2009; Kim & Park, 2010; Nam, 2010; Kwon, 2010; Lee, 2011; Bagozzi & Yi, 1998; Kim, 2012; Choi, 2012; Lee, 2012; Kim, 2013). We thus conclude that confirmatory factors model is appropriate for this study's analysis.

<Table 5> Analysis on goodness of fit evaluation of confirmatory factors

Suitable index				
NPAR	$\chi^2$ (CMIN)	DF	P	CMIN/DF
78	444.830	247	.000	1.801
RMR	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
.038	.814	.818	.908	.073

4.2.1. Construct reliability and convergent validity

High construct reliability refers to high internal validity. It is usually considered valid when its value exceeds 0.7. However,

when it does not, it can sometimes be acceptable depending on the purpose and needs of the study. For the purpose of this study, we have evaluated the AVE (average variance extracted index) of the following 8 service factors: convenience service .681, reliability service .800, interpersonal service .650, informational service .681, additional service .650, customer expectations .704, brand attachment .685, and brand loyalty .761, as can be seen in Table 6. They all fell in between the values of .650~.800, with CCR's results falling within .813 and .952. Therefore, we conclude that this study is internally valid.

4.2.2. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity tests whether measurements that are supposed to be unrelated are, indeed, unrelated. Therefore, a successful evaluation of discriminant validity shows that a test does not correlate with other tests that deal with distinct constructs (Fang, 2011). If the value of the correlation coefficient is lower than the AVE, then the discriminant validity is deemed to be successful (Lee et al., 2005).

<Table 7> shows correlation coefficients of different factors. For the purpose of this study, we have used instead of the correlation coefficient of 1, and found that the r-square of the cor-

<Table 6> Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Result

Channel			Std. Estimate	SE	CR	CCR	AVE
Reservation service composition	Convenient factors	→ IV-1	.656	-	-	.864	.681
		→ IV-2	.740	.180	7.203		
		→ IV-3	.816	.170	7.542		
	Reliable factors	→ IV-4	.806	-	-	.923	.800
		→ IV-5	.926	.087	12.405		
		→ IV-6	.783	.084	10.538		
	Human factors	→ IV-7	.809	-	-	.847	.650
		→ IV-8	.670	.105	7.948		
		→ IV-9	.764	.104	9.073		
	Informational factors	→ IV-10	.728	-	-	.877	.704
		→ IV-11	.836	.131	8.718		
		→ IV-12	.745	.132	8.155		
	Additional factors	→ IV-13	.859	-	-	.900	.752
		→ IV-14	.890	.083	12.389		
		→ IV-15	.699	.090	9.404		
Customer expectation	→ Human service	.710	.096	9.585	.952	.800	
	→ Physical environment	.686	.098	9.176			
	→ Reliability	.885	.079	13.085			
	→ Creative service except prediction	.817	.080	11.651			
	→ Other service	.821	-	-			
Brand attachment	→ Emotional attachment	.669	-	-	.813	.685	
	→ Reliability and interest	.623	.139	7.668			
Brand loyalty	→ Behavioral intend	.858	.105	10.340	.904	.761	
	→ Positive Word-of-mouth intentions	.690	.118	8.278			
	→ Revisit and repurchase	.759	-	-			

relation coefficients do not exceed. Therefore, discriminant validity has been established in this study.

CR value as illustrated in <Table 9>. It helps determine whether

<Table 7> Correlation coefficient( $\Phi$ )and average variance extracted index (AVE)

Division		Reservation service components					Customer expectation	Brand attachment	Brand loyalty
		Convenient factors	Reliable factors	Human factors	Informational factors	Additional factors			
Reservation service composition	Convenient factors	.681*							
	Reliable factors	.527	.800*						
	Human factors	.596	.631	.650*					
	Informational factors	.485	.373	.583	.704*				
	Additional factors	.506	.550	.557	.442	.752*			
Customer expectation		.650	.657	.692	.596	.634	.800*		
Brand attachment		.424	.519	.586	.610	.441	.842	.685*	
Brand loyalty		.239	.350	.357	.449	.350	.606	.837	

Brand attachment and brand loyalty have been studied in the past as two separate concepts, according to the researches performed by Han (2004), Thomson et al. (2005) and Kim (2007). However, we have found that the correlation coefficient between brand attachment and brand loyalty was .837 and its r-square .701, which is low in discriminant validity. However, because combining the two concepts would defeat the purpose of the study, we have decided to continue the study as is Yoo(2011).

Therefore, this study has met the validity (convergent and discriminant validity) and reliability requirements (CCR), as shown in the aforementioned Confirmatory Factors Analysis (CFA).

### 4.3. Verification and interpretation of research hypothesis

After examining the appropriateness of the study, we have constructed a summary of results as shown in <Table 8>.  $\alpha = .803$ ,  $\alpha = .809$  are short of 0.9, but the overall standard can be satisfied by  $\alpha = .902$ ,  $\alpha = .040$ ,  $\alpha = .074$ . We assume that proposed model is thus suitable.

<Table 8> Goodness of fit evaluation of research model

Suitable index				
NPAR	$\chi^2$ (CMIN)	DF	P	CMIN/DF
67	468.260	258	0.000	1.815
RMR	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
0.040	0.803	0.809	0.902	0.074

Adoption of research hypothesis can be determined by the

er or not the observed test statistic is more extreme than it would have been if the null hypothesis were true, by comparing the observed value to the critical value.

First, H1-1 assumed that convenient service among reservation service components would have a significant effect on consumer expectation. As a result, we found that the regression coefficient of .190 ( $p = .046 \leq .05$ ) between the variables is statistically valid, as well as the CR value of 1.996, which exceeds the critical value of 1.96. This hypothesis has thus been applied to the study after a critical evaluation and interpretation of the concept.

H1-2 hypothesized that reliable services would have a significant influence on consumer expectations. As a result, we found that the regression coefficient of .249 ( $p = .007 \leq .05$ ) between the variables is statistically valid, as well as the CR value of 2.721, which exceeds 1.96. This hypothesis has thus been applied to the study after a critical evaluation and interpretation of the concept.

H1-3 hypothesized that human services would have a significant influence on the consumers. However, neither the regression coefficient of .174 ( $p = .124 > .05$ ), nor the CR value of 1.539 (critical value of 1.96) was able to substantiate the hypothesis. This hypothesis has thus been dismissed from the study after a critical evaluation and interpretation of the concept.

H1-4 hypothesized that the informational services would have a significant influence on consumer expectations. As a result, we found the regression coefficient of .231 ( $p = .009 \leq .05$ ) between the variables is statistically valid, as well as the CR value of 2.614, which exceeds 1.96. This hypothesis has thus been applied to the study after a critical evaluation and interpretation of the concept.

<Table 9> Result of covariance structure analysis

Channel				Standard regression coefficient	Standard error	CR value	P	Adoption of hypothesis	
H1	H1-1	Convenience factors	→	Customer expectation	.190	.102	1.996	.046	Adopted
	H1-2	Reliability factors	→	Customer expectation	.249	.072	2.721	.007	Adopted
	H1-3	Human factors	→	Customer expectation	.174	.088	1.539	.124	Dismissed
	H1-4	Information factors	→	Customer expectation	.231	.081	2.614	.009	Adopted
	H1-5	Additional factors	→	Customer expectation	.198	.062	2.353	.019	Adopted
H2	Customer expectation	→	Brand attachment	.655	.074	6.395	.000	Adopted	
H3	Brand attachment	→	Brand loyalty	.980	.176	7.463	.000	Adopted	

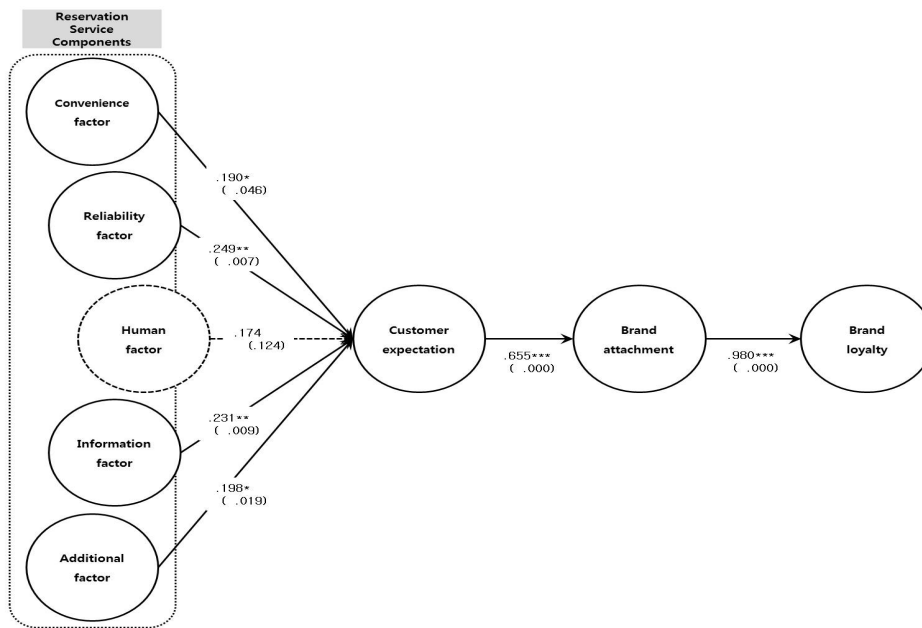
H1-5 hypothesized that additional services will have a significant influence on consumer expectations. As a result, we found that the regression coefficient of .198 ( $p=.019 \leq 0.05$ ) is statistically valid, as well as the CR value of 2.353, which exceeds 1.96. This hypothesis has thus been applied to the study after a critical evaluation and interpretation of the concept.

Furthermore, H2 assumed that consumer expectation will have a significant effect on brand attachment. As a result, the regression coefficient of .655 ( $p=.000 \leq 0.05$ ) between the variables is statistically valid, as well as the CR value of 6.395, which far exceeds 1.96. This hypothesis has thus been applied

to the study after a critical evaluation and interpretation of the concept.

Lastly, H3 hypothesized that brand attachment will have a significant influence on brand loyalty. As a result, we found that the regression coefficient of .980 ( $p=.000 \leq 0.05$ ) is statistically valid, as well as the CR value of 7.463, which exceeds 1.96. This hypothesis has thus been applied to the study after a critical evaluation and interpretation of the concept.

The research model comprised of the aforementioned hypotheses is as follows:

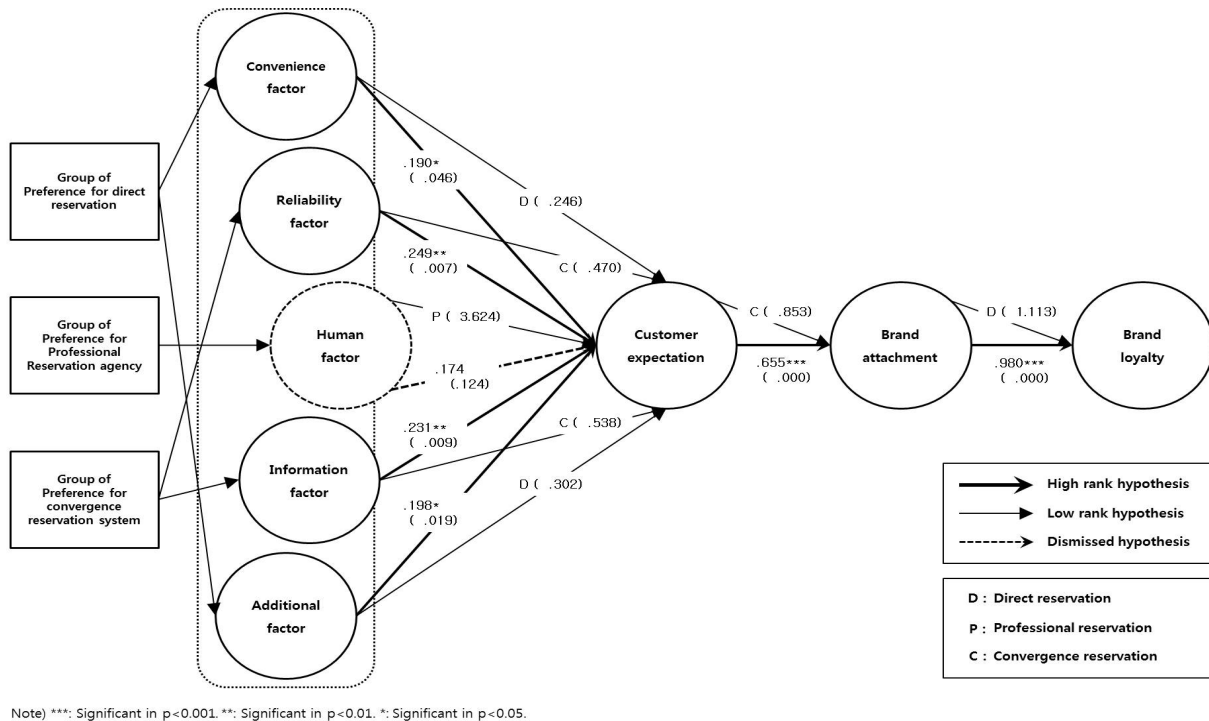


Note) \*\*\*: Significant in  $p < 0.001$ . \*\*: Significant in  $p < 0.01$ . \*: Significant in  $p < 0.05$ .

<Figure 2> Hypothesis verification result of research model

The above model is a visual representation of the study's evaluation and verification of the previously discussed hypothesis. We have further developed the model to also represent the level of influence of the different preference groups as shown in the graphic model below: <Figure 3>.

users staying at K Hotel in Seoul, Korea, and A Hotel in Miyazaki, Japan, between the dates of Aug 20 and Oct 2, 2013. From the research, we concluded a sequential relationship of the following: reservation service components -> consumer expectations -> brand attachment -> brand loyalty.



<Figure 3> Final result of research model hypothesis verification

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Summary of Results and Suggestions

This study identified the relationship among hotel package products, reservation service components, consumer expectations, brand attachment, and brand loyalty, as well as to understand the importance of consumer's perceptions on reservation service components and environment. Most of all, the study has helped develop a strategic marketing plan for loyal customer retention.

For the purposes of this research, extant literature was examined to analyze the theoretical backgrounds. We have then extracted variables from the existing studies and restructured them to better accommodate our approach.

We have performed the research on hotel package service

Based on our findings, we have drawn the following implications:

First, among the different hotel package service components, reliability factors such as the hotel's reservation system, brand recognition and credibility, and convenience were all found to have the most significant influence. This finding indicates that customers set their service expectation standards based on the reliability factors. Thus, we suggest that reservation service should focus more on providing such services to gain trust from the consumers and increase their credibility.

Second, the information factor was found to have a significant influence in consumer expectation. In other words, customers set their service expectation standards based partly on the ability of the service to provide a lot of accurate and meaningful information. Therefore, we suggest providing consumers the experience of comparing similar goods and services, and offering them detailed information on each of the choices.

Third, we found that additional service factors (e.g., adding premium to the package) have a significant influence in con-

sumer expectations. Meaning, consumers express higher level of expectation when they observe their demands be understood and delivered during the reservation process.

Fourth, convenience factors such as the standardization and speed of the booking process as well as the ease of making reservation plan changes turned out to not have as much of an effect as did the other factors. However, its significance was supported by the statistical reports, implying the underlying importance of the convenience factors. Service providers should thus still focus on providing quick and painless reservation services.

Fifth, consumer expectation has a significant influence on brand attachment. Given this information, we speculate that when the consumer builds expectations based on the service components, the expectation then leads to an emotional bond and attachment between the consumer and the hotel brand. Therefore, in order for hotels to better retain their customers, they first need a promotional tactic that can trigger an increase in the level of consumer expectations.

Sixth, brand loyalty, which is a tendency of a consumer to continue buying a particular brand's product or service even at premium costs, is significantly affected by the consumer's level of attachment to the brand. Likewise, in order for hotels to secure their loyal customers, they need to prioritize offering quality services that satisfy the consumer's needs and demands.

Lastly, we have found that human factors did not contribute to the level of consumer expectations. Although trends in hotel package reservation methods changed from in-person to I.O.T. (Internet of Things), where people reserve through smart devices, the core contents offered during the reservation process remains the same in both forms. Therefore, if one desires to differentiate the brand and improve its customer satisfaction level with the service, maximizing the influence of the human factors is an important process that should not be overlooked. Furthermore, by introducing the unidentified variables, we sought to persuade the hotel businesses to expand their research on reservation type-specific brand expectations, brand attachment and brand loyalty, so that they can strategize effective management plans, and maximize the quality of their service.

Therefore, hotels, especially in this rapidly moving IT century, should understand the growing need to assess the changes in the distribution market (Jung, 2009), and to effectively strategize and analyze the major service components that go through the distribution channels and to their end-users, who will, in turn, evaluate them in terms of their level of satisfaction. Indeed, hotel businesses should perform more extensive researches to develop ways to significantly differentiate themselves from their competitors.

## 5.2. Implications and Limitations

Due to time constraints, the number of samples collected was limited. Thus, assessments were not performed on the following two relationships: between brand attachment and brand loyalty, and among the level of influences depending on the different group preferences. Therefore, we suggest further researches to

be done on the aforementioned relationships. Moreover, we have found that human factors did not contribute to the level of consumer expectations. However, we were unable to perform further investigation on the matter. Thus, we would like to suggest future researches to critically evaluate the human factors.

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