

From HTQA to WOM: An S-O-R Model in Chinese Honeymoon Tourism

Chen Yuan., Sathiswaran A/L Uthamaputhran

Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia – Kampus Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the development and dynamics of the honeymoon tourism industry, with a specific focus on the rapidly expanding Chinese market. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theoretical framework, this research constructs a conceptual model to address existing gaps in understanding how honeymoon tourism quality attributes (HTQA) influence memorable tourism experience (MTE) and future word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions. Within this model, HTQA is positioned as an external stimulus that directly affects MTE (the organismic response), thereby shaping subsequent WOM intention (the behavioral response). By integrating HTQA, MTE, and post-travel behavioral intention into a unified conceptual framework, this study enriches the existing theoretical system in tourism research. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from honeymoon tourism research, it offers a structured analytical framework for examining the critical role of service and product quality in shaping lifelong travel experiences and consumer advocacy.

Keywords: HTQA, MTE, WOM, S-O-R Theory

INTRODUCTION

Honeymoon tourism has expanded notably over the past few decades, becoming a key and economically significant part of the tourism sector (China Tourism Academy, 2018; Ctrip, 2017; Kim & Agrusa, 2005; Sardone, 2018; Wang et al., 2018). Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted its growth, affecting 97% of honeymoon plans and causing widespread cancellations, reductions, or postponements. (PR Newswire, 2022). Despite this setback, it's expected to rebound and be popular post-pandemic (PR Newswire, 2022). Honeymooners have a significant economic impact on local communities, spending more than other tourists (Sardone, 2018). In some countries, such as the US, China, South Korea, and the UK, honeymooners spend three times as much as other holidaymakers (Fakfare et al., 2020).

Market data for 2024 show a global honeymoon tourism market size of USD 131.56 billion, with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.6% from 2025 to 2030 (GRAND VIEW RESEARCH, 2024). Growth is driven by rising disposable income, preference for personalized travel, social influence, online travel agencies (OTAs), and the development of destination weddings (GRAND VIEW RESEARCH, 2024). Europe has long led the market, holding 39.3% of global share in 2024, while the United States has a strong presence with over 34% share and steady growth. By 2030, the Asia-Pacific region is expected to have the highest CAGR by 2030, with China as a key and fast-growing market (Business Research INSIGHTS, 2024; Global Market Insights, 2024; GRAND VIEW RESEARCH, 2024). These trends highlight honeymoon tourism's strategic significance in global tourism (Business Research INSIGHTS, 2024), calling for academic and industry focus on adapting and seizing future opportunities.

China's honeymoon tourism market has seen significant growth in recent decades, especially before COVID-19, largely driven by the post-90s generation (China Tourism Academy, 2018; Ctrip, 2017; Wang et al., 2018). After the post-pandemic tourism reopening, it has reaffirmed its vital role in the industry. The 2023 market size is approximately RMB 120 billion, up 15% year-on-year, expected to surpass 180 billion yuan by 2025 and exceed 100 billion yuan by 2030 with a stable 12% CAGR (Report on the Market Status Survey and Investment Potential Analysis of China's Honeymoon Travel Industry from 2025 to 2030, 2025). Annually, 8.1136 million couples

marry, with nearly 60% expecting honeymoon trips, meaning about 5 million couples opt for post-wedding travel (National Marriage Industry Survey and Statistics Center, 2023). Newlyweds allocate 31% of their savings to wedding expenses, with a large share going toward honeymoons. Younger demographics, especially post-90s and post-00s couples, dominate, accounting for 31% of the market (Ctrip, 2017). Research shows a shift in wedding celebrations, with couples prioritizing honeymoon travel over traditional ceremonies (Yan et al., 2023). These trends highlight the evolving market and call for deeper exploration.

The academic exploration of honeymoon tourism is a relatively new area, with systematic research emerging over the past two decades (Sharma et al., 2024). During this time, literature has mainly focused on a narrow set of topics, such as the appeal of overseas honeymoon destinations (Kim & Agrusa, 2005), a choice set model (Jang et al., 2007), and factors influencing destination selection (Lee et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2015; Wu, 2017). Other studies have examined the destination decision-making process (Reisenwitz, 2013), broader ideas like wedding tourism (Bertella, 2018; Schumann & Amado, 2010; Seebaluck et al., 2015), and methodological advancements, including the development and validation of a scale to measure honeymooners' motivations (G. Chen et al., 2020). Empirical research also explored links between honeymoon tourism experience (HTE) constructs and behavioral intentions (Chen et al., 2021). However, a critical review shows that scholarly research remains limited in scope, with even less focus on the Chinese market. There's a lack of interdisciplinary approaches and in-depth analyses of post-pandemic behavioral changes and market trends, particularly regarding the quality attributes and their implications for tourism behavior models (Fakfare et al., 2020).

Honeymoon tourism holds unique "once-in-a-lifetime" symbolic and emotional significance for newlyweds (Bulcroft et al., 1999), leading to higher expectations and greater investment in quality than in other types of tourism (MacInnis & Price, 1990). As a result, honeymoon tourism quality attributes (HTQA) become crucial determinants that directly shape the memorable tourism experience (MTE). Any shortcomings in HTQA could undermine the perceived value and emotional fulfillment of the milestone event, highlighting the need for rigorous analysis and optimization of these attributes (Bulcroft et al., 1999; MacInnis & Price, 1990). However, few studies have holistically explored how HTQA affects MTE and subsequent behavioral intentions. Previous research has examined only limited aspects; for example, Fakfare and Lee (2019) developed a multidimensional scale for honeymoon tourism attributes, Fakfare et al. (2020) analyzed honeymooners' behavior in terms of quality, fantasy, and destination relational value, and Lee et al. (2020) categorized HTQ. Understanding the interplay among HTQA, MTE, and the behaviour intentions is vital for optimizing this high-value tourism segment, especially in the Chinese market, where comprehensive analyses of HTQA's role are essential for growth.

This paper offers two major theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the honeymoon literature by proposing a new conceptual framework that systematically links honeymoon destination sustainability practices to HTQA and further connects HTQA to word-of-mouth (WOM) intention via the MTE organism in the Chinese market context. In practice, it significantly extends the application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model in honeymoon research, especially by clarifying how HTQA influences MTE and, subsequently, drives WOM intention, with positive surprise acting as a moderating factor. This framework provides practical guidance for industry practitioners aiming to strategically align HTQA with measurable enhancements in WOM intention.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 conducts a systematic literature review on HTQA, MTE, and WOM intentions. Section 3 applies the S-O-R model to develop a conceptual framework and derive empirically testable research propositions. Sections 4 and 5 explore the theoretical and practical implications of this framework. Section 6 outlines the research limitations and proposes directions for future research. Section 7 finally concludes the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Honeymoon tourism quality attributes (HTQA)

The evaluation of product and service quality is primarily based on performance attributes (Dodds et al., 1991). In the tourism sector, the perceived quality of tourism experiences is significantly influenced during the service

delivery process (Formica & Uysal, 2006; Gearing et al., 1974; Hu & Ritchie, 1993). Additionally, tourist engagement and the immersive consumption of destination products, such as hotels and restaurants, also affect the quality of tourism experiences (Žabkar et al., 2013).

In the context of honeymoon tourism, research has identified unique dimensions of HTQA and highlights its importance. MacInnis and Price (1990) noted that honeymooners generally have higher expectations for high-quality products and services than regular tourists, as they invest considerable time, money, and effort in planning their romantic journeys. This aligns with Arismayanti (2021), who emphasized the pivotal role of tourism destination quality attributes in shaping visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Researchers often employ attribute-based assessments to evaluate the quality of destination characteristics in analyses of tourist experiences. Beyond the destination's attributes, Kim et al. (2005) and Lee et al. (2010) highlighted that the quality of service providers and the unique treatments offered significantly influence the overall perception of honeymoon tour quality.

Despite the valuable insights from the existing literature, detailed qualitative or descriptive analyses of honeymoon tourism quality are often lacking. Nonetheless, several researchers have conducted in-depth studies from various perspectives to better understand this niche area of tourism. Buhalis (2000) proposed the Six A's framework, classifying tourism destination attributes into six core elements: attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities, and ancillary services, providing comprehensive guidance for destination planning, management, and marketing. Li (2012) conducted a survey targeting the marriageable population in Shenzhen, identifying six key factors influencing the honeymoon tourism experience: sightseeing, accommodation, catering, entertainment, transportation, and shopping. Vajčnerová et al. (2014) identified ten factors significantly impacting visitor satisfaction with destination quality, including service quality, transportation convenience, brand image, natural landscapes, and entertainment activities. Rajaratnam et al. (2015) revealed eight essential elements contributing to destination quality: accessibility and logistics, amenities, hygiene, core tourism experience, security, information, hospitality, and value for money.

More recent studies have delved into specific dimensions of HTQA. Cong (2016) identified multiple dimensions of destination quality related to hospitality, including accommodation and restaurant quality and service; food quality and pricing; transportation cleanliness and road safety; public transport availability; the friendliness and hospitality of local people; natural scenery; nightlife; and shopping. Wu (2017) analysed user-generated content (UGC) from Chinese honeymooners on social media platforms, categorizing high-frequency vocabulary into five destination choice factors: tourism landscape resources, tourism entertainment activities, tourism service facilities, destination cuisine, and degree of openness. Feng (2019) explored the monthly tourism market development in Shenyang, identifying key features of honeymoon products, such as (1) personalization and privatization, (2) a strong emphasis on the travel atmosphere, and (3) distinct seasonality with a tendency for longer stays at the destination, highlighting the experiential and emotional demands of honeymooners that go beyond standard tourism needs.

Fakfare et al. (2020) conducted a study in Phuket, Thailand, examining various aspects of honeymoon quality that significantly contribute to the ideal honeymoon experience. The study, involving international honeymooners from different countries, including 126 Chinese honeymooners, aimed to determine whether the perception of this ideal enhances honeymoon tourists' overall experience. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study empirically validated a multidimensional framework and identified seven key factors (the quality of services provided by honeymoon service providers, special privileges for honeymooners, the hospitality of residents, accessibility, accommodations for honeymooners, dining experiences, and local tour products). Each of these elements contributes to the fantasy of a honeymoon and ultimately enhances the destination's relational value for tourists.

To support this research, the study will utilize the scale developed by Fakfare et al. (2020) specifically for Chinese honeymooners. These factors will help build a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional attributes of honeymoon tourism quality for further investigation. The literature on HTQA highlights its multifaceted nature and critical role in shaping the MTE and subsequent tourist behaviours, emphasizing the need for continued research in this area.

2. Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)

In recent tourism literature, the concept of memorable tourism experience (MTE) has gained prominence as a comprehensive framework that adopts a consumer-oriented perspective, focusing on tourists' emotional and subjective reactions (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015). Larsen (2007) defines tourist experiences as significant past events associated with travel that leave a lasting impression on long-term memory. Kim and Ritchie (2012) defined an MTE as a tourism experience that is positively remembered and recalled after the travel, emphasizing critical moments in tourists' actions, emotions, and thoughts at a destination.

Notably, not all experiences are memorable; tourists selectively construct and remember their most pertinent and significant experiences (Kim et al., 2012). This selective construction is based on personal evaluations of these experiences, with novel events or features being more likely to be remembered. (Skavronskaya et al., 2020; Stone et al., 2022). A recalled experience often indicates its distinctiveness and capacity to evoke strong emotions (Larsen, 2007). MTEs predominantly encompass positive experiences (Kim et al., 2021), and the extent to which they are recalled can vary depending on an individual's prior interactions with the same service providers (Kim, 2018). Jorgenson et al. (2019) observed that our understanding of the relationship between memory and tourism is still in its early stages, suggesting a need for further exploration in this area.

Tourism studies underscore the importance of creating memorable experiences, as individuals primarily rely on their memories when deciding whether to revisit a destination and when sharing recommendations through word of mouth (Oh et al., 2007). For instance, Parta and Maharani (2023) found a positive, statistically significant correlation between MTE and WOM intention in indigenous tradition-based tourism in the Mentawai Islands of Indonesia, highlighting the appreciation of travellers for tangible and intangible indigenous cultural elements. Travelers often depend on past experiences and memories to inform their plans (Lehto et al., 2004; Wirtz et al., 2003), making MTE significant in influencing tourists' future travel decisions (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004; Kim et al., 2010).

Recently, practitioners in the tourism industry have recognized that providing memorable experiences is even more vital than offering tangible resources (Wang et al., 2020). Memorable experiences are essential for creating successful tourism products (G. Chen et al., 2020) and serve as a key factor in fostering loyalty behaviours (Zhang et al., 2018). They play a crucial role in enhancing a destination's competitiveness and sustainability by encouraging tourists to recall positive memories, a strategic approach to gaining a competitive advantage in today's highly competitive tourism market (Zhang et al., 2018). Talarico and Rubin (2003) noted that remarkable, surprising, unforeseen, and emotionally impactful experiences can create vivid, lasting mental images in individuals, making them more likely to revisit destinations that evoke positive memories (Marschall, 2012).

3. Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

Word-of-mouth (WOM) has emerged as a pivotal concept in tourism research, serving as a crucial metric for evaluating tourists' post-trip experiences. From a broader consumer behaviour perspective, WOM is defined as informal information exchange between consumers regarding the ownership, use, or attributes of goods, services, or suppliers (Wang et al., 2022; Westbrook, 1987). In the tourism context, WOM functions as a core post-travel behaviour indicator, reflecting tourists' feedback after completing their journeys and acting as a fundamental component of destination loyalty (Som et al., 2011; Su et al., 2017). It is an informal yet influential form of communication that aligns well with modern trends, especially through social media platforms (Schoner-Schatz et al., 2021; Tsai & Bui, 2021).

WOM plays a significant role in destination marketing and the evaluation of tourist experiences. Existing studies consistently demonstrate that favourable travel experiences directly drive tourists to disseminate positive WOM (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Seyfi et al., 2024). This positive WOM serves as a key mechanism for amplifying destination visibility and shaping consumer perceptions. By sharing their experiences, tourists act as informal marketers, influencing the decisions of potential visitors and contributing to the destination's reputation.

In destination marketing, WOM is often used to gauge the effectiveness of promotional efforts. Its informal nature makes it a more trustworthy source of information compared to traditional advertising, as it is perceived

as unbiased and authentic (Schoner-Schatz et al., 2021). Social media marketing, in particular, has leveraged the power of WOM by providing platforms for tourists to share their experiences widely and instantly, thereby enhancing the reach and impact of WOM (Tsai & Bui, 2021).

Scholars have emphasized that WOM emerges from the tourism experience itself, with its generation and transmission closely tied to emotional and cognitive responses (Hoang et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2023). Positive emotions, such as joy, satisfaction, and awe, experienced during a trip are likely to trigger the desire to share these experiences with others. Similarly, cognitive responses, such as the perceived value and uniqueness of the destination, also influence WOM generation.

The literature establishes WOM as a multifaceted construct in tourism, encompassing both attitudinal (e.g., recommendation intentions) and behavioural (e.g., actual dissemination of feedback) dimensions. Its significance lies in its ability to bridge experiential satisfaction with destination marketing outcomes, though its applicability may vary across tourism contexts. Future research is called to dissect further these contextual nuances, such as in the honeymoon tourism context, and to strengthen the theoretical grounding of WOM in tourism.

4. Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory

The S-O-R theory was proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) within the field of environmental psychology literature and has since been extensively employed in research on tourism and consumer behaviour. It elucidates the process by which the external environment (stimuli) influences an individual's internal state (the organism), thereby resulting in behavioural responses. Eroglu et al. (2003) characterized stimuli as external elements capable of capturing an individual's attention and eliciting responses, generally conceptualized as influences that activate internal states.

In this study, HTQA is conceptualized as an external stimulus that influences consumers' internal processing of MTE. This interaction ultimately gives rise to the behavioral response of WOM intention. By leveraging the S-O-R theory, this paper consolidates HTQA, MTE, and post-travel behaviour intention into a cohesive framework that clarifies how HTQA impacts outcomes of MTE. The insights from this analysis underscore the effects and implications of HTQA on consumer behavior, with strategic significance for the development of honeymoon destinations.

Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

This study uses the S-O-R Theory as a valuable theoretical framework to examine how HTQA (stimuli) affects MTE (organism) and WOM intention (response). As illustrated in Figure 1, HTQA serves as a stimulus that triggers internal consumer evaluations of MTE. These internal processes, in turn, lead to the response: the WOM intention.

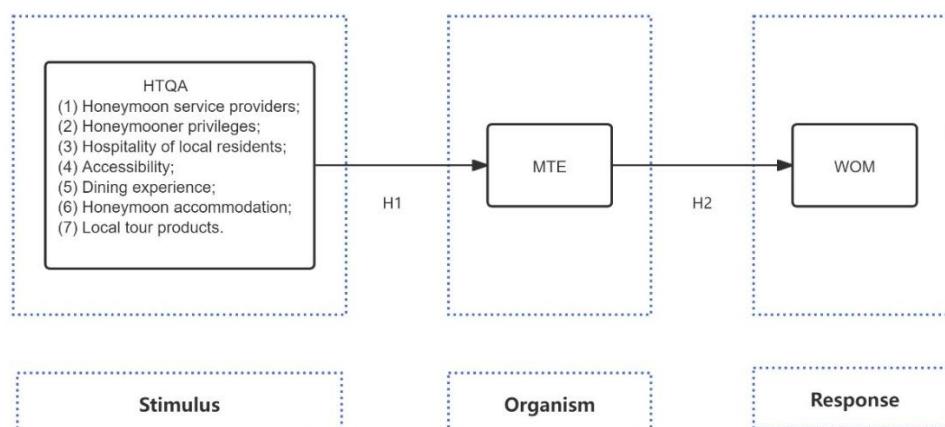


Figure 1 Research Framework

This section presents detailed theoretical rationales and empirical foundations for the proposed model, leading to the formulation of two research hypotheses.

HTQA and MTE

Honeymoon tourism represents a crucial sector within the broader tourism industry. Newlyweds typically regard their honeymoon as a significant, once-in-a-lifetime event, expecting that it will forge enduring memories and unforgettable experiences throughout their married life (Jericó & Wu, 2017; Kim & Agrusa, 2005). Memorable tourism experiences (MTE) are tourism encounters that are positively remembered and recalled after the event (Kim & Ritchie, 2012). According to Tung and Ritchie (2011), the core of MTE comprises four dimensions: affect, expectations, consequentiality, and recollection. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, Honeymoon tourism quality attributes (HTQA) serve as stimuli that can shape various cognitive and emotional aspects of the tourist experience, such as memories and emotions.

Substantial research evidence highlights the positive influence of honeymoon tourism quality attributes (HTQA) on the memorable tourism experiences (MTE) for newlyweds. Key factors include service quality, which exerts a substantial impact on the overall experience (Kim, 2018; Kim & Agrusa, 2005; Lee et al., 2010; Qu & Sit, 2007). The provision of special privileges such as room upgrades and surprise gifts fosters a sense of exclusivity and enhances memorability (Bulcroft et al., 1999; Penner, 2009), playing a pivotal role in creating a memorable honeymoon experience (Bulcroft et al., 1999). Accommodation is pivotal, with its quality, privacy, and amenities directly affecting satisfaction and the creation of memorable experiences (Bulcroft et al., 1999; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Moutinho et al., 2012). Similarly, the dining experiences serve as a foundation for the trip, allowing couples to immerse themselves in local culture in cuisine, thereby deepening their overall experience and creating lasting memories (Bulcroft et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2010). Additionally, the warmth and hospitality of local residents contribute significantly to visitor satisfaction (Cong, 2016; Tosun et al., 2015). Finally, the ability to customize travel experiences and access flexible, high-quality local tourism products that prioritize privacy and personal interests is crucial for ensuring long-term satisfaction and vivid, cherished memories (Kim & Agrusa, 2005; Lee et al., 2010). Therefore, the following hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1: HTQA positively affects MTE.

MTE and WOM

Research defines MTEs as experiences that are positively remembered and encompass critical moments of emotional and cognitive engagement. These moments are selectively constructed based on personal evaluations (Kim et al., 2012; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Larsen, 2007). Such experiences, especially those characterized by novelty, surprise, or intense emotional resonance, forge enduring mental impressions that shape travellers' reflections after their trips (Skavronskaya et al., 2020; Stone et al., 2022; Talarico & Rubin, 2003). These memorable events directly motivate tourists to spread positive WOM, as they draw upon past experiences and memories to guide their future travel decisions and recommendations (Kim et al., 2010; Oh et al., 2007). For instance, Parta and Maharani (2023) noted a statistically significant correlation between MTE and WOM intention in the context of cultural tourism, highlighting that unique, emotionally charged experiences (e.g., festivals, ceremonies) inspire travellers to promote destinations. MTE positively influenced WOM by creating emotionally impactful, distinctive, and vivid recollections that tourists are eager to share.

Moreover, MTE serves as a strategic lever to enhance destination loyalty and achieve marketing success, as it bridges experiential satisfaction with WOM behaviours (X. Chen et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018). The informal yet influential nature of WOM, which is grounded in tourists' emotional and cognitive responses to their trips, enhances destination visibility and shapes consumer perceptions through platforms such as social media (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Schoner-Schatz et al., 2021; Seyfi et al., 2020; Tsai & Bui, 2021). By prioritizing MTEs over tangible resources, tourism practitioners recognize their role in fostering loyalty and encouraging WOM as a crucial mechanism for competitiveness (Wang et al., 2020). Scholars further emphasize that WOM, encompassing both attitudinal intentions and actual sharing behaviours, is fundamentally linked to the quality and memorability of tourism experiences (Hoang et al., 2023; Som et al., 2011; Su et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2023). Therefore, MTEs not only satisfy tourists but also stimulate their desire to share positive narratives, thereby

reinforcing destination appeal and enduring success. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2: MTE positively affects WOM intention.

While the proposed conceptual model provides a structured pathway for examining the relationships among honeymoon tourism quality attributes (HTQA), memorable tourism experience (MTE), and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions, this study is not without limitations, which in turn offer fruitful avenues for future scholarly inquiry.

The primary limitation is the study's focus on the Chinese honeymoon tourism market. Although this offers valuable insights into a rapidly expanding segment, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural and market contexts. Future research should prioritize cross-cultural validation by replicating this model in diverse geographical contexts to test its robustness and enhance its external validity.

Furthermore, while the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework offers a parsimonious and structured lens for analysis, its application may oversimplify the intricate and nuanced emotional and cognitive dynamics inherent in the co-creation of memorable honeymoon experiences. To address this, a promising direction for future studies is to enrich theory by integrating the S-O-R model with complementary perspectives, such as consumer culture theory or emotional contagion theory. Such theoretical enrichment would enable a more holistic and profound understanding of the complex mechanisms underlying the formation of the tourist experience and subsequent behavioural outcomes, thereby strengthening both the theoretical depth and practical relevance of honeymoon tourism research.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several significant contributions to the field of honeymoon tourism research by deepening the theoretical and conceptual understanding of how honeymoon tourism quality attributes (HTQA) affect consumer behavior in the Chinese market. By employing the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory as the conceptual foundation, this research enriches existing literature by facilitating an in-depth examination of the interconnections among HTQA, memorable tourism experiences (MTE), and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions.

Firstly, although honeymoon research has gained increasing attention in tourism research, the existing studies on honeymoon tourism only have intermittently examined a few aspects, such decision-making processes of honeymooners (Kim & Agrusa, 2005; Lee et al., 2010), evaluations of destination attributes (Fakfare & Lee, 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Ünal et al., 2017), and travel motivations (Lin, 2014). In studies focusing on HTQA, Prior work mainly identified its dimensions and classified it into must-be, hybrid, and value-added categories, while examining its impacts on rational value and revisit intention (Fakfare et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2020). However, there remains a lack of research exploring HTQA and its impacts on MTE and consumer behavior from a theoretically comprehensive perspective. This study extends and enriches honeymoon tourism literature and helps to fill the knowledge gap in the HTQA and MTE literature.

Specifically, by utilizing the S-O-R theory as the guiding framework, this paper advances theoretical understanding of how external HTQA stimuli trigger internal MTE to shape post-travel behavioral intentions. It theoretically formulates a conceptual model that delineates the relationships among HTQA, MTE, and WOM intentions. By exploring these interconnections, this research advances our theoretical insight into the relationships among HTQA, MTE, and WOM intentions. Furthermore, it builds an S-O-R model of HTQA for the Chinese honeymoon tourism market.

Furthermore, the study clarifies the moderating effects of positive surprise on the relationships between HTE (fantasy and MTE) and WOM intention, thereby enhancing understanding of the dynamics at play in honeymoon tourism. Addressing these relationships, the research builds a robust body of knowledge in HTQA studies, ultimately providing service providers in the honeymoon tourism sector with valuable insights to enhance their offerings and customer engagement strategies. This comprehensive approach will ensure that the specific needs and preferences of honeymooners are addressed, fostering better customer experiences and satisfaction.

Lastly, over the past few decades, China has emerged as one of the largest honeymoon markets globally due to its vast population, shifting opinions, and growing honeymoon needs. However, the Chinese honeymoon market and honeymooners have largely been neglected in research. This study will focus on the Chinese honeymoon market to investigate the effects and implications of HTQA on consumer behavior, with MTE as a mediating factor. It aims to offer theoretical guidance for the future development of the Chinese honeymoon industry.

Practical Contributions

The research findings on the effects and implications of HTQA for enhancing experiences are crucial and are expected to provide honeymoon destinations with valuable marketing and management insights.

Firstly, amid growing competition and rising demand in the Chinese honeymoon market, honeymoon destinations must adopt effective management and marketing strategies to foster their development. Given that HTQA significantly shapes honeymooners' post-travel behaviour, service providers and destination marketing organizations should prioritize delivering high-quality honeymoon products and services that evoke positive experiences. For example, honeymoon destinations should offer products and services that enhance honeymooners' fantasy experiences and trigger positive MTE. Specifically, honeymoon service providers should leverage advanced facilities and digital technologies (like virtual reality and digital robots) to enhance emotional engagement and create memorable experiences for honeymooners.

Lastly, given the significant role of WOM intention in developing honeymoon destinations, these locations must design experiences that not only fulfill but also exceed expectations, motivating honeymooners to share their journeys with others. To achieve this, honeymoon destinations should prioritize delivering high-quality products and services that co-create emotionally impactful and memorable experiences. These experiences must possess qualities such as novelty, refreshment, engagement, informativeness, meaning, and indulgence, as these characteristics heighten emotional resonance and distinctiveness, which are key drivers of WOM intention (Skavronskaya et al., 2020; Stone et al., 2022; Talarico & Rubin, 2003). For example, activities like craft-making programs (e.g., creating souvenirs) or fruit-picking (e.g., coconuts) can foster meaningful cultural engagement and lasting memories. These emotionally charged and socially transmissible moments directly amplify tourists' willingness to recommend the destination to friends and family, thereby strengthening its long-term competitiveness in appealing to Chinese honeymooners.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper developed a Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework that systematically explains how honeymoon tourism quality attributes (HTQA) act as external stimuli, shaping internal experiential constructs (MTE) and ultimately influencing post-travel word-of-mouth (WOM) intention.

This study makes several significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge on honeymoon tourism and consumer behavior. Theoretically, by integrating these elements into a cohesive model, the research addresses a critical gap in honeymoon tourism literature, which has previously lacked a holistic theoretical lens to explore the interplay between quality attributes, experiential outcomes, and behavioral intentions. In addition, it extends the application of the S-O-R framework to honeymoon tourism research by classifying the impacts of HTQA on WOM intention in the Chinese market. In practical terms, it underscores actionable strategies for honeymoon destinations and service providers. Prioritizing high-quality, resonant experiences is essential to meet the unique demands of Chinese honeymooners. Such approaches not only amplify newlyweds' memorability but also foster long-term loyalty and advocacy. The framework not only advances academic discourse but also provides practical guidance for honeymoon destinations aiming to improve their reputations.

In summary, this study lays the conceptual groundwork for future empirical exploration of HTQA implications in honeymoon destination development. By designing services that align with these experiential attributes, destinations can effectively leverage organic WOM to sustain competitiveness in the rapidly growing Chinese honeymoon market.

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