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A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW FOCUSING ON LUXURY HOTELS IN EUROPE AND ASIA

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ABSTRACT

Following the significant impact of the pandemic on the hotel industry, hotels continue to play a key role in the economy sector. However, maintaining financial stability is a major challenge for them. Luxury and sustainability may seem like contradictory concepts, but there are “best practices” that refer to the coexistence of these two concepts (Peng & Chen, 2019). The aim is to systematically review the literature on luxury hotels in Europe and Asia, after formulating a unique definition of the term luxury. Few studies are available on this topic, despite the rapid and global growth of the sector (Moore, 2024). This article provides a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of luxury hotels, drawing key correlations from European and Asian publications.

Keywords: luxury hotel, luxury products and services, systematic literature review



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SZISZTEMATIKUS IRODALOMFELDOLGOZÁS – FÓKUSZBAN AZ EURÓPAI ÉS ÁZSIAI LUXUSSZÁLLODÁK

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ABSZTRAKT

A világjárvány szállodaiparra gyakorolt jelentős hatását követően a hotelek továbbra is kulcsfontosságú szerepet játszanak a gazdasági életben. A pénzügyi stabilitás fenntartása azonban jelentős kihívást jelent számukra. A luxus és a fenntarthatóság ellentmondásos fogalmaknak tűnhetnek, vannak azonban olyan „best practice” luxusszállodai gyakorlatok, amelyek e két fogalom egyidejű létezését igazolják (Peng & Chen, 2019). A cél az európai és ázsiai luxusszállodákról szóló szakirodalom szisztematikus áttekintése a luxus egyedi, saját definíciójának megfogalmazását követően. A témában kevés számú tanulmány áll rendelkezésre, habár az ágazat gyors és globális növekedésnek indult (Moore, 2024). A cikk átfogó képet ad a luxusszállodák jellemzőiről, kulcsfontosságú összefüggéseket fogalmaz meg az európai és ázsiai vonatkozású publikációk alapján.

Kulcsszavak: luxusszálloda, luxus termékek és szolgáltatások, szisztematikus szakirodalom-elemzés

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1. Introduction

There has been a limited focus on research of luxury topics, particularly in the context of luxury services and luxury hotels. By defining the term luxury, this paper can contribute to the academic value of the field and provide further insights for future research in this area. Given the rapid growth of this sector (Moore, 2024), it is essential to conduct regular, periodic examinations to obtain the most up-to-date data, trends, and development strategies in this field. As posited by Iloranta (2022), the global luxury goods industry is dominated by luxury hospitality (in general, luxury hotels, restaurants, cruises and luxury tourism were examined in the related studies).

What distinguishes this paper from existing literature and how does it contribute to the research field? It is not possible to propose an exact definition of luxury, as it is understood in different ways by different authors. Wirtz et al. (2020) argue that academic research has largely ignored luxury services. While luxury goods have been the subject of considerable research recently, the same cannot be said for luxury services. In their article in the *Journal of Service Management*, the authors take the initiative of defining the phenomenon of luxury services. The paper is the first not only to define such services but also their characteristics as well (Wirtz et al., 2020). This is a challenging task due to the complex nature of the services (according to the so-called IHIP characteristics like intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability) and the whole concept.

The primary aim of this paper is to define the concept of luxury itself, based on the available literature, mostly research on luxury goods and services, and then to present its implications for the hotel industry, focusing on luxury hotels in Europe and Asia. A systematic literature analysis using the VosViewer software to process the relevant articles on the Web of Science will allow a comparison of possible similarities and differences between the European and Asian contexts. Further research directions and suggestions are also made in the summary section of this article.

2. Literature review

Although no precise definition exists for luxury, definitions for luxury goods and services can be found in research papers. It can be described as a set of dimensions. A review of the literature reveals a multitude of definitions of the term.

“Luxury services are extraordinary hedonic experiences that are exclusive. Exclusivity can be monetary, social and hedonic in nature. Luxuriousness is jointly determined by objective service features and subjective customer perceptions. Together, these characteristics place a service on a continuum, starting from everyday luxury (i.e. with low levels of exclusivity and extraordinariness), to luxury, to elite luxury (i.e. with high levels of exclusivity and extraordinariness)” (Wirtz et al., 2020: 668). A further element is required to complete this definition: the terms *quality* and *high quality*. The following key dimensions and several characteristics of luxury were examined in the articles under review. The aim of the team of Wirtz (2020) was a detailed literature review of over 100 articles in this field. According

to the analysis of the articles they could define *luxury goods and services* and enhance the key dimensions of the given definitions. Based on the most frequently mentioned features by Wirtz (2020) the mosaic word for the own definition of luxury could be created by the author of the present study.

Table 1. Key dimensions of luxury

Key Dimensions / Article Nr.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	*
Aesthetics		x											1
Authenticity	x	x					x						3
Connection	x							x					2
Continuum												x	1
Craftsmanship								x					1
Escapism		x											1
Exclusivity		x					x	x	x	x		x	6
Experience							x		x				2
Hedonism				x									1
Heritage								x					1
Nonownership												x	1
Perception												x	1
Pleasure					x								1
Prestige	x					x	x		x				4
Price / High price	x		x			x	x						4
Quality	x		x				x		x	x		x	6
Rarity			x				x						2
Relationship					x								1
Self-concept				x									1
Status				x	x			x		x	x		5
Symbol of identity											x		1

Source: Edited by the author based on Wirtz et al., 2020. * Frequency

The frequency analysis indicates that the self-defined concept of luxury can be described as exclusive goods or services of superior quality, which convey a sense of prestige and are priced accordingly. Consequently, the author formulated the following definition of LUXURY = EPPQS, where EPPQS stands for *exclusivity, prestige, price, quality, and status*.

This article puts forth a proposal for defining the concept of luxury in the context of hotels engaged in the provision of high-quality accommodation services on a daily basis.

3. Research methodology

The methodology of systematic literature analysis is based on the publications indexed in the Web of Science. After collecting the most relevant publications, the VOSviewer tool was used to define the most relevant connections between European and Asian research on the topic of luxury hotels. In what follows, the results for Europe and Asia will be presented, with the similarities and differences between the two highlighted.

The objective is to present a synthesis of the most recent research. The initial study with relevance to the present study is that of Chu et al. (2016), who conducted a comprehensive review of 65 publications on luxury hotels between 1994 and 2013. In addition to a systematic literature review by topic, the articles were also subjected to a significant sorting criterion based on the place (journal) and date of publication, the analytical method used, and the geographical area of the study.

This pioneering research defined trends in the luxury hotel milieu and formed the basis for subsequent research, for example on the relationship between luxury and sustainability. Additionally, 29.2% of the articles examined addressed the subject of marketing in the context of luxury (Chu et al., 2016).

The objective of this research is to develop a unique conceptualisation of luxury, particularly in the context of the hotel and hospitality industry. This type of accommodation represents a high level of quality and exists within a niche market for research studies. In their literature review, Wirtz et al. (2020) identified numerous definitions of luxury, noting that the majority of existing studies focus on goods. The current research addresses this limitation by focusing on the service aspect, filling a gap in the literature. The authors enhance associations with quality, exclusivity (inclusive prestige), positive customer emotions and high price. Consumers can achieve the feeling of exclusivity through monetary, social and hedonic exclusivity.

Luxury hotels have a specific clientele in mind, and the provision of quality, personalised services and guest satisfaction are paramount. This must be confirmed by the systematic literature review. In order to examine the topic, it is necessary to take into account the multidimensional nature of the concept, given that it is a highly complex phenomenon. It is not sufficient to focus on a single aspect of the term under study; rather, a multidimensional approach is required, addressing both the product or service in question and the context in which it is situated. For instance, in the case of a hotel, the focus may be on the building itself, or on the real estate implications of the hotel's location.

Guests tend to favour luxury hotels and services, as they are not merely seeking the provision of conventional products; rather, they are also in pursuit of premium quality and experience-based products and services. In the view of Godey et al. (2013), the terms *elitist*, *exclusive*, *symbolic*, *prestigious* and *expensive* are synonymous with the concept of luxury. Additionally, emotional drivers and hedonic values represent novel features of this phenomenon. The key factors that define luxury tourism, as outlined by Iloranta (2022), are as follows: the tourism product and experience, price, status, the number of stars, other value, the consumer, the brand, comparison, and class.

Additionally, it would be beneficial for luxury hotels to acknowledge the connection between sustainability and their operations, given the growing environmental and governmental pressure on the hospitality industry. There is a growing awareness of environmental issues, with an expectation that individuals will demonstrate responsibility for the natural environment and adopt more environmentally friendly practices. The analysis of the research conducted by Acampora et al. (2022) demonstrates that the topic of green hotels and their associated initiatives has become significant and in recent years.

4. The research process and results

4.1. European publications

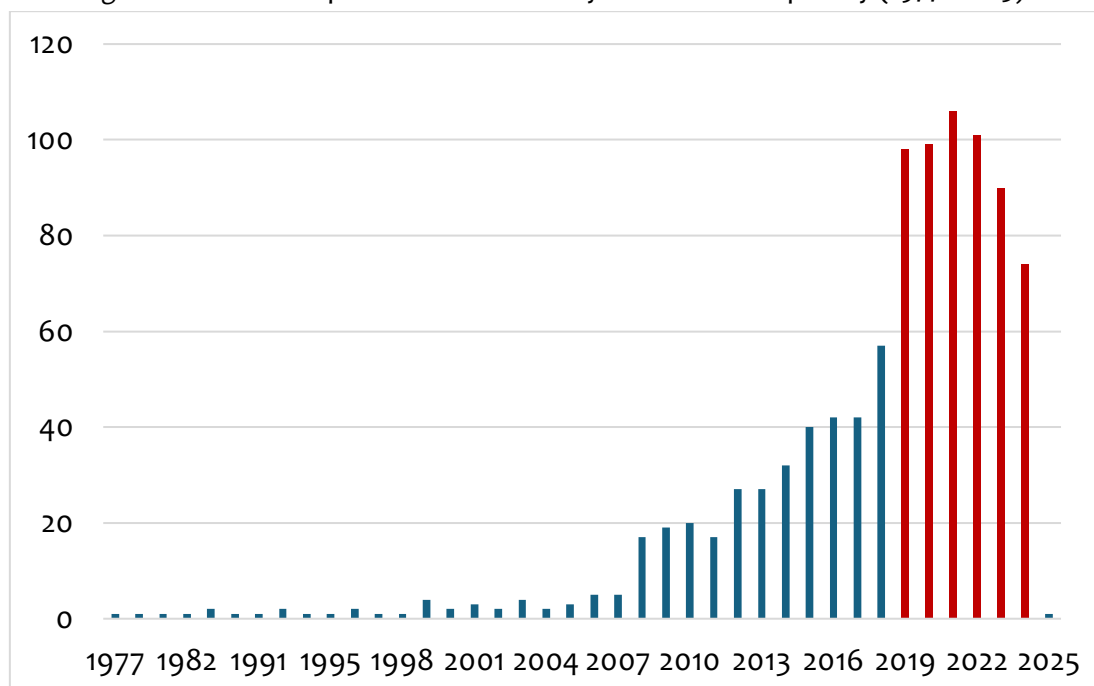
The objective of this research is to present a systematic literature review in connection with the main phenomenon, luxury. Topics related to it reflect the high standards of a product or service, as well as those of a hotel or hospitality establishment. The selected analytical method helps us to identify, filter and critically analyse the relevant studies throughout the research process (Barbosa et al., 2024; Higgins et al., 2019; Page & Moher, 2017). The initial step is to filter the publications collected from the Web of Science using the search parameters “luxury AND hotel OR hospitality”. This procedure is expected to lead to a relevant set of related publications.

A total of 1098 documents were identified. To refine the results and obtain a more homogeneous set of research, it is possible to apply additional filters, such as limiting the document type to articles and only considering publications in English. The 955 results are displayed in Figure 1, arranged chronologically from 1977 to 2025. The most significant period in terms of the number of articles analysed is the last five years, which encompasses the Covid-19 year (2019) and the five subsequent years. The majority of publications on the topic of luxury hotels and hospitality are from 2019 to the present day. Consequently, this research will focus on the 569 articles published during this time.

The 569 items were subjected to further refinement through the application of Web of Science categories, facilitating the attainment of a more sophisticated outcome. The results were refined by eliminating fields that were irrelevant or only loosely connected to the topic, including engineering, food science technology, social sciences, agronomy, and art.

The most significant fields, as indicated by the number of publications, are hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism (324), management (158), business (96), environmental studies (54), green sustainable science technology (36), environmental sciences (31), economics (25), sociology (18), and operations research management science (9).

Figure 1. Number of publications on luxury hotels and hospitality (1977–2025)



Source: Edited by the author based on publications found on Web of Science.

Following the application of the filtering process, the remaining 493 items can be subjected to further examination at the country and regional levels, allowing for more detailed information concerning the similarities and differences between Europe and Asia. At this phase, the publications originating from the USA are not considered to be principal aspects, given their distinct cultural context, hotel strategies, and classification procedures. Consequently, 114 publications were excluded at this stage.

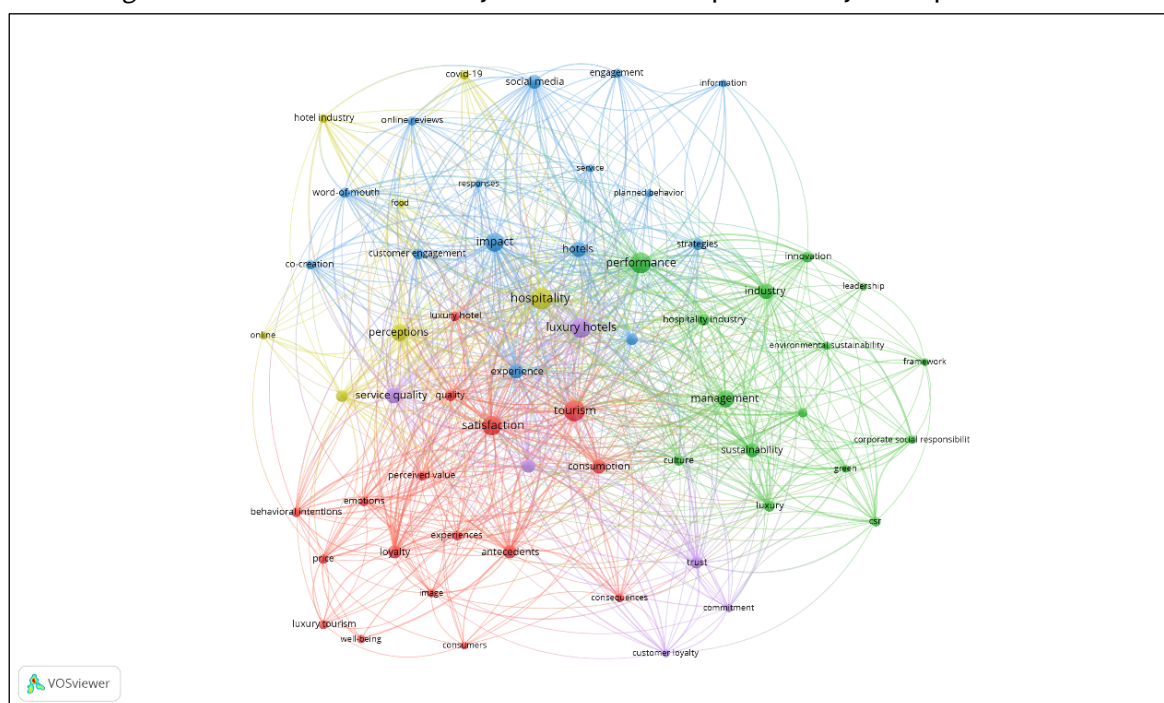
It is necessary to address a potential ambiguity in the research procedure. The geographical points in question are Turkey and Russia. Turkey is situated in both South East Europe and South Western Asia, while Russia is located in both East Europe and North Asia. Consequently, these countries are counted as both European and Asian. The European component encompasses 33 countries and generates a total of 190 publications. A review of the literature revealed that 285 articles were published in 23 Asian countries. From this perspective, it can be observed that researchers based in Asia are directing a greater level of attention – as evidenced by the number of publications – towards the subject. The findings of Godey et al. (2013) indicate that the perception of luxury is complex: it encompasses both conspicuous and status-oriented elements as well as those that are more oriented towards hedonic and emotional dimensions. Additionally, significant cross-cultural differences were observed when evaluating the various dimensions of luxury through the proposed adjectives. It would be informative to determine whether there is a notable difference between the European and Asian literature reviews.

The analysis can be refined using a more specific analytical approach, co-occurrence. This method involves identifying instances where a given keyword is present at least five times in the data sets from both the European and Asian research projects. It is essential

to control all the keywords in order to obtain the most significant and transparent information. To this end, it is necessary to avoid using general definitions such as “economy”, “business” and “aesthetic labour” and research phrases such as “model”, “determinants”, “moderating and mediating role”, “qualitative research”, and “scale development”.

Analysing the five clusters in connection with the European publications is the following step in the research procedure. The initial cluster, comprising 17 items, is constructed by consumers or guests. These individuals are made to pay for luxury products and services, which assume the form of luxury hospitality. When coupled with an appropriate price and a focus on guest well-being, a high level of satisfaction has the potential of fostering a loyal customer base.

Figure 2. Five clusters of the keywords in the European luxury hotel publications



Source: Edited by the author in VOSviewer.

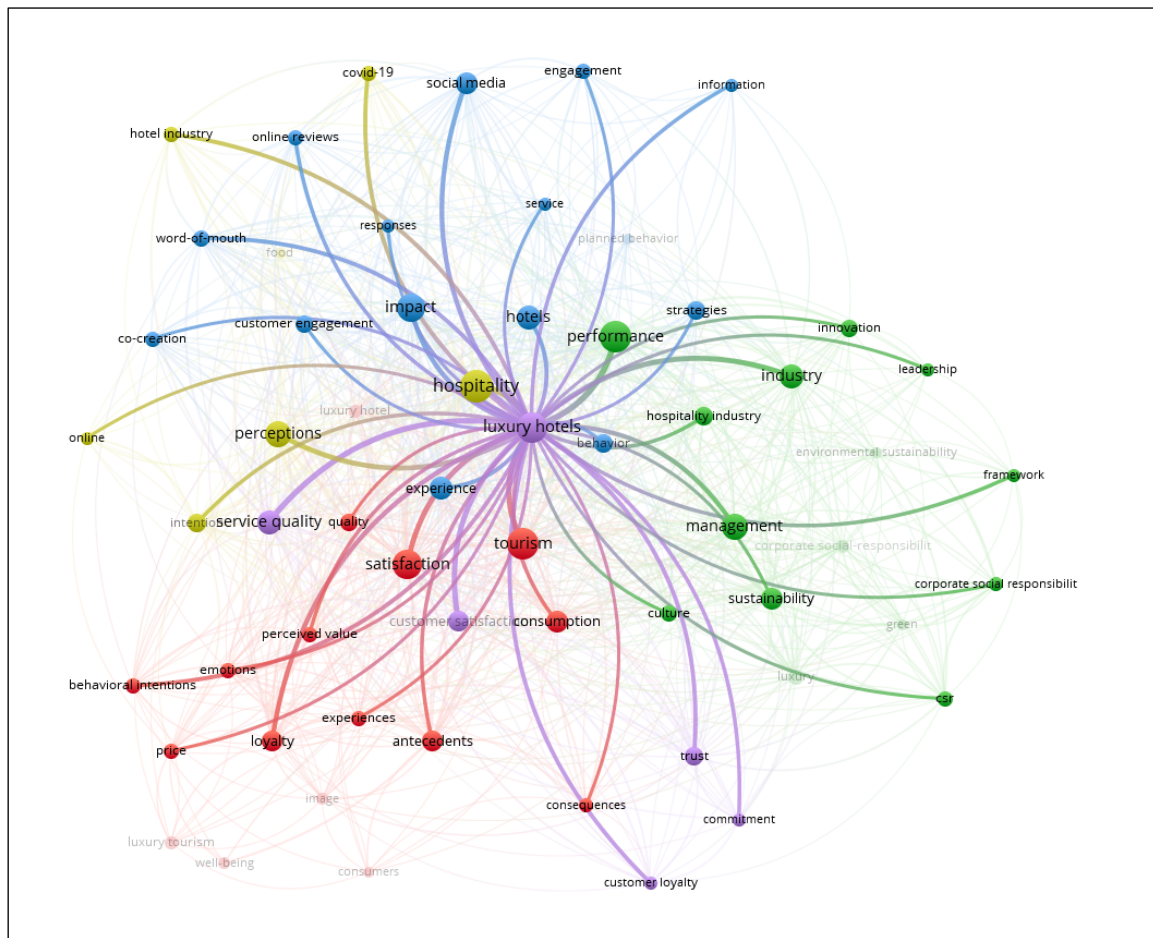
The second cluster (comprising 15 items) pertains to the hotel's business environment. This cluster is not solely concerned with financial matters; it also encompasses the sustainable environment. The items included in this cluster pertain to corporate social responsibility, sustainability, management performance, and innovation.

The third cluster (comprising 15 items) concerns the behaviour of employees. If employees are engaged, guests will be engaged as well. In the contemporary era, the most effective and cost-efficient marketing instrument is word-of-mouth recommendation. When combined with social marketing tools, it can yield optimal results. There are a number of creative ways in which the luxurious ambience of luxury hotels can be promoted.

The fourth cluster (of seven items) encompasses the hotels and hospitality units themselves, as well as the accommodation and food, which represent the primary service elements.

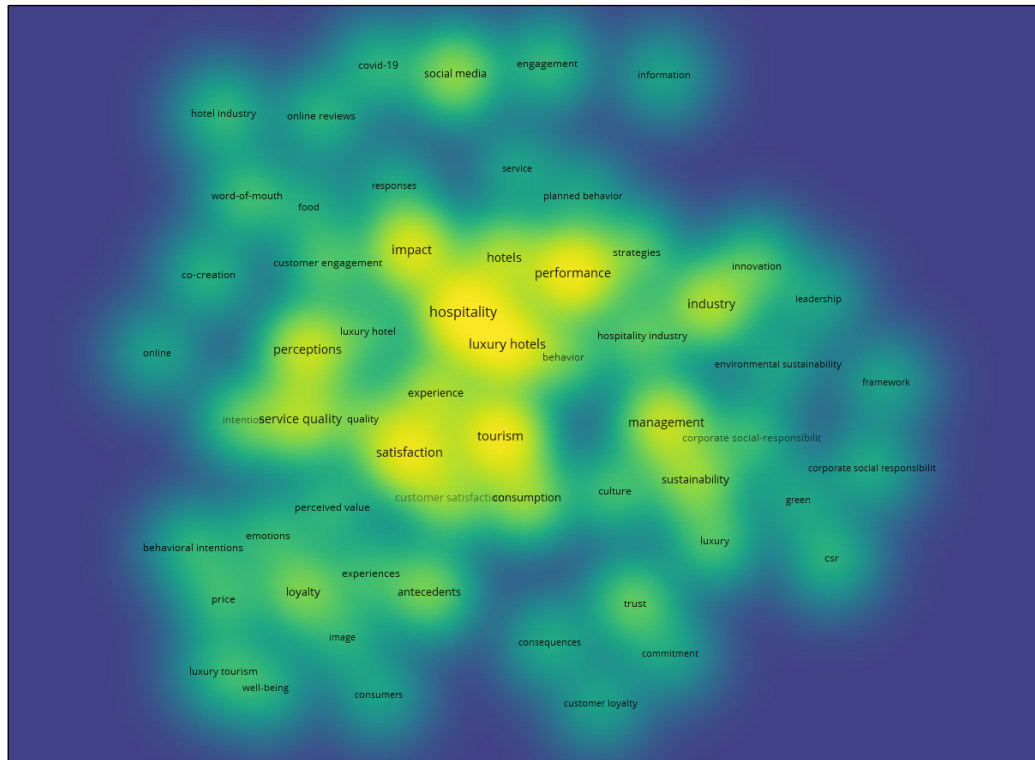
The fifth cluster (of six items) illustrates the outcome of a luxury service that fosters engaged and loyal customers or guests. The provision of high-quality service can result in the satisfaction of both hotel employees and guests. On the density chart (Figure 3) guest satisfaction and experience can be also seen.

Figure 3. Cluster five (with 48 links) of the keywords in the European luxury hotel publications



Source: Edited by the author in VOSviewer.

Figure 4. Density chart in VOSviewer based on the keywords in the European publications



Source: Edited by the author in VOSviewer.

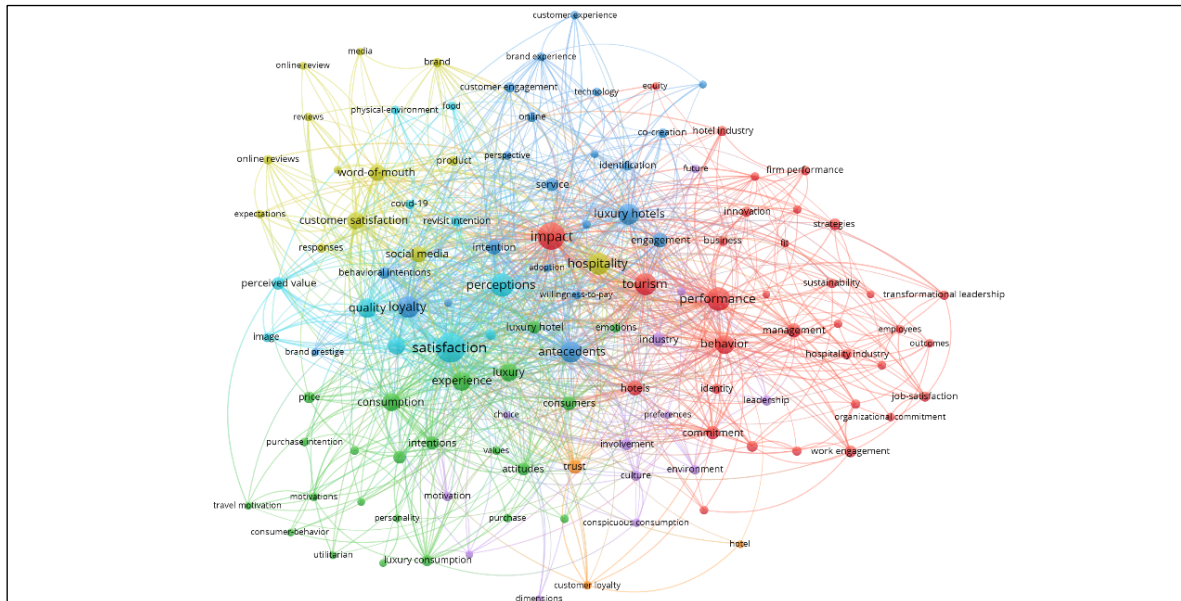
4.2. Asian publications

A detailed examination of the seven clusters in relation to Asian publications reveals the following. In this phase of the investigation, it is essential to exercise caution when utilising keywords, ensuring that they are not merely encompassing general definitions or geographical names (e.g., information, materialism, China, India, Hong Kong, work) or research phrases (e.g., model, consequences, moderating and mediating role, determinants, scale development, PLS-SEM, big data, models, framework).

The first cluster (33 items) encompasses the elements of the field job, employee, satisfaction and engagement. Additionally, the value co-creation and the strong roles in connection with the brands represent novel elements within this cluster, particularly when considering the items from European publications.

The concept of green actions by management, the phenomenon of innovation, and the relevance of sustainability are also common themes in publications pertaining to luxury hotels. Hotels can exert considerable influence on the natural environment. It is becoming increasingly common for guests at luxury hotels to follow environmentally-conscious practices. It is insufficient to merely employ the term *sustainable* in a marketing strategy; guests are increasingly aware of sustainability issues.

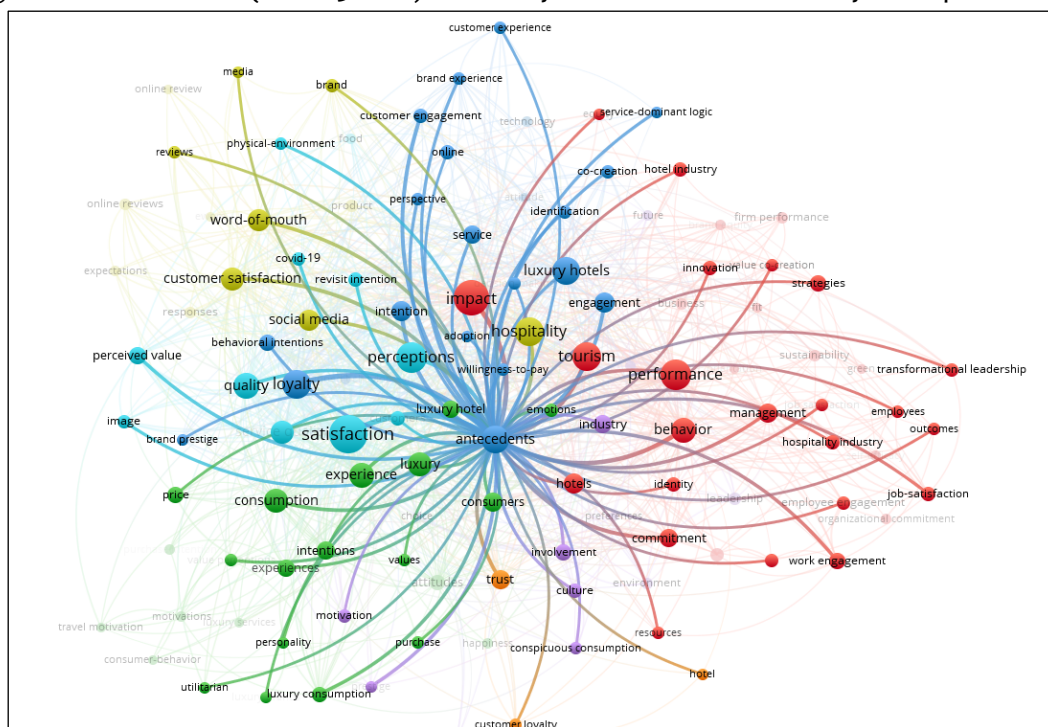
Figure 5. Seven clusters of the keywords in the Asian luxury hotel publications



Source: Edited by the author in VOSviewer

The second cluster (23 items) demonstrates the significance of the guest experience, the perceived value, and the role of price as evidence. The guest is engaged in the process of experience collection, the formation of pre-emotions and the development of feelings in the immediate surroundings. It is only in the event of satisfaction with the package of luxury products and services that guests will choose to travel to the same destination on a future occasion.

Figure 6. Cluster three (with 83 links) of the keywords in the Asian luxury hotel publications

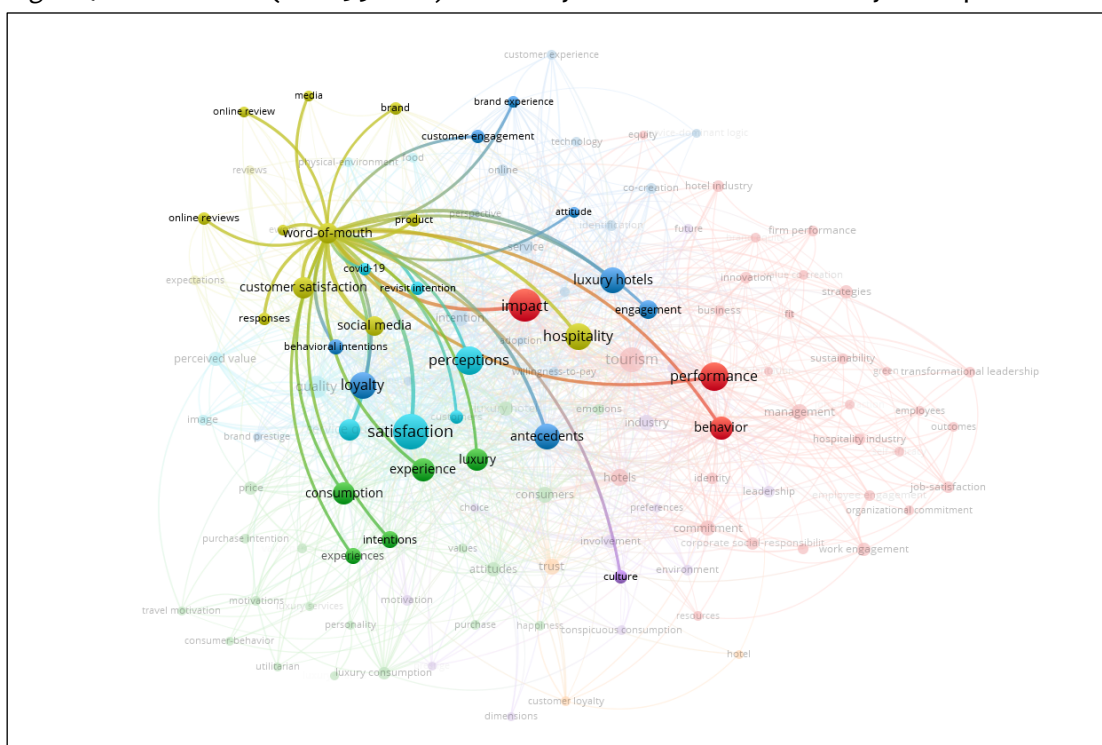


Source: Edited by the author in VOSviewer.

Cluster three (22 items) encompasses the motivating factors that influence a guest's decision to travel and to pay. For instance, guests may seek to experience the brand in a meaningful way. Luxury-seeking loyal guests are inclined to co-create and adopt a service-oriented mentality.

The fourth cluster (13 items) comprises product-focused topics and the utilisation of social media for the promotion of luxury products. It is also important to consider the role of online word-of-mouth recommendations, as well as the expectations and experiences that customers share on social media platforms.

Figure 7. Cluster four (with 59 links) of the keywords in the Asian luxury hotel publications



Source: Edited by the author in VOSviewer.

Cluster five (13 items) is predominantly concerned with the ambience of the hotel and the potential for future growth. The typical characteristics of this cluster are an emphasis on culture, future orientation, and knowledge-based thinking. Cluster six consists of 11 items, including quality (food), satisfaction, perceived value and perceptions, with Covid-19 as an item also belonging to this group. Cluster seven (three items) which comprises three items, demonstrates that customer loyalty and trust are also significant factors in the hotel industry. The performance of employees has a significant impact on guest perceptions, with excellent experiences potentially leading to high levels of satisfaction and positive recommendations.

The hotel sector has been at the forefront of implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the broader tourism industry (Acampora et al., 2022). It is not only guests who are becoming more environmentally conscious; the management and owner teams are also adopting more eco-friendly practices, particularly when offering a

positive advantage to those interested in them. The objective of sustainable tourism is the optimal allocation of resources. The principal strategic challenge is to mobilise intangible assets and transform them into a sustainable competitive advantage. This is also applicable to luxury hotels.

5. Summary

5.1 Limitations of the research and future research directions

The study has presented articles on the topic of luxury based on a systematic literature analysis methodology. Furthermore, it has offered a concrete definition of luxury in the context of the hotel sector. The analysis is limited to articles published from 2019 onwards, reflecting the post-Covid-19 period. It would be possible to extend the study to include articles published in the earlier period, as well as to areas outside Europe and Asia. A more comprehensive result could be obtained by conducting a systematic literature analysis following the collection of articles on the Scopus site, or even by setting up a PRISMA model. As defined by Page & Moher (2017), the model comprises a collection of reports on systematic reviews and meta-analyses.

In order to fulfil the requirements of a PRISMA analysis, it is advisable to carry out a comprehensive study involving the input of multiple researchers when systematically reducing the literature articles, as Jain et al. (2023) did in the third step of their research on the same topic. For a comparison with the Indian terrain, it would be beneficial to examine the systematic literature research conducted by Jain et al (2023). A total of six clusters were identified in their bibliographical analysis, which exhibited similarities to both European and Asian research.

The initial cluster encompasses digital interactions on online evaluation and complaint handling platforms. The second cluster is concerned with a strict brand-based system of standards that define the basic characteristics of products and services, outlining the properties of products and services. The third cluster is characterised by premium pricing, while the fourth cluster is defined by the high quality of services. The fifth cluster is formed by the working environment and sustainability pillars, while the final cluster is identified as labour and labour-related parameters (Jain et al., 2023). The underlying trends, the number and content of clusters in the publication and research, appear to be virtually independent of geographical location and are identical. It is evident that an expansion of the research area (continent) is beneficial for a comprehensive, global perspective. Conversely, a reduction in the scope of the research may yield more detailed and nation-specific results.

In addition, Juhász-Dóra (2022), a Hungarian researcher, emphasises the significance and contemporary relevance of luxury hotel services. Her paper also analyses the impact of the Corona virus pandemic on luxury products and services in hotels.

The hotel sector was among the first to adopt CSR practices within the broader tourism industry (Acampora et al., 2022). It is not only guests who are becoming more environmentally conscious; management and owner teams are also adopting more eco-

friendly practices, particularly when there is a clear advantage to be gained. The environmental aspect of sustainability is of particular importance in the context of luxury hotels, with a focus on the preservation of water resources, energy efficiency, optimal waste management practices, and the prioritisation of local produce and ecological materials (Spits, 2022).

5.2 Contributions to theory

In general, the significance of luxury hotels in the hotel sector is on the rise, as evidenced by an increase in average hotel occupancy, revenue per available room, and other key performance indicators (Chu et al., 2016). The present research has aimed to define the concept of luxury in the hotel sector, utilising an abbreviation to summarise what previous researchers have referred to as a complex concept. The definition of luxury is open to interpretation, and its meaning can be understood in the context in which it is considered. Luxury can be defined as EPPQS, an abbreviation representing the key attributes of exclusivity, prestige, price, quality and status.

The systematic literature review method is used in the social sciences and management reviews because of the increasing number of online accessible articles, data bases, and other types of resources (Formádi & Papp, 2022). The Web of Science was used as a basis for the search for literature on the subject, with the search terms “luxury and hotel or hospitality”. The dataset of articles could be reduced by year, discipline and language, thus allowing the researcher to define the geographical area relevant to the research. A considerable number of researchers from both Europe and Asia have contributed to this field of study, although there is a tendency to focus on the topic after 2019.

It is evident that the number of publications from Asian countries exceeds that of European researchers, when the same set of criteria is taken into account. In the European sample, five clusters of search terms were identified, while seven clusters were formed in the Asian group. In essence, the foundation for both outcomes is identical: the hotel and its immediate environment are of primary importance, with ownership and management offering employment opportunities to a dedicated and devoted employee who provides an exemplary level of service. The price and quality of products and services are of consequence to regular guests, who will only be satisfied if their experience matches their expectations and previous perceptions. The advent of the digital age has also rendered social media and online advertising a significant aspect of the hospitality industry. These resources not only enable guests to form an impression of their previous stay but also allows prospective guests to obtain information about a luxury hotel in advance, based on the images and descriptions available. In the context of Asian culture, the concepts of loyalty and sustainability are of greater and more pronounced significance, as evidenced by the proportion of keywords identified in the literature analysis. The present study broadens the scope of systematic literature analysis in the field, indicating new lines of enquiry for future research.

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