

# **How different aspects of social media review influence staycation in Hong Kong**

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Submitted to Professor Gaukhar Chekembayeva

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## **Affidavit**

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed. The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

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## **Abstract**

The substantial market for digital marketing in the hotel industry has emerged due to the growing usage of social media. Although numerous studies have shed light on the effect of social networks on the hospitality industry, such as developing brand awareness, promotion, etc, the number of the research that focuses on this issue, particularly in Hong Kong and during the coronavirus pandemic time is limited. This study aims to determine the influence of social media on attitudes towards the hotels and staycation intention on the decision to purchase staycation in Hong Kong, especially during Covid – 19 periods.

An online survey was conducted for this study. The result revealed that perceived brand image, safety/ hygiene measures, comprehensive facilities and activities, and price and discount included in social media reviews would have a significant impact on customers' attitude towards the hotel. The attitude towards the hotels was also positively correlated with customers' staycation intention.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background Information

COVID-19, being one of the worst viruses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, had influenced the whole world since the end of 2019, regardless of social or economic aspects. At the end of 2019, the first coronavirus case was reported in Wuhan, China. Hong Kong was one of the earliest affected cities because of its close geographical location with China. The virus then spread rapidly across the globe due to its high contagiousness. In the span of one year, there were already over ninety million infections and more than two million deaths worldwide (Worldometers, 2020). To tackle the threat of the coronavirus, governments from different nations adopted different measures in order to control the spread of the virus, for example, working from home policy, quarantining high-risk regions, cancelling all school days, etc, while lockdown and border control policies were the most popular measures being implemented (Atalan, 2020). All outbound travelling plans were cancelled due to the strict border control policy declared by various countries. On 11<sup>th</sup> March, The World Health Organization announced it as a pandemic (Times, 2020). With their highly contagious features, this had become the largest crisis for the travel industry ever due to the worst performance performed in revenue passenger kilometers in 2020 (Yu et al., 2021). As the virus had spread across the whole world and it showed no sign of stopping, many governments from different countries had declared lockdown and border control policies in order to control the outbreak. Besides, people cancelled their travelling plan for the whole year due to the fear of being infected and the need to adhere to social distance norms. The travelling demand had decreased significantly (Yu et al., 2021). The lifestyle and habit of people were forced to adjust drastically due to the outbreak.

Hong Kong, one of the most legendary cities in the world, which is known as The Pearl of the East. With a land area of approximately 7000 square kilometers, the population of this little city is estimated to be around 7.5 million people (Hong Kong: Introduction, 2020). Besides, due to its geographical location, it becomes one of the world's most influential financial hubs and prominent commercial ports (Study in Hong Kong, n.d.). Apart from the financial service and logistics industries, tourism and professional

service and other producer services also contribute a large proportion of GDP in the economy of Hong Kong ("Hong Kong - Introducing Hong Kong: a travel guide", 2022). As a result of its well - reputation, it attracts visitors from all over the world. In 2019, Hong Kong International Airport recorded 71.5 million passenger throughput which was before the start of Covid-19 while only 8.8 million in 2020. This figure includes both arriving and departing travelers (HKIA Factsheet, 2021). It can be witnessed that the travelling activity behavior is reshaped by Covid -19 pandemic. Despite the fact that Hong Kong has never implemented a lockdown before, the severe immigration and boarding restrictions are causing a considerable drop in oversea travelers (HKIA Factsheet, 2021). In addition, Hong Kong citizens are not able to travel conveniently at the same time too due to the lockdown policy in other countries or long quarantine period after boarding. Due to these changes, the travelling expenses rises. People are stuck and their motivation of travelling become low.

Under this pandemic, the hotel industry was being hit hard globally due to the zero number of outbound and inbound tourists on the whole lockdown period in the city (Huang, 2020). A lot of research has paid attention on the impact of coronavirus bring to the hospitality industry to investigate the management way on facing an unpredictable crisis. It stated that at least 22 USD billion were predicted to lose in the tourism industry due to coronavirus (Agarwal, 2021). Tourists are unwilling and unable to travel abroad and this is causing an economy recession. This led to the rise of staycation trend again as this term "staycation" was first originated after the 2008 financial tsunami in the United States. People were suffering from wealth losses and compelled to reduce vacation budget (André, 2020).

So far, Hong Kong has had the highest mortality rate in the whole world (Taylor, 2022). In order to follow the dynamic zero infection strategy, the government had tightened the regulations, such as, public gathering who involves over more than 2 people are prohibited, flight ban to specific countries which are being considered as high-risk countries and suspends the flight from a same city if there are more than 5 infected passengers. These measures are wreaking havoc on the local economy since purchasing power of both local citizens and inbound travelers are dropping. Although both the public and private sector tried to impose a lot of strategies to save the industries that were hit by this crisis, for example, 5000 dollars consumer vouchers

for all eligible Hong Kong citizens. However, hotels in Asia were still expected to lose more than US \$1.041 million in room revenue since the outbreak of COVID-19 and they can foresee the occupancy rates decreased by 57% (Yosintha, 2020). Undoubtedly, Hong Kong was impacted too. Due to the intensifying economic risks, more studies focused on the crisis management by the hotel, for instance, the relationship between the hygiene standard and the perceived image of the hotel. Deeper insight into consumer behavior is being done as it is clearly notice COVID-19 has changed the purchase habit of consumers (Yu et al., 2021). Different factors can influence their consuming purchase. Before coronavirus, many scholars have identified social networks is vital in consumers purchase decision-making process through the relationship between electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and hotel attribute performance (Yen and Tang, 2019). It can provide a multidimensional review since it involves six important elements, which are its enhanced volume, dispersion, persistence and observability, anonymity and deception, salience of valence and community engagement (King et al., 2014 as cited in Yen and Tang, 2019). People tend to believe the social media reviews as they are unbiased which helps to boost the liability.

In addition, eWOM can be used to build up a positive hotel brand image and motivate people to consume their service (Hu and Kim,2018). The fact that social media is significant in hotel industry marketing is proven. At the same time, it can also bring negative impacts, for example, the negative comments or complain to the hotel can spread to the public quickly on internet. However, negative comments are not always bad to an organization (Hu and Kim, 2018). It offers a chance for company to improve and show this improvement to purchasers. People are able to know what the hotel can offer them. They are able to develop a perception on the hotels before consuming. Besides, digital market tools can help to increase the exposure rate of the hotels. Kaya (2020) stated that an increase usage of social media is caused by the lockdown. People who become high frequency social media users are spending longer time on internet because of the work from home policy, updating the latest information in daily life and kill time when they are not encouraged to leave home in Covid-19 time. This is also the way for hotel operations to approach their loyal customer and potential customer right now.



## **1.2 Aim of the thesis**

Nevertheless, existing research has mostly focused on the association between social media/ word of mouth and vacation destination, with attention devoted mainly before to the outbreak of Covid-19, but not specifically under the pandemic period. Coronavirus have been emerged for over two years and it has been proven that individuals' behaviors, no matter purchasing or cognitive behaviors are altered due to the restrictions from government and the concern of getting exposed with Covid-19 (Liu et al., 2020). Therefore, in order to fill the research gap, the objective of this thesis is to evaluate the consequence bring to hotel by Covid-19 and how does social media influence the customer purchase decision during this period of time. The rise of staycation trend will also be discussed. Second, how positive and negative eWOM influence on the development of hotel will be highlighted through investigating related academic literature sources of this topic. Last, the influence of social media on the attitude towards the hotels and staycation intention will be analyzed.

## **1.3 Approach**

This thesis will involve secondary research to provide data and information to completely explore this topic. Utilizing existing research allows the readers to have a better understanding. At the beginning, an overview of staycation trend in Hong Kong will be provided. Second, how it started and why staycation has become as popular as it is now will be examined. Moreover, the impact of Covid-19 brings to hotel industry will be discussed. In addition, the components of electronic word of mouth (eWOM), such as perceived image, safety measures, comprehensive facilities and activities offered and discount provided on influencing the staycation destination will be emphasized.

Primary research is needed to address the research model, which will be performed via questionnaire. The survey will be shared on Instagram and distributed to recipients on WhatsApp. The target demographic will be Hong Kong residents between the ages of 18 and 60. The survey is constructed to study the relationship between social media and staycation destination preference since the beginning of Covid-19. An insight of how social media impacts on the people's attitude towards hotel will be created.

Ultimately, it will demonstrate how the attitude of individuals influence the staycation intention with the perceived risk under the pandemic period.

There will be 5 major sections in this thesis, which are introduction, literature review, methodology, data analysis and findings, and conclusion and recommendations. First, an outline of the issue will be mentioned in the introduction, as well as the background information, for instance about Hong Kong, and corona situation here. The author will then indicate the analytical approach used in the methodology part too. For literature review section, deeper insight will be done on the rise of staycation in Covid-19, the significance of social media on the impacts of visitors' intention and the factors on social media which could influence the choice of consumers when they are making purchase decision on staycation. Furthermore, five hypotheses will be developed. In methodology part, various research approaches will be discussed, with a particular emphasis on the quantitative method. When it comes to survey development, ways to collect the data and analysis procedures will be presented. Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) will be utilized and the result of the survey will be provided in data analysis parts. Lastly, in conclusion and recommendations, finding and results from the previous section will be reviewed and it will be able to determine to what extent the social media is influencing the staycation trend in Hong Kong and how it contributed to this phenomenon.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 A definition of staycation**

Staycation, which can be derived from "stay" and "vacation", is defined as a trip that people are able to stay in their own nations and enjoy their leisure time there ("Staycation," n.d.). It has been such a big hit in Hong Kong again since 2020 due to the corona pandemic (Klook Careers, 2021). The biggest sightseeing and service online booking platform in Hong Kong, Klook indicates that 85% of Hongkongers have a desire to go on staycation and 60% of them had been on a staycation previously (Klook Careers, 2021). Staycation has become an increasing trend is revealed. Informed by the analysis of the Fact sheet: Hong Kong, it states that hotel and tourism industry had always been one of the crucial economic pillars in Hong Kong and they were mainly

served to non-local visitors before coronavirus (Gov HK, 2020). According to data from Statista (2021), there were 55.9 million visitors in Hong Kong in 2019, when was before the corona started while there were only 3.57 million visitors in 2020. The target market of the hospitality industry has shifted due to the huge reduction of international tourists.

## **2.2 The Rise of Staycation**

Indeed, this is not the first-time hoteliers in Hong Kong experience this kind of large-scale infection epidemic, for instance, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, H1N1 in 2009, etc. Even though the disease came about suddenly and left many unprepared, the effectiveness of crisis management of hotels in Hong Kong is high. The Heritage Tourism Brands (HTB), which was established by the global renowned Hong Kong hotels brands, constituted by Harilela Hotels, The Langham Hotels and Resorts, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, Swire Hotels, The Peninsula Hotels, and Wharf Hotels, was a group founded to collaboratively tackle the obstacles and challenges faced for the survival of hotels during this tough period (Laufer, 2021). Drawing on the lessons learnt from the SARS 2003 outbreak, James Riley, the chief executive of Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group proposed that the industry is now offering more domestic “staycation” and “eatcation” packages with a diverse experience, which include dining, spa, and different kinds of entertainment activities (Man, 2021). In view of the strict travel and quarantine restrictions imposed in 2020, staycation provided an attractive alternative for those who seeked a getaway from the stressful and hectic lifestyle of many Hong Kongers. Therefore, the demand for local leisure activities rose and popularized the concept of “staycation”, which perfectly adhered to government regulations while providing amenities and desirable characteristics of vacation.

Staycation allows people to enjoy the whole private area instead of sharing the common areas with other strangers, which eliminates the concern from customers about the risk of spreading or getting coronavirus. As Covid-19 is discovered can be transmitted through breathing and talking, people can be infected easily if they contact with the infected person within 6 feet. (CDC, 2021) This indicates that the contagion risk becomes very high when people interact with others without any precautions. Each hotel room in Hong Kong are only allowed accommodate up to

a maximum of 4 Guests under the social distance rule implemented by the Hong Kong government. Meanwhile, with higher hygiene awareness, customer's intention to enjoy staycation in the hotels. Previous study has also proved that there is a positive relationship between health consciousness and customers' behavioural intention in service industry. (Wei et al., 2021)

### **2.3 Impact of Covid-19 on hospitality industry**

As discussed in the previous paragraph, most countries applied lockdown to minimize the spread of the coronavirus. Days of lockdown vary by countries and all economic activities are suspended on those days (Atalan, 2020). This brings a huge economic loss to most industries, especially hospitality industry. The future is full of uncertainty as the policy is changing every day and no inbound international tourists are allowed to visit. The compulsory lockdown is affecting different types of hotels, regardless of the chain or independent hotel. To illustrate the impact of coronavirus on hotel's balance sheets, the author has examined Marriott International, a world-renowned brand of chain hotel and resort which has more than 30 brands and 8000 properties across the whole world. In the second quarter of 2020, the RevPAR of Marriott's hotels suffered a dramatic decline by decreasing 84.4 percent (Marriott International, 2020). In addition, the company announced their total net loss of \$234 million in the 2020 second quarter, which was a far cry to the same period of last year when they announced a net income of \$232 million (Marriott International, 2020). It demonstrates that coronavirus is inflicting a huge loss in the hotel industry. All of these contribute to inadequate cash flow in many hotels as the revenue is dropping significantly. While large institutions such as Marriot are able to weather significant short-term losses due to their records healthy financials and funding, many small-scale independent hotels are facing significant risks of layoffs during this pandemic as they are simply unable to maintain their income.

Besides, Hong Kong government's strategy in tackling the coronavirus also puts significant strains on the businesses of local hotels. Unlike other countries, Hong Kong insists on tackling the coronavirus with a "0 cases" mentality and to reduce caseloads to as little as possible, therefore adopting stricter and tighter rule compared to many countries in the world. A significant detractor to tourism is the mandatory 14-days/ 21-days hotel quarantine policy for all inbound travellers, including the entry of local

residents. In addition, they categorize countries into different “risks” levels according to the number of Covid-19 case in that country. For instance, Austria is under A zone, which means a high-risk location. Boarding and quarantine requirements are therefore enhanced. Furthermore, vaccination status also determines the length of quarantine. The complicated entry arrangements bring more inconvenience to travelling and non-Hong Kong residents are denied to entry except they undergo and fulfil all the specified conditions ("COVID-19 Thematic Website, Together, We Fight the Virus, Inbound Travel", 2021). With so many regulations and inconvenience imposed by the city, it is easy to understand the dramatic decrease in business revenues of local hotels as many tourists may simply opt for other places that do not have such stringent rules, such as Thailand and Australia. The World Travel Organization also found that the global hospitality industry has experienced a serious decline from April 2020, with occupancy rate falling to only 22% and room rates drop by nearly 20% compared to 2019 (UNWTO Tourism Recovery Tracker, 2020). This indicates the hotel industry in Hong Kong is under this disastrous impact brought by Covid-19 unambiguously too.

## **2.4 The impact of negative and positive eWOM on the development of hotels**

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) includes all informal interactions about the characteristics of specific products and services or their sellers to customers directly through internet-based technology (Litvin et al., 2018 as cited in Pelsmacker et al., 2018). eWOM can influence the decision-making of customers by effective digital marketing strategy through digital platforms, for example, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Google, their organization website, etc (Rangaswamy et al., 2020). Both the effect of negative and positive eWOM on the behavior of hotel customers through social media have been observed (Hu and Kim, 2018). Yee and Tang stated that negative eWOM allows customers to vent their unsatisfied emotions on the hotels’ service, for example, anger, revenge and frustration (Yee and Tang, 2015; Bronner and De Hoog, 2011; as cited in Hu and Kim, 2018). After posting on the internet, those negative experiences can be spread on the internet quickly which can be read by other internet users. However, these comments also help the organization to improve their amendments by understanding the expectation and

perceptions of customers. The response of the hotel is capable of improving consumers' likelihood of future buying, for instance, showing empathy and sending sincere apology as soon as possible. Their responsible attitude can form a positive image of organizations. Besides, the positive eWOM helps to lower the risk of experiencing bad purchase for customers and increase their confidence in the hotels (Bhandari et al, 2021).

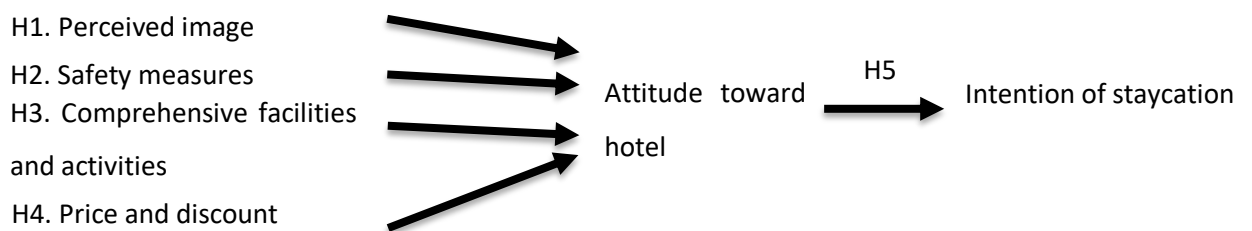
## **2.5 Impact of social media on staycation during Covid-19**

Social media can convey people's hotel experience through videos, pictures or their written review. Besides, due to advanced technology, people are able to access all sorts of information from the internet easily. Working from home is becoming common during Covid-19 in order to minimize social contact (Hao et al., 2020). Therefore, people engage more on the internet for working and receiving information. There is an increase 110 thousand number of social media users from 2020 to 2021 during the Covid-19 period (Kemp, 2021). It shows that consumer behavior greatly changes under Covid-19. The dramatic rise of internet usage is providing a platform for organizations to reach the customers due to the higher exposure rate. Since the need of customers change constantly, following the latest trend closely is crucial. The hotel companies should present themselves on social media when purchasers increasingly connect to it. Inviting influencers to have staycation stay at hotels and sharing the video on social media can arouse the interest of people, especially the locals. The videos enable customers to observe whether the hotel fulfill their expectation or not, for instance what will be included in the staycation package and how are the hygiene measures in the hotels. This eWOM can leverage the effect of making a purchase decision. Furthermore, COVID-19 has lasted for two years and quarantine measure is leading people to have stronger desire to travel which has been claimed by more than 51% interviewees in Argentina (López, 2020). Staycation nights in a hotel is a kind of domestic travel, which can provide locals a short break without leaving their city. It is more convenient and the only safe way for citizens to experience vacation during the pandemic time. This helps to motivate people to consume the local hotel package. In addition, people have different concerns about choosing a hotel during or after this pandemic time. Safety becomes the top priority for clients during the decision-making procedure. People pay attention to the hygiene standards

and unwilling to share facilities within the hotel, such as swimming pool, gym, spa, etc. in order to reduce direct contact. It has been researched that hygiene of the hotel is able to determine the hotel-centric customer behavior, for instance, customer satisfaction, perceived service quality and revisit desire (Barber and Scarcelli, 2010; Moon et al, 2017; Pizam and Tasci, 2019 as cited in Yu et al., 2021). Thus, hotels should take the initiative to promote the precautions taken by them on the social platform, which helps to boost customers' confidence. Social networks also allow hotels to communicate directly and individually with potential customers without social contact.

## 2.6 Hypotheses Development

It is obvious that eWOM via social media contributes to the staycation decision. A research model is built to identify perceived image, safety measures, comprehensive facilities and activities and pricing provided as crucial antecedents to customer behaviour in a staycation. These determinants on eWOM were considered to have ability that influence people's attitude towards the hotels. By influencing their attitude while choosing the hotels for a staycation which can have a direct impact on the intention of staycation. This research aims to discover which factors of considerations while booking a hotel for a staycation.



**Figure 1:** Research model

## **Hypothesis 1**

*Perceived image has a significant impact on the customers' attitude towards hotel.*

As revealed above, eWOM can influence the perceived image of hotels. There are mainly two types of eWOM, which are verbal and visual. Social media allows exchange of information by users all over the world. Reviews, rating and forums all kinds of travel service, such as tour guides, auto rentals and tourist spots information are provided and people can take into considerations before purchasing (Fileri et al., 2021). Staycation is an impalpable product so it can be very subjective on rating the product. Hence, customers' attitude towards the hotels were critical to taken into consideration model. Before purchasing, people would love to observe views and experience from different users. People believe that the reviews or recommendations from others are more trustworthy. This seems to be consistent with Nielson's study (2015), eWOM was ranked within the top 3 among the most trusted types of advertising around the world, surpassing all other forms of advertising (Nielson, 2015 as cited in Evgeniy et al., 2019). After all those evaluations, consumers' perception of product features can be significantly influenced by a brand image (Simonian et al., 2012). A successful brand image could benefit the hotels by establishing an appropriate hotel brand position, being distinguishable in the hotel industry and boosting market performance (Evgeniy et al., 2019). Individuals were able to recognize the quality of the hotel and its service by identifying the brand. They were familiar with the brand and confident in its quality. With a strong and positive perceived image, customers prefer to positively rate the hotel and therefore, it boosts their positive attitude towards the hotel so they are more intend to purchase the staycation.

## **Hypothesis 2**

*There is a positive relationship between the safety measures of hotels and the visitors' attitude towards hotel.*

Numerous research has attributed Covid-19 in causing a mental health crisis across the world (Lin et al., 2021). Due to different restrictive measures in combating the coronavirus, more and more people are suffering mental health disorders such as,



anxiety, fear, and depression. A group of researchers shed light on the current mental health crisis in Hong Kong, which demonstrated that there is a mental health emergency in the city. The stress and anxiety levels rose around 30% and 42% respectively since the Covid-19 outbreak compared to 2016 and 2017 (Zhao et al., 2020). Having experienced the traumatic and devastating losses of SARS outbreak in 2003, Hong Kong residents are hyper-vigilant and fearful of a repeat with the Covid-19 epidemic. Compared to many individuals from other countries, the degree of fear and caution of Covid-19 is infinitely higher. The issue is even more alarming for elderly who have multiple health co-morbidities. The fear is getting stronger when they escape from their homes. Therefore, people will be worried and cautious about staying overnight outside due to the high risk of becoming infected. When people are exposed in a hazard environment, they tend to avoid and prevent the risk. Many researchers have inferred this as risk avoidance. Individuals will adopt risk-based decisions based on their own personal risk perceptions (Harrell, 1990; Sitkin and Pablo, 1992; Van der Pligt, 1996; Mearns et al., 2001; Rundmo, 2001; Eklöf and Törner, 2002; Slovic et al., 2005; Huany et al., 2007 as cited in Haas and Yorio, 2019). Any public area can be considered a risky and uncertain environment. The safety level of a hotel is reflecting the hygiene standard of a hotel, such as whether all the employees are required to wear a mask, social distancing rules apply in all public areas within the hotel, regulating the number of guests in rooms, having independent drainage pipe system, offering sanitizer, providing extra surgical mask for guests, contactless device, and service, using disinfectants to clean public and in-room facilities, etc. Hotels can promote their safety measures done internally and externally on social media and allow more potential guests watch that. From eWOM, people are able to seek inspiration for their domestic vacation and they can know the comments from different stakeholders. Developing more hygiene measures can show the confidence and commitment of the hotels. People feel more relieved and intend to have a staycation in the hotel as they regard this staycation as safe and secure. The anxiety can be lowered. As a result, the more the safety measures developed by the hotel, the higher the intention of the visitors' intention of staycation as a positive attitude of the hotel is established.

### **Hypothesis 3**

*There is a positive relationship between the variety of comprehensive facilities and activities and the visitors' attitude towards hotel.*

Under the Covid-19 pandemic, many social activities are banned in an attempt to limit the spread of the virus, for example, party rooms are shut down, barbecue facilities, cinema, bars and some public beaches are closed temporarily (Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2021). With various restrictions in place, Hong Kongers simply needed a breath of fresh air and sought new sources of entertainment. With the concept of staycation gaining traction since the start of the pandemic, many rushed to experience the packages that are on offer. Klook, the online platform for reserving travel activities and services, partners up with different hotels in Hong Kong to provide offers and staycation packages for customers and is a popular platform amongst Hong Kongers (Klook Careers, 2021). Customers can choose which package fits their needs the most according to reviews on social media. Wuest, Tas and Emenheiser advocated that hotel facilities are a key factor to provide customer satisfaction. (Wuest et al., 1996 as cited in Chu & Choi, 2000). Many staycation packages not only include an accommodation to stay, but also offer customers a wide range of activities and dining or spa credit to enhance their experience. Jacqueline (2021) examined the types of staycation package in Hong Kong and they were targeting different customer groups, by focusing on personalized, premium and unforgettable experience. It showed that different hotels are organizing different themes, for example, Mandarin Oriental offers private yacht trips, The Peninsula offers helicopter trips above Victoria Harbour, Island Shangri-La provides family summer camp activities, etc (Jacqueline, 2021). Hotel industry was in a fierce competition. Hong Kongers, who are known to be travelling addicts, can now find good substitutes for their travels and enjoy the luxurious activities at a moderate discount. Therefore, staycation packages which offer comprehensive and wide ranging activities are sure to capture many Hong Kongers attention, as many look for alternatives to their travels in this pandemic world. Hence, comprehensive activities can lead to the positive attitude towards hotel which will increase their desire for a staycation package.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

*Price and discount have a significant effect on people's attitude towards the hotel.*

When the entire world is under a global economic slowdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, people tend to lower their travel expenditure when the economy is in a slump (Forss, 2009 as cited in Kim et al., 2019). A previous study suggested that offering room discount is an effective approach for dealing with crisis and recouping the occupancy performance (Israeli and Reichel, 2003; Israeli et al., 2010; Naidoo et al., 2011; Pappas, 2015 as cited in Kim et al., 2019). Due to the low mobility of international travellers, the target customer group for Hong Kong hotels is altering. They begin to partner up with OTAs to provide diversified staycation packages to attract local customers. In different festivals, such as Valentine's Day, Easter and Christmas, special packages have been created. Drawing on insight from price discount effect, Lee and Yu (2018) have mapped out price promotions that come with the hedonic benefits are favourable to customers. In order to enhance the exposure and marketability, they cooperate with social media and provide discount code so people are more willing to spend on that as they believe they will save the money. Besides, with the subsidization from government, customers can spend even less while still getting the same high-quality staycation package. The Hong Kong government introduced the consumption voucher scheme to all local residents in 2021 and 2022 respectively, whereby all residents are eligible to receive \$5000 and \$10000 Hong Kong dollars in stages. Staycation will be encouraged by lower price. An experiment had been done by Büyükdag et al (2020), showed that price promotion is regarded as a key factor in perceived price attractiveness. In addition, it demonstrates the phenomenon "fear of missing out"(FoMO). Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell have recently described FoMO as "a suffusive anxiety that others may be having gratifying experiences from which one is absent" (Przybylski et al., 2013 as cited in Li et al., 2021). The study also indicates the emergence of FoMO is tightly linked to online social engagement, which is why it is now a common and frequent psychological issue (Alt, 2017 as cited in Li et al., 2017). This psychological well-being not just only influence youngsters, but also people of all ages. When people notice their peers or family or some key opinion leader (KOL) are posting their vacation in hotels, sharing the staycation discount code, etc on social media, they wish to experience the same so they don't not feel lagging behind compared to other people.

However, some people may argue that offering discount or lowering price will not promote staycation because pricing can definitely influence how people perceived the standard of the hotels and the brand image. Hotels in different segments have diverse target markets, for instance, the 5 star hotels cater to individuals with high income while the target market of 3 to 4 star hotels are people with limited budget. For people who build a solid loyal customer relationship with 5 stars hotels intend to be treated to luxury service and room during their stay. If these types of hotel lower their room rate to attract other groups of customer groups, it may harm the brand image and people may concern the standard of the hotel will be lowered. It is possible that the hotel won't be able to meet their expectations. People who intend to have staycation in high level hotel will be reduced due to this reason. However, the above statement in the previous section is not accurate in the pandemic situation, as many people are aware of room rates being fluctuating and adjusted according to the demand. With increasing transparency on social media, the pricing strategies are mainly collaborated across channels in order to boost profits (Yan, 2010 as cited in Gao et al., 2021). People are able to recognize that the adjustment of room rates is due to this worldwide health crisis. Even though room rates are lowered, it is found that guest satisfaction is mostly determined by the accommodation infrastructure and expertise of staffs, rather than by price alone (Nunkoo et al., 2020). In addition, Covid-19 are impacting all hotels in Hong Kong, instead of specific hotels in particular region. HTB, includes most of the top and luxury Hong Kong hotel brands, which have collaborated with different external partners to offer dollar-off and percentage off discount when local residents purchased the staycation package in the hotels under their group. Jennifer Cronin, the president of Wharf Hotels has indicated a tendency of offering cheap deal of staycation package in Hong Kong and she has concluded that the survival of hotels under this pandemic depends on periodic internal communication, which includes delivering the most updated information and reality check are more significant (Laufer, 2022). This new concept can be adopted in a range of hotels, even the top hotels. As a result, all room rate need to be lowered to keep up with the demand. There is still a relative price gap between high and low standard hotels.

### **Hypothesis 5**

*Attitude towards hotel is positively correlated with staycation intention.*

Customer experience is one of the core components in the hospitality industry as the main product that they delivered are impalpable. With reference to figure 1, it presents a visualization of propensity towards a brand which includes the perceived image, safety measures, comprehensive facilities and activities, and price and discount. They are playing a catalytic role in the attitude towards the hotel. The hotel business is very competitive especially under the pandemic period. Consumers are more cautious and picky when it comes to collecting information on staycation. Hotel service is intangible in particular, purchasing hotel service is always being considered a high-risk decision since it is difficult to measure the quality precisely. The factors revealed in figure 1 are variables and they can be regarded as the key factors to determine whether the hotels are appealing to the purchasers and their attitude to the hotel brand. People can evaluate their needs and experience from the ex-purchasers to pick their staycation room. Any of them will become an impact on the competition between hotels. The study of Vasco, Rudy, and Agus (2020) extended the findings of Bettman's research (1979) by showing the essential influence of internal and external memory in the decision-making process when someone tends to do anything. External memory is derived from the information about the products or services which can refer to the reviews that consumers obtain or read from social media (Adato et al., 2020). These memories and experiences can be engraved on the consumers' minds. As a result, it is possible to conclude that attitude towards the hotel is directly correlated with staycation intention.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Principle**

For this thesis, the quantitative method will be utilized as this is an effective way to gather data from a large sample of respondents and conclude this thesis. A quantitative approach is classified into 3 types, which are descriptive research, experimental research and, causal comparative research (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001 as cited in Williams, 2007). According to Bryman, the quantitative approach places a strong emphasis on quantifying and tries to figure out the answers to queries such as how much, to what extent, etc (Bryman, 2012 as cited in Rahman, 2016). Furthermore, an online survey will be conducted for acquiring primary data. There are

various advantages to use a web-based questionnaire. First, it is economical. With the simplicity of the internet, constructing a survey is an easy task now. It will not cost any budget and all just one click away. Second, automation of data saves time and increases efficiency. Due to the global reach of social media, the researcher can now distribute the questionnaire to everyone in the world. Districts and time are no longer an issue. By sending them a link, it is able to reach a wide range of respondents with a rise in response rate. All of these procedures are automated. Last but not least, quantitative approach demands precise and statistical data. This characteristic is leading to the rise of the objectivity. However, there are concerns about the usage of online surveys simultaneously. The cons are low validity of data and sampling problems (Wright, 2017).

### **3.2 Survey Development and Collection**

In this survey, 16 questions were developed with the aim of taking an interpretative approach to the existing problems and determining the hypotheses stated in the literature review. The survey was conducted in English and the questions mainly consisted of closed-ended questions. When it comes to developing a survey, the most prevalent sorts of questions are closed-ended and open-ended. The key distinction between these two is the answer options of closed-ended questions usually prepared by the analysts, which are predefined, for instance, the 5-point scale (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” and from “not at all satisfied” to “extremely satisfied”) (Baburajan et al., 2022). Respondents can pick the most appropriate one from the options provided. Open-ended question, on the other hand, allows the participants to express their opinions freely. Therefore, only closed-end questions were selected in this survey.

Microsoft Form was used to create this survey as well as to collect the data. It began on March 23, 2022. In order to gather information and reach a broad range of ages, various levels of educational levels and employment status, gender, etc, the researcher published the online questionnaire on social media Instagram and distributed it through WhatsApp. Since this thesis aims to explore the effect of social media on influencing staycation during the pandemic time in Hong Kong, participants were required to base in Hong Kong to ensure they were familiar with and understood the local culture. Therefore, Hongkongers were chosen as the target group of this

study. In total, 152 people took part in the survey. However, 12 participants did not fulfill the above criteria and they were considered missing data since they were not covered in this sampling size (Brick & Kalton, 1996). Hence, 140 questionnaires were validly received and regarded as the final sample. In the first section (question 1 to question 4), it comprises of demographic questions. Respondents were asked what is their gender, education level, age and employment status. These questions would be able to assist the researcher to acquire a basic background about the population of the survey.

Respondents were questioned are they living in Hong Kong in question 5. This is a vital question since it can determine if the participants satisfy the criteria for being part of the survey's target segment. Participants who voted no will end the survey while those who chose yes will be taken to the next section.

The following part (from question 6 to question 10) questioned the respondents about their travelling and social media habit. This allows the researcher to examine if staycation may be used to replace an international trip for local Hong Kong residents. Therefore, respondents needed to indicate how frequently they travelled overseas before the Covid-19 pandemic started, followed by how often did they go on staycation since the Covid-19 pandemic started in questions 6 and 7. For question 8, participants were required to respond to the question: "Will they read customer reviews on social media/ website before booking a staycation?" which aims to see if social media influences their purchasing habits on staycation. The next two questions were designed to elicit information on the social media usage of the respondents. They were asked, "what social media channels are they most active on?" They were also given the option of selecting multiple alternatives to this question. Question 10 was the final question before moving on to the next section: "How long do they spend on social media channels per day?" This assists to identify were social media contributed a great proportion to their daily lives.

The last section of the survey (question 11 to question 16) ascertains whether the 5 hypotheses were rejected or accepted. As a consequence, all 6 questions were key questions and they were designed based on the research model (figure 1). Participants were asked to rate "how much hotel brand image on social media reviews would influence their choice of staycation hotel?" in question 11. It would be useful to

analyse if people depend on the hotel brand image depicted on social media. The definition of hotel brand image is inspired by Lahap (2016), which means what comes into your mind and spontaneously think of the features when you assess the hotel name. The explanation was given to the participants which enables them to have a better comprehension of the situation and therefore presented next to the question. Next, both questions 12 and 13 were constructed based on the hypothesis “attitude towards the hotel is positively correlated with staycation intention”. Participants were asked how much would social media reviews influence their staycation intention and how much would social media reviews influence their attitude towards the hotel for a staycation in questions 12 and 13 respectively. It was measured through scale rating from 1 to 5 where 1 represented never influence me and 5 represented extremely influence me. Next, with the goal of testing the hypothesis “there is a positive relationship between the safety measures of hotels and the visitors’ attitude towards hotel”, respondents were queried on how much they agree the following safety/hygiene measures will attract them when choosing this hotel on a staycation. The six hygiene standards were listed (See Appendix 1). They aimed to find out if people considered hygiene standards as a crucial factor when deciding for a staycation. The responders were given the option of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Following, question 15: “How much would the following comprehensive facilities/activities promoted on social media reviews influence your choice of staycation hotel?” was used to examine the hypothesis “there is a positive relationship between the variety of comprehensive facilities and activities and the visitors’ attitude towards hotel”. This question assisted the author to understand the attractiveness of facilities and activities included in the staycation package. Facilities and activities revealed in the survey were adopted from Padma and Ahn (2020). This can be seen in Appendix 2. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In order to thoroughly examine the hypothesis: “price and discount have a significant effect on people’s attitude towards hotel”, the last question of this survey asked how much do the participant agree the price and discount will influence them when choosing a staycation hotel. The discount format that the hotel offers included dollar-off, percentage-off, bonuses, and free gift. Besides, options from 1 (Never influence me) to 5 (Extremely influence me) were provided.



## 4. Data Analysis and Findings

As previously noted, the author distributed the link to the survey through WhatsApp and Instagram. The published Instagram post can be found in Appendix 3. Since there was no limit to how many individuals could participate, anyone could access the survey via the link on various social media channels. However, the target audience of this study was Hong Kong residents based in Hong Kong. There were 12 respondents who were not eligible for the survey as they lived abroad or had other nationalities. The tables below represent the characteristics of the sample population and hypotheses testing. Frequency and regression analysis were adopted. Frequency analysis was chosen in this study because of its clear and concise method to assess quantitative performance (Hulshof, 2005). In addition, regression was chosen to interpret the result for the hypothesis test since it is the easiest way to determine the statistical significance reflected by the regression model and identify the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Arkkelin, 2014).

### 4.1 Frequency Overview

*Table (3) Overview of participants' gender*

<b>Gender</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	85	60.7	60.7
Male	55	39.3	100
Total	140	100	

The survey first began with basic background information of respondents, such as their demographic characteristics. As displayed in Table 3, 85 (representing 60.7%) out of 140 participants were female while 55 (representing 39.3%) were male. Quite a big percentage of the participants were female in this research.

Table (4) Educational level of respondents

<b>Educational Level</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Secondary School	8	5.7	5.7
College for Higher Vocational Education	6	4.3	10
Diploma	19	13.6	23.6
Bachelors	92	65.7	89.3
Masters	6	4.3	93.6
Doctorate	9	6.4	100
Total	140	100	

Next, with reference to Table 4, it presents an overview of the participants' educational levels. It can be seen that only 8 out of 140 participants obtained a secondary school degree (representing 5.7%). 6 people (representing 4.3%) indicated that college for a higher vocational level as their highest education level and 9 people (representing 13.6%) stated that a diploma is their highest education level. Furthermore, respondents who have completed a bachelor's degree made up the majority of the sample as there were 92 out of 140 participants (representing 65%). Furthermore, 6 people (representing 4.3%) had a master's degree, and 9 participants (representing 6.4%) specified that they have a doctorate degree.

*Table (5) Age category of participants*

<b>Age</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 18	5	3.6	3.6
18 -24 Years Old	108	77.1	80.7
25 – 34 Years Old	19	13.6	94.3
35 – 44 Years Old	4	2.9	97.1
45 – 54 Years Old	3	2.1	99.3
55 or above	1	0.7	100
Total	140	100	

When it came to age, there was a large variation. 5 respondents (representing 3.6%) were below 18 years old. In addition, age category 18 -24 had a plurality in this survey sample, with 108 people (representing 77.1%) participating. 19 respondents (representing 13.6%) were aged between 25 and 34. Furthermore, there were 4 people (representing 2.9%) who responded that they were 35 – 44 years old and 3 people (representing 2.1%) were 45 - 54 years old. Only 1 participant (representing 0.7%) was in the group of 55 years old or above. It implied that the overwhelming majority of the result was based on the younger generation.

*Table (6) Employment status of respondents*

<b>Employment Status</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Student	70	50	50
Part – time	22	15.7	65.7
Full – time	31	22.1	87.9
Internship	12	9.3	97.1
Unemployed	4	2.9	100
Total	140	100	

The result obtained from Table 6 demonstrated the last demographic factor, the employment status of all participants. The larger part of the sample composed of students, with 70 out of 140 participants being students (representing 50 %). Next, 22 respondents (representing 15.7%) claimed that they were working part-time job and 31 people (representing 22.1%) stated that they were full-time workers. 13 people (representing 9.3%) were having an internship at that moment. Only 4 participants (representing 2.9%) were unemployed.

*Table (7) Number of participants living in Hong Kong*

<b>Are you living in Hong Kong?</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	140	100	100

The main target audience of this research is Hong Kong residents who are currently residing in Hong Kong. Table 7 summarized the number of respondents who are able to meet the basic criteria of this study. Only people who responded “Yes” in this question can continue to next section while who respond “No” will automatically end the survey as the author believed they did not have a full understanding on Hong Kong’s entertainment and staycation culture. Since the author had received 152 responses, it can be seen that only 140 people can fit to the sample size and they were allowed to answer the remaining questions. Hence, 12 respondents were eliminated as they did not fulfill the requirement.

The below section aims to find out whether staycations in Hong Kong could be an alternative option for travelling overseas due to the strict boarding restrictions with the emergence of the coronavirus. Therefore, the vacation habit before and after the pandemic started should be fully interpreted.

*Table (8) Respondents’ travel pattern before Covid-19*

<b>How often you travelled overseas before the Covid-19 pandemic started?</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	13	9.3	9.3
1 time per year	57	40.7	50
2 – 3 times per year	58	41.4	91.4
4 – 5 times per year	9	6.4	97.9
5 times or above	3	2.1	100
Total	140	100	

Regarding the sixth question that deals with the annual travelling times, Table 8 concluded the frequency of Hong Kong people travelling overseas before the Covid-19 pandemic started. Out of 140 participants, there were 13 people (representing 9.3%) that had never traveled abroad before, and 57 participants (representing 40.7%) usually travelled 1 time per year. In addition, there were 58 people (representing 41.4%) stated that they had international trips 2 – 3 times per year and 9 people (representing 6.4%) travelled 4 – 5 times per year. 3 people (representing 2.1%) stated they travel 5 times or above per year. It can be observed that most of the participants tend to travel at least once every year from the above table.

*Table (9) Respondents' staycation pattern after Covid-19*

<b>How often did you go on staycation since Covid – 19 pandemic started?</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	17	12.1	12.1
1 time per year	47	33.6	45.7
2 – 3 times per year	54	38.6	84.3
4 – 5 times per year	18	12.9	97.1
5 times or above	4	2.9	100
Total	140	100	

Concerning if staycation can be an alternative vacation during the pandemic, participants were asked how often did they go on staycation after the beginning of Covid – 19 pandemic in question 7. In accordance with Table 9, it summarized the number of times of staycation since Covid -19 started. There were 17 people

(representing 12.1%) who had never had a staycation among 140 participants, 47 respondents (representing 33.6%) responded that they had a staycation 1 time per year since the emergence of coronavirus, 54 participants (representing 38.6%) mentioned they had 2 – 3 times per year, 18 people (representing 12.9%) stated they had staycation 4 – 5 times per month and last, only 4 people (representing 2.9%) claimed they had staycation 5 times or above.

By comparing with Table 8, the number of respondents who never went on staycation after Covid – 19 time is lower than that who travelled overseas before Covid – 19 started. Moreover, participants who went on staycation 1 time per year are fewer than those who travel abroad 1 time per year before Covid – 19. Respondents who had staycation 2 – 3 times per year are also less than that who travelled overseas 2 – 3 times annually before Covid – 19 started. In contrast, the result indicated participants who had staycation 4 – 5 times per year are double that of people who travel internationally 4 – 5 times. Participants who had staycation 5 times or above after the rise of Covid – 19 are also higher than that who travel overseas 5 times or above before Covid -19 times. This data showed that only people who travelled more frequently before the outbreak of coronavirus tend to have staycation more after this worldwide pandemic started.

The next part of the survey is indicating the social media habit of the sample group. In order to have a deeper insight into their social media use and their dependency of social media in their daily life, respondents were questioned about their behaviors concerning Internet use, the purpose of using social media, which social media platforms they use and the frequency of social media usage.

*Table (10) Social media impact on customers' staycation decision*

<b>Will you read the customer reviews on social media/ website before booking a staycation?</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	115	82.1	82.1
No	25	17.9	100
Total	140	100	

The answers to the next question presented that 115 participants (representing 82.1%) preferred to read the customer reviews on social media or websites before booking a staycation while only 25 people (representing 17.9%) said that they would not read any customer reviews on social media or websites before booking a staycation. The table is shown above and it can be seen that the majority take into consideration social media reviews before choosing to book a staycation hotel.

*Table (11) Frequency of different social media platforms' usage pattern*

<b>Facebook</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Valid	50	35.7
Missing	90	64.3
Total	140	100

<b>Instagram</b>
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	Frequency	Percent
Valid	94	67.1
Missing	46	32.9
Total	140	100

<b>YouTube</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Valid	88	62.9
Missing	52	37.1
Total	140	100

<b>Twitter</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Valid	23	16.4
Missing	117	83.6
Total	140	100

<b>Tiktok</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Valid	31	22.1

Missing	109	77.9
Total	140	100

Regarding the online presence of all participants, they were asked about what social media channels were they most active on. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Tiktok were provided in the options list. Respondents were allowed to select more than one choice. With reference to Table 11, it can be seen that 50 people out of 140 (representing 35.7%) used Facebook frequently, 94 people out of 140 (representing 67.1%) used Instagram regularly, and 88 people (representing 62.9%) used YouTube regularly. Only 23 participants mentioned they used Twitter. Lastly, 31 people (representing 22.1%) used Tiktok. It appeared that Instagram was the favorite social media platform amongst many users, closely followed by YouTube.

*Table (12) The hours spend on social media per day per respondent*

<b>How long you spend on social media channels per day?</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 hour or less	33	23.6	23.6
2 – 3 hours	72	51.4	75
4 – 5 hours	28	20	95
6 hours or more	7	5	100
Total	140	100	

In order to know how much time people spend on social media channels daily, respondents were required to answer question 10. There were 33 people (representing 23.6%) who spent 1 hour or less on social media per day. Participants who spent 2 – 3 hours on social media channels per day comprised the majority of the

sample since 72 people (representing 51.4%) had chosen that while 28 people out of 140 participants (representing 20%) had spent 4 -5 hours on social media daily. There were only 7 people (representing 5%) who said that they spent 6 hours or more on social media platforms per day.

## 4.2 Hypotheses Testing

The developed hypotheses were displayed in Table 13 throughout this research. The lower segment illustrated how they were tested and whether are accepted or rejected by observing the significance level. Regression analysis was utilized. It is given that when the significance level is lower than 0.05, it represented the result is significant.

*Table (13) Summary of developed hypotheses*

<b>5 Developed Hypotheses</b>
H1: Perceived image has a significant impact on the customers' attitude towards hotel.
H2: There is a positive relationship between the safety measures of hotels and the visitors' attitude towards hotel.
H3: There is a positive relationship between the variety of comprehensive facilities and activities and the visitors' attitude towards hotel.
H4: Price and discount have a significant effect on people's attitude towards hotel.
H5: Attitude towards hotel is positively correlated with staycation intention

*Table (14) Regression analysis between perceived image and attitude towards the hotels*

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		T - value	P - value
	B	Standard error		
(Constant)	1.201	0.277	4.339	0.00
How much hotel brand image on social media review would influence your choice of staycation hotel?	0.718	0.067	10.666	0.00

\*p < 0.05

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.448, F = 113.759, significance F = 0.00

In order to investigate whether the perceived image has a significant impact on the customers' attitude towards the hotel (Hypothesis 1), regression analysis is employed. Question 11 targeted finding the relationship between hotel brand image on social media reviews on the choice of staycation hotel and attitude towards the hotel (dependent variable). The result was explained in Table 14 and it illustrated the regression values on attitude towards hotel ( Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.448, F – value = 113.759, p < 0.05 ). From the above table, p - value is 0.00 which is lower than 0.05. This indicated there is a significant relationship between hotel brand image on social platforms on customer choice of staycation hotel and attitude towards the hotel. They are positively related. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and it can be concluded that the perceived image has a significant impact on the customers' attitude towards the hotel is proven correct.

*Table (15) Regression analysis for safety/ hygiene measures influencing attitude towards hotels*

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		T - value	P - value
	B	Standard error		
(Constant)	2.392	0.319	7.504	0.00
How much do you agree some of the following safety/ hygiene measures will attract you when choosing the hotel for staycation?	0.416	0.076	5.467	0.00

\*p < 0.05

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.172, F = 29.889, significance F = 0.00

Regression analysis was conducted to statistically examine the association between safety/ hygiene measures and the attitude towards the hotel (Hypothesis 2). The result shown above in Table 15, revealed that a significant effect of safety/ hygiene measures on attitude towards the hotel as the p - value is 0.00 which is lower than 0.05 and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.172, F – value = 29.889. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Hypothesis 2 is accepted. In conclusion, safety/ hygiene measures have a significant effect on people’s attitude towards the hotel.

*Table (16) Regression analysis for association between facilities/ activities on influencing customer choice and attitude towards hotels*

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		T - value	P - value
	B	Standard error		
(Constant)	3.175	0.230	13.821	0.00
How much would the following comprehensive facilities/ activities promoted on social media reviews influence your choice of staycation	0.263	0.063	4.204	0.00

\*p < 0.05

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.107, F = 17.677, significance F = 0.00

In order to test hypothesis 3, regression analysis was applied. Table 16 presented the analysis result between comprehensive facilities or activities promoted on social media reviews and attitude towards the hotel. The test result reported that p – value was 0.00, adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.107, F –value = 17.677. Since the p – value is lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, and therefore, there is a significant relationship between comprehensive facilities or activities promoted on social media reviews and attitude towards the hotel. According to this finding, H3 is accepted.

*Table (17) Regression analysis for association between price and discount on influencing staycation choice and attitude towards hotels*

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		T - value	P - value
	B	Standard error		
(Constant)	3.214	0.376	8.549	0.00
How much do you agree the price and discount will influence you when choosing staycation hotel?	0.210	0.088	2.399	0.018

\*p < 0.05

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.033, F = 5.754, significance F = 0.018

Regression analysis was also conducted for testing hypothesis 4. It assumed that price and discount have a significant effect on people's attitude towards the hotel. Table 17 explained the analysis for testing price and discount on influencing staycation hotel choice and attitude towards hotel. The regression value is illustrated (P – value = 0.018, adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.033, F – value = 5.754). As p - value is lower than 0.05, this indicated that price and discount certainly have a positive influence on people's attitude towards the hotel. When the discount was offered, they tend to choose to have a staycation in that hotel. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and H4 should be accepted.

*Table (18) Regression analysis between attitude towards hotel and staycation intention*

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		T - value	P - value
	B	Standard error		
(Constant)	1.434	0.243	5.902	0.00
How much would social media review influence your staycation intention?	0.659	0.059	11.214	0.00

\*p < 0.05

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.473, F = 125.721, significance F = 0.00

To test hypothesis 5, the goal of this question is to identify whether there is a positive correlation between attitude towards hotel and staycation intention. The regression result was explained in Table 18. It can be observed that the regression value for this question (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.473, F – value = 125.721, p < 0.05 ). P value is smaller than 0.05 so null hypothesis is rejected. Attitude towards the hotels definitely had an impact on the staycation intention.

*Table (19) The consideration factors influencing on participants attitude towards the hotels*

Average score of factors influencing on participants attitude towards the hotels	
Hotel brand image on social media reviews	4.04
Safety/ hygiene measures	4.11
Comprehensive facilities/ activities promoted on social media	3.51



Price and discount	4.21
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Another significant finding from the survey was that people considered the price and discount promoted on social media as the top priority factor influencing their attitude towards the hotel. Additionally, hygiene measures were ranked second, followed by brand image constructed on the social network. Lastly, comprehensive facilities and activities contributed the least impact on the attitude towards the hotels. Participants were given the range from 1 (strong disagree/ never influence me) to 5 (strongly agree/ extremely influence me). Table 19 gathered the findings from question 11, 14 – 16 in the questionnaire. This order observed from the result has not previously been described in earlier findings. Another possible explanation for this is that Covid – 19 has posed extraordinary challenges in economic aspects for the whole city. The shutdown and suspension of businesses were causing the peak unemployment rate in Hong Kong, recorded at 5.4% in April 2022 (Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong, 2022) and workers were required to take no pay leave. This had tremendous impact on all industries and led to the rise of unemployment rates. When their disposable income decreased, people tend to reduce their expenditures on vacation. Therefore, when it came to choosing a hotel destination for a staycation, getting discounts and lower prices in social media became the most important factor on influencing their attitude towards the hotel. This is consistent with the result on hypothesis 4.

When it comes to safety measures, the survey showed that it is considered to be the second most important factor in influencing guests' attitude towards the hotels. People were trying to resume some semblance of normalcy in their lives since Covid – 19 has lasted over two years, and looking for safe approaches to leisure activities became a global trend. As aforementioned in the literature review, the risk avoidance and high caution of Covid – 19 were engraved on their mind (Harrell, 1990; Sitkin and Pablo, 1992; Van der Pligt, 1996; Mearns et al., 2001; Rundmo, 2001; Eklöf and Törner, 2002; Slovic et al., 2005; Huany et al., 2007 as cited in Haas and Yorio, 2019). They were afraid of getting infected. Hygiene and safety measures promoted on social media were able to lower their concern and these will show higher confidence when

they are considering the destination for a staycation. As a result, safety and hygiene measures are the second important factor in influencing individual attitude towards the hotel.

Perceived image is considered to be the third most important factor in influencing attitude towards the hotels, according to the online experiment conducted by the author. The possible explication is that perceived image is able to offer customers familiarity with the hotel quality and service (Anwar & Andread, 2021). The competition between local hotels was extremely intense since the target segment of Hong Kong hotels had been altered from corporate travellers from all over the world to people who searched for leisure activities in Hong Kong. When there is a variety of choices, customers have a tendency to select the staycation destination which has already been acknowledged from experience or information gathered from social media reviews (Anwar & Andread, 2021), for instance, the overall review, location, service standard, cleanliness, comfort level, facility, and food and beverage (Kościólek, 2017).

When it comes to facilities and activities promoted on the social network, though it had a direct impact on individuals' attitude towards the hotels, it was the last consideration factor. It can be implicated that amenities within the hotels could assist to enrich customers' experience and satisfaction by establishing an aesthetic and alluring environment. This also accords with Chu and Choi's earlier observations (2000). Besides, comprehensive activities could fulfil the compelling demand for entertaining activities when there were plenty of social distance restrictions outside the hotel. Despite the riches of entertainment on offer, it appeared that this was the least concerning factor when choosing staycation packages. This was likely because many restrictions imposed by the government were not only exclusive to general public facilities, but also applied to hotels as well. As a result, what hotels were able to offer were not too drastically different from what people could enjoy outside. In addition, due to the strict social distancing and compulsory face mask rules, as well as the general safety concerns of the coronavirus, people were less inclined to base their staycation package goals on facilities and activities. This would explain why it contributed the least to people's attitude towards the hotel.

## 5. Conclusion

This research study, entitled “How social media influence staycation in Hong Kong” was undertaken on only Hong Kong residents. To achieve the objectives of this investigation, what factors are appealing in social media reviews and whether there is a relationship between them and attitude towards the hotels were discovered and tested. Besides, it is an attempt to address an association between attitude towards the hotels and staycation intention by providing evidence. These issues were uncovered in the literature review section. In order to have a better understanding and solid proof of the subjects revealed in this present study, a survey was carried out. More information can be collected regarding the social media usage pattern, travel patterns, and key factors in travel-related decision-making. 16 questions were included in it and all of them were mandatory to respond by 140 participants.

There were multiple researchers confirmed the negative impacts of Covid -19 on the hospitality industry in the literature review part. The popularity of staycation was also identified. Some scholars presented the benefits of utilizing social media on rescuing hotel industry. 5 hypotheses were developed regarding the 4 elements included in social media reviews, attitude towards the hotels, and staycation intention.

According to the findings of the survey, Instagram was the most popular social media platform while Tiktok was the least attractive for all respondents. Besides, it was confirmed that a lot of participants would read the previous customer reviews before making a final purchase decision for a staycation trip. Further analysis showed the pattern of vacation before and after the emergence of coronavirus. The comparison highlighted staycation definitely upheld an appetite of people who travelled internationally a lot. After the beginning of Covid – 19, only people who travelled at least 4 times annually before the pandemic time prefer to have a staycation more. On the other hand, individuals who had fewer than 4 times below were substantially lower than that who had international trips below 4 times per year before Covid – 19 struck. A plausible explanation for this might be that people who travelled over 4 times above before Covid- 19 times were more addicted to travelling. It is clear that their vacation demand is relatively stronger than those who travelled less frequently.

Therefore, these people who were in dire need of a trip became willing to consider domestic travel as an alternative during this uncertain period.

In addition, a closer look at the data dictated that 5 hypotheses developed in this research were all significant. The most obvious finding to emerge from the result is that all the factors: perceived image, safety/hygiene measures, comprehensive facilities/ activities, and price and discount on social media are positively correlated with attitude towards the hotels. Furthermore, the result confirmed that attitude towards the hotels has a significant impact on staycation intention. The above results corroborated the finding of a great deal of the previous work described in the literature review.

Moreover, a new critical finding postulated based on the research model developed. People ranked price and discount promotions on social media as the most important element impacting their attitude towards the hotels. In addition, cleanliness measures came in second, followed by the perceived brand image created on social media. Finally, comprehensive facilities and activities had the smallest impact on developing an attitude towards the hotels.

## **6. Limitations and Recommendations**

For future research in this similar field, the first recommendation could be not to limit the research only to Hong Kong. It could be across the globe. The spread of Covid – 19 is a global issue and influences each nation in the world. People with different nationalities may have different understanding and preferences when it comes to the same condition due to cultural and background difference. Another recommendation for further investigation could be how the emotions that come when reading the reviews on social networks affect their intention to staycation.

Unfortunately, every research has its own set of limitations and flaws. Below were a few that can be listed. First, the major defect in this survey was having a too small sample size. There were only 140 respondents who qualified at the end. A larger sample size, approximately 200 participants would be preferable to achieve a more representative sample of the population and reduce the margin of error.

The second main weakness in this study was having only one language for the survey. Although most of the people in Hong Kong can read and understand English, it neglected the needs of the older generation as their educational level may not be as high as the younger generation. Their English level was not very good. A broader sample size can be done if there was a Chinese version of the survey. It should also be highlighted that over three quarters of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24. Half of the sample indicated that they were a student and the majority of them owned a Bachelor's degree. This presented a diversified sample that should be obtained for future study. It would be more favourable to have information about individuals from various age categories, educational levels, and unemployment statuses.

Regarding the above findings, further advice could be suggested for the hotel aspect. First, more digital marketing strategies between hotels and online users can be made, such as through Instagram, YouTube, etc from an organisational point of view. This indirect approach would be able to develop a solid relationship with loyal customers and build a positive perceived image for future potential customers. This allows customers to pay more attention to the hotels as they believe the unbiased comments will assist them in making the best and right decision instead of relying on the statement or poster that the organizations claimed by themselves only. Maintaining a good relationship and positive attitude towards hotels for customers could even motivate and encourage online users to consume during the pandemic time.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 6 Safety/hygiene measures presented in question 14

Question 14
1. Temperature check at the entrance
2. The hotel provides contactless service
3. The hotel offers sanitiser in room
4. The hotel uses disinfectants to clean the public area (restaurants facilities, lobby, escalators)
5. The hotel staffs maintains a distance of more than 1 m from their fellow staff members while at work
6. This hotel cleans in-room facilities (i.e., desks, chairs, sofas, beds, mirrors, and closets) using disinfectants

### Appendix 2 Facilities and Activities presented in question 15

Facilities	spa, jacuzzi, car park, poolside bar, lounge, etc
Activities	yoga class, cooking class, yacht trip, etc

### Appendix 3 Instagram story on author's account



## Appendix 4 Survey

# Survey on how social media influence staycation

Hi, my name is Rachel. I am an undergraduate student at Modul University Vienna and currently conducting a study on how social media influence staycation in Hong Kong. Staycation, which is derived from the words "stay" and "vacation," is defined as a trip that people are able to stay in their own nations and enjoy their leisure time there. It is getting popular in Hong Kong since the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic. From this survey, I would like to access the opinions and thoughts of Hong Kongers on staycations. Please complete this 5-minute survey and your responses are anonymous. Thank you for your participation.

1. What is your gender? \*

- Male
- Female

2. What is your educational level? \*

- Secondary school
- College for higher vocational education
- Diploma
- Bachelors
- Masters
- Doctorate

3. What is your age? \*

- Below 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 or above



4. What is your employment status? \*

- Student
- Part-time
- Full-time
- Internship
- Unemployed

5. Are you living in Hong Kong? \*

- Yes
- No

6. How often you travelled overseas before the Covid-19 pandemic started? \*

- Never
- 1 time per year
- 2-3 times per year
- 4-5 times per year
- 5 times or above

7. How often did you go on staycation since Covid-19 pandemic started? \*

- Never
- 1 time per year
- 2-3 times per year
- 4-5 times per year
- 5 times or above

8. Will you read the customer reviews on social media/ website before booking a staycation? \*

- Yes
- No

9. What social media channels are you most active on? (You can choose more than one answer) \*

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Youtube
- Twitter
- Tiktok

10. How long you spend on social media channels per day? \*

- 1 hour or less
- 2 - 3 hours
- 4 - 5 hours
- 6 hours or more
- Never

11. How much hotel brand image on social media reviews would influence your choice of staycation hotel? \*

Hotel brand image is what comes into your mind and spontaneously think of the features when you assess the hotel name.

- 1    2    3    4    5
- Never influence me                  Extremely influence me

12. How much would social media reviews influence your staycation intention? \*

- 1    2    3    4    5
- Never influence me                  Extremely influence me

13. How much would social media reviews influence your attitude towards the hotel for staycation? \*

- 1    2    3    4    5
- Never influence me                  Extremely influence me

14. How much do you agree some of the following safety/hygiene measures will attract you when choosing the hotel for staycation? \*

1. Temperature check at the entrance
2. The hotel provides contactless service
3. The hotel offers sanitiser in room
4. The hotel uses disinfectants to clean the public area (restaurants facilities, lobby, escalators)
5. The hotel staffs maintains a distance of more than 1 m from their fellow staff members while at work
6. This hotel cleans in-room facilities(i.e., desks, chairs, sofas, beds, mirrors, and closets) using disinfectants

- 1    2    3    4    5
- Strongly disagree                  Strongly agree

15. How much would the following comprehensive facilities/activities promoted on social media reviews influence your choice of staycation hotel? \*

Facilities: spa, jacuzzi, car park, poolside bar, lounge, etc  
Activities: yoga class, cooking class, yacht trip, etc

Never influence me    1    2    3    4    5    extremely influence me  
           

16. How much do you agree the price and discount will influence you when choosing staycation hotel? \*

The discount format that hotel offers: dollar-off, percentage-off, bonus , free gift

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree