

**A cross cultural comparison between Chinese international and Australian domestic
visitors on evaluation of luxury seaplane services**

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Declaration Statement

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Keywords: Luxury, novelty, seaplane, attitude

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Abstract

This research examines the effect of perceived luxury and novelty on tourists' evaluation of and behavioural intention toward luxury seaplane services, in particular, the moderating role of self- and other-directedness. Data were collected via a self-administered online survey questionnaire and involved Australian and Chinese respondents who intend to visit Western Australia. Findings indicate that consumers' perceived luxury and novelty of the service influence service evaluation, where Australian respondents showed stronger intention to experience the luxury seaplane services than Chinese respondents. Furthermore, Australian (Chinese) consumers' perceived self-directedness (other-directedness) enhanced their positive relationship between perceived luxury (novelty of the service) and service evaluation. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by demonstrating that self- and other-directedness may serve as a mechanism that underlies the cultural differences in the motivation, perception, and intention toward luxury services in the tourism recreation context.

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Introduction

The luxury market is growing rapidly with an annual growth rate of 4% in 2019 and an estimated market value of €1.3 trillion globally (Bain & Co., 2020). While the focus of most luxury marketing studies have been to explore the consumer motivation toward the consumption of luxury goods (Dhaliwal et al. 2020; Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2021) and their perception towards luxury brands (Ko et al. 2019; Li and Su, 2007), there has been a shift from a goods-centric focus towards a service-centric perspective within the context of luxury (Correia, Kozak, Del Chiappa, 2020; Wirtz, Holmqvist, Fritze, 2020). According to the literature, this move was to better understand the key characteristics of luxury services and its differentiation from luxury goods, as well as the consumer behaviours that apply to the consumption of luxury services, in particular new and novel ones (Ko et al. 2019; Wirtz, Holmqvist, Fritze, 2020). One example of a growing luxury experience or service is luxury travel and destination experience (Bain & Co., 2020), therefore research on luxury services has largely focused in the tourism and hospitality industry (e.g., Bahri-Ammari, Van Niekerk, Khelil, & Chtioui, 2016; Veríssimo & Loureiro, 2013; Yang, Lau, 2015). However, many existing studies on luxury services have neglected the consideration of cultural differences and relatively few studies have examined the psychological mechanisms that underlie the cultural differences in luxury service consumption. The current paper therefore addresses this gap and recent calls for further research (e.g., Zhang, Xiong, & Lee, 2021) to explore why motivation and intention of luxury service consumption differs between cultures.

This paper focuses on the cultural differences in the consumption of luxury seaplane services as it was a relatively novel and unique luxury service offering in Australia and around the world during the time of the research. In fact, there was an emerging industry interest in luxury seaplane services

and the premiumisation of ordinary seaplane service. Thus, the findings of this paper may provide insights not only into the premiumisation of services but also the design novel luxury service offerings. Furthermore, there has been a growing scholarly and industry interest in understanding special interest tourism, which is defined as the provision of customised leisure and recreational experience for the unique interests and needs of a niche market in the tourism and hospitality context (for a review, see Mckercher & Chan, 2005 and Wen & Wu, 2020). Past research has identified emerging trend to consumer special interest tourism products such as food tourism centred around unique cuisines (e.g., Kim, Park, & Lamb, 2019) and film tourism centred around nostalgic movies (e.g., Kim, Kim, & King, 2019). Luxury seaplane service is a novel tourism experience at the time of the research and was targeted for a niche market of affluent tourists desiring for a unique, fast, and luxurious way to travel between different destinations. Thus, the current research extends the current literature on special interest tourism by not only exploring tourists' motivation toward luxury seaplane service, but also investigating the cultural differences on these motivations.

Seaplane services have been in the market since 1950s. It was first considered a means of transportation into the islands and remote areas where other vehicles could not go or where there was no airport due to low demand and infrastructural limitations (Knott, 2011). Seaplanes were then primarily used in the national militaries and for forest firefighting purposes. However, in recent times seaplane services have served as a quicker, shorter and environmentally friendly vehicle to the travellers and tourists (Gobbi et al., 2011). In particular, the UK based “Loch Lomond Seaplanes” commercialised its service in 2003 for the first time, and gradually leisure market became the largest segment for the seaplane services (Garcia, 2009; Rocca, 2010).

Sightseeing flights are seen as a unique, novel and exciting experiences to the tourists across USA, Canada, Australia, Maldives, Malta and other destinations. The influx of new entrants into the industry reflects the future growth potential of the currently niche and conspicuous seaplane market (Gobbi et al., 2011). The seaplane services have received notable attention from the experts in the aviation industry over the last decade, but scant academic research is available within the context of the consumers of seaplane services. Few research has examined technical aspects of seaplane services such as feasibility, route planning and urban impacts (e.g., Iliopoulou et al., 2015; Zelef, 2014). Reports published in the popular press often categorise the sightseeing seaplanes as luxury services (e.g., Nunns, 2014). However, to date, no research has examined consumers' perception, attitude and purchase intention for the seaplane services. To provide managerial insights into the marketing and provision of seaplane services from a consumer perspective, this paper investigates the tourists' attitude and behavioural intention toward the luxury seaplane services in Western Australia (WA).

The consumption of luxury products and services is often explained with Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption which is based on the fact that those who spent their wealth on material products are more likely to receive desired treatment by social contacts, and such effects depend on a comparison of the desirability of signalling through price, quantity, or quality (e.g., Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996). The literature shows that regardless of social class or income, status seeking consumers are more likely to obtain, use, convey, and consume luxury products and services (Kessous and Valette-Florence, 2019; Phau and Teah, 2009). However, O'Cass and Frost (2002) describe status consumption as the personal nature of owning status possessions, which may or may not be conspicuous or publicly displayed, and that status

today may be displayed in more-subtle ways (Truong et al., 2008; Shipman, 2004). Therefore, consumers with a high-status seeking consumption will strive to obtain products or brands that display status (i.e., luxury brands). These consumers' consumption also aims to project their ego to new heights, and to earn respect and recognition from others (Han et al., 2010). The high price and limited availability provide luxury characteristics in seaplane services. In addition, the consumers' unfamiliarity and high arousal potentially reflects on the novelty or uniqueness of the seaplane services (Sung, Hatton-Jones, Teah, Cheah, and Phau, 2020; Wirtz et al., 2020). In fact, recent research has shown that social value, conspicuousness, and uniqueness are the drivers of consumptions of luxury tourism experience (Correia et al., 2020). This further strengthen the important roles perceived luxuriousness and novelty play in motivating the consumption of luxury tourism experience. Taken together, this research intends to investigate the impact of consumers' perceived luxury and novelty on attitude toward and purchase intention for luxury seaplane services. This will provide the first step in building theoretical and managerial insights on the psychological mechanism that underlies the consumption of luxury seaplane services.

Furthermore, two major market segments of the Australian tourism industry revolve around Australian interstate and Chinese international tourist. Therefore, the proposed theoretical relationships are tested across Australian interstate and Chinese international tourists. The focus of these two samples also aligns with Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (1980) and subsequent extension work conducted on luxury consumption (e.g., Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Li and Su, 2007), which suggest a fundamental cultural difference between consumers from collectivist cultures (e.g., China) when compared to those from individualist cultures (e.g., Australia). In fact, research shows that luxury consumption of Chinese consumers, when compared to consumers

from individualistic cultures, is driven by their desire for social identification, self-presentation attitudes, and public reputation through display of luxury brand. Whereas, consumers from individualist cultures such as the United States and Australia tends to consume luxury products and services due to individual uniqueness, self-expression attitudes, and the pursue of self-actualisation (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Li & Su, 2007). This cultural difference in the representation of self is important in luxury consumption as existing literature has demonstrated that the concept of self is a key motivator of luxury consumption (e.g., Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012; Shukla & Purani, 2012; Truong & McColl, 2011).

Prior studies have even acknowledged that luxury experiences, when compared to the material possessions of luxury products, are closely related to the self-enhancement, self-ascendance, and self-realisation (Cater & Gilovich, 2012; Hemetsberger, von Wallpach, & Bauer, 2012; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010). In fact, recent research has shown that social emulation, self-esteem and public display are key consequence of luxury tourism product consumption (Correia et al., 2020). Interestingly, cultural differences between the Western and Eastern perspectives on the concept of self have been widely documented, especially in the luxury marketing literature (e.g., Shukla & Purani, 2012; Wang & Waller, 2006). For instance, Shukla and Purni (2012) has demonstrated that British consumers consider self-directed attitude or values to be a motivator of luxury consumption, whereby they tend to assign higher importance on how the product or service makes them feel. On the other hand, Indian consumers in Shukla and Purni's study tend to consume luxury products due to other-directed attitude or value. The exiting literature suggests that an individual's behaviour and consumption in collectivist cultures is more influenced by social norms than the internally motivated concerns (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Aune and Aune, 1996). Thus,

it is assumed that Chinese tourists (collectivist culture) would emphasise on other-directed value perceptions, whereby they make purchase decisions to impress friends, relatives and associates. By contrast, Australian tourists (individualistic culture) are predicted to have a self-directed attitude towards luxury consumption whereby the choices are primarily influenced by the feeling of inner gratification (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Hung, Huang, and Lyu, 2020; Wu and Yang, 2018).

Taken together, the current research therefore extend Shukla and Purni's study (2012) on luxury products by examining how self- and other-directed attitude of Australian interstate tourists and Chinese international tourists drive the consumption of luxury seaplane services.

These potential cultural differences are important to understand from an academic and managerial perspectives. By examining the psychological mechanisms that drive the consumption of luxury seaplane for Chinese and Australian tourists, the current research will provide significant managerial insights into the segmentation, marketing and positioning of such a luxury service. Specifically, the findings will also inform marketing, tourism, and recreation practitioners regarding the use of novelty vs. luxury appeal as well as the effect of self- vs. other-directed attitude on the marketing of luxury seaplane services.

The rest of this paper is structured into several sections. First, relevant literature are reviewed and a research framework is proposed with a set of hypotheses. Next, the research methodology is outlined and results are presented. The results are discussed in the following section. Then the

theoretical and managerial implications are provided. The paper concludes with discussing the limitations and future research directions.

Framework Overview

Luxury Branding

Existing luxury branding literature does not provide an all-encompassing definition of luxury brands due to the ambiguity of the term “luxury” and different contexts and socio-cultural characteristics consumers associate with luxury (Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Luxury brands have however been characterised by having emotional connections with consumers (e.g., Brun et al., 2008), social status (e.g., Bian and Forsythe, 2012), a sense of exclusivity and uniqueness (e.g., Phau and Prendergast 2000), its conspicuous nature (e.g., Godey et al., 2013) high perception of quality and price (e.g., Nueno and Quelch, 1998; see Jiang and Shan, 2018 for a review). All luxury brands are not the same; based on the purchasing power of the consumer, luxury brands can fall into one of the following categories; inaccessible luxury, intermediate luxury, and accessible luxury (e.g., Sung et al., 2015).

Luxury is not only a matter of disposable income, however, it can change according to the social and economic context (Christodoulides et al., 2009). Luxury brand consumption has previously been researched and explained through a multitude of consumer behaviour traits from personal and interpersonal aspects (e.g., Ajtha and Sivakumar, 2017; Dubois and Laurent, 1994; Mason, 1992). Luxury brand consumption also allows consumers to achieve social recognition through others approval (Jiang and Cova, 2012). Luxury brand consumption can also be driven not only by function but also by symbolic value the consumer places on the product (Kim and Jang, 2017;

Zhu, Teng, Foti, and Yuan, 2019; Levy 1959). Moreover, the symbolic value consumers place on their luxury consumption may vary due to their desire for attention through public or private consumption (Zhu et al., 2019; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). These factors indicate that consumer's attitudes and purchase intention towards luxury brands may vary according to their social motivations. Therefore, the influences towards attitudes of luxury brands should be distinguished through social reasoning.

Perceived Luxury

Current research illuminates luxury brands within the context of consumers' perceived feeling of luxuriousness of the brand (for a review, see Ko et al., 2011). The perception of luxury has been explained with the notion of something that is exclusive (Bearden and Etzel 1982), rare (Phau and Prendergast, 2000), of high price (Miller and Mills, 2012; Dubois et al, 2001), beyond necessity (Reith and Meyer 2003; De Barnier et al. 2006), a reflection of prestigious image (Keller, 2009) and so on (see Jiang and Shan, 2018 for a review). Extant studies on luxury perception largely hinge on Vigneron and Johnson's (2004) framework of brand luxury index that includes the consumers' personal and non-personal aspects with five key dimensions: conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality, hedonic, and extended self. Conspicuousness within a luxury brand is reflected through the consumption of luxury branded products and services that often demonstrate the consumers' desire for social prestige (Nikbin, Batouei, Iranmanesh, Kim, Hyun, 2019; Truong et al., 2008; Wilcox, Kim, and Sen, 2009). On the other hand, luxury brands are distinct from other brands in terms of style, quality feature, and design (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Research on perceived luxury argue that the appeal of international luxury goods can be a result of their perceived premium quality, recognizable style, reputation, and limited accessibility (Hung et al.

2011). The symbolic aspect of luxury values is influenced by the individual's private and public meaning of self-symbolism (Sung et al., 2015; Elliott, 1997). Signalling superiority to others through the consumption of luxury brands has been widely researched that acknowledges the variance of perceived luxury across markets and cultures (Cheah et al., 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). Given that the seaplane service is perceived and marketed as a luxury service, we hypothesised that:

H₁: Perceived luxury will have a significant positive influence on consumers' evaluation toward the luxury seaplane service

Perceived Novelty

Novelty is defined as the intensity of contrast between past experience and present perception regarding a stimulus (Jenkin, 1969; Judd, 1988; Sung et al., 2016). Based on the Novelty Categorisation Theory, Förster et al. (2010) argue that a stimulus can be called novel if it does not match with an individual's current mental categories. The notion of novelty seeking becomes apparent when an individual is motivated to seek out unusual information by an internal impulse or external influence (Acker and McReynolds, 1967; Mitas and Bastiaansen, 2018; Sung et al., 2016). Few scholars posit novelty as an antithesis of familiarity (Mitas and Bastiaansen, 2018; Welker, 1961). Moreover, a novel object should include elements of thrill, surprise, reduced boredom and an exception to routine experience (Lee and Crompton, 1992). Studies show that perceived novelty influences the consumers' adoption of and choices for a product, service or idea (Hirschman, 1980; Sung et al., 2016). Moreover, the novelty component in marketing communication enhances the consumers' interest toward a product or service (Silvia, 2005; Sung

et al, 2016). Overall, a novel stimulus enhances the person's intention to explore, but an extreme level of novelty may discourage the exploration (Kim et al., 2015; Lee and Crompton, 1992). With the context of travel and tourism research it is stated that people often travel to experience something new and different and if a travel destination is to be new and different for a tourist, it should possess relatively large amounts of novelty, uncertainty, complexity, and high arousal potential (Mitas and Bastiaansen, 2018; Wahlers and Etzel, 1985). Notably, a study by Kim et al. (2012) shows that novelty stimulates memorable tourism experience, and this may be something new and unique to the travellers or this may be an experience that is once-in-a-lifetime. Numerous studies have identified novelty as one of the key drivers of tourism motivation (e.g., Mitas and Bastiaansen, 2018; Geus et al., 2016; Tussyadiah, 2014).

In fact, novelty and familiarity have distinct effects in enhancing destination loyalty, but only novelty has a positive effect on satisfaction (Toyama and Yamada, 2012). Similarly, other research demonstrates that travellers with high novelty seeking are more likely to be satisfied but less likely to revisit the destination (e.g., Assaker and Hallak, 2013; Feng and Jang, 2004). Still, the novelty seeking travellers value the travel benefits and are a lucrative segment for the tourism and hospitality industry (Chen and Yoon, 2018). As previously denoted, research on the consumer evaluation toward new and novel luxury services is generally sparse (Writz et al., 2020), and as such this study seeks to explore consumer's evaluation of a luxury seaplane service which in its domain is a relatively new service within the Western Australia tourism landscape (see Swan River Seaplane, 2020), therefore we hypothesised that:

H₂: Novelty of the service will have a significant positive influence on consumers' evaluation toward the luxury seaplane service.

Consumer Attitude and Purchase Intention

Attitude is the enduring and overall evaluation of an object, product, service or any other component (For a review, see – Fishbein, 1963; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977; Lee and Ro, 2016). Based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) state that an individual's behavioural intention is determined by the person's attitude toward the relevant component. From marketing perspective, consumers develop positive attitude toward the products and services that deliver good values (Verma et al., 2019; Stern and Dietz, 1994). Thus, the unique traits of the offerings and consumers' perceived value together influence the formation of attitude which in turn impacts the purchase intention and actual purchase (e.g., Zeithaml et al., 2006; Mitchell and Olson, 1981). This is consistent with the argument that consumers' perceived value is higher for a product that offers novelty (e.g., Berlyne, 1970). The positive link between perceived novelty and an individual's intention toward engaged exploration (i.e., intention) has been widely supported across academic disciplines (Fahy et al., 1993, Forster et al., 2010; Hopp and Gangadharbatla, 2016). Within the communication perspective, Cox and Locander (1987) find that the presence of a novel product within an advertisement enhances the consumers' emotional responses (i.e., positive purchase intention) toward the product.

This research focused on the consumers' evaluation and intention to use a luxury seaplane service within the influence of perceived value and novelty of the service. It is assumed that perceived luxury of the service will result in a positive evaluation of the luxury seaplane service. Furthermore, if the consumers consider the service a novel one, it is likely that they will be willing

to explore the seaplane experience. Based on the above discussed literature, attitude-intention model, and relevant empirical findings, this research hypothesises that

H₃: Service evaluation will have a significant influence on the consumers' purchase intention for the luxury seaplane service.

Moderation of Self-Directedness and Other-Directedness

The self-concept consists of several aspects which include: actual self, ideal self, social self, and ideal social self (For a review, see – Rosenberg, 2017 and Sirgy, 1982). The four types of selves have been studied and found relevant to the study of consumer behaviour (e.g., Malar et al., 2011; Boksberger et al., 2011). In an advancement of the self-concept theory, Singelis (1994) measures and conceptualises 'self-construal' with an argument that some individuals are more concerned about their personal goal and internal attributes (i.e., self-directed), whereas others care more about their desirable social representation and interaction in a public environment (i.e., other-directed). The differences in the consumers' self-construal may affect their consumption choices (Ahn, 2019; Gardner et al., 1999; Rosenberg, 2017). The notion of self-directedness and other directedness is also relevant to the consumers' cultural background.

Referring to the Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension, studies show that people from individualistic (collectivist) society are tend to be more self-directed (other-directed). Relevant to the context of this research, studies related to cultural influences on luxury consumption find that consumers in collectivist societies (e.g., China) are primarily concerned about public display and social influences (e.g., Lin et al., 2013; Sabiote-Ortiz et al., 2016). On the other hand, consumers

in individualistic societies (e.g., Australia) prioritise their personal desire (i.e., actual self) in luxury consumption decision (e.g., Shukla and Purani, 2012; Bian and Forsythe, 2012). Following previous research in luxury good literature (e.g., de Kerviler and Rodriguez, 2019; Truong and McColl, 2011), this research proposes that perceived luxury is a self-directed construct that reflects the individual's assessment of the desired value from a luxury seaplane service. Therefore, the level of self-directedness, amongst the travellers from individualistic societies, will have an impact on the relationship between perceived luxury and service evaluation. By contrast, perceived novelty is regarded as a unique trait of the luxury seaplane service and the other-directedness of the travellers from a collectivist society would influence the strength of the relationship between perceived novelty and service evaluation. Therefore, the followings are hypothesised (refer to research framework in Figure 1):

H₄: Australian consumers' perceived self-directedness would enhance the positive relationship between perceived luxury and luxury seaplane service evaluation.

H₅: Chinese consumers' perceived other-directedness would enhance the positive relationship between perceived novelty and luxury seaplane service evaluation.

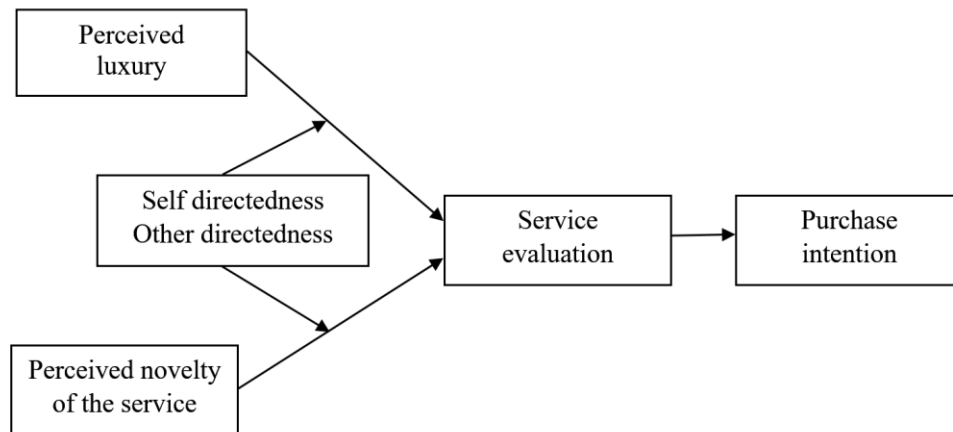


Figure 1: Research framework

Methodology

Background to the Study

This research is conducted within the context of potential tourists toward Western Australia (WA). With extensive tourism and infrastructure development, Western Australia has become a travel destination to a range of new and exciting tourism experiences that appeal to domestic and international tourists. Between July 2018 and June 2019, Western Australia welcomed over 11.5 million tourists including both domestic and international visitors (Tourism Western Australia, 2020). Statistics show that a total of 1.5 million interstate tourists and .95 million international tourists visited Australia in the year ending September 2018 (Tourism Western Australia, 2020). In particular, the Chinese tourist were noted to rank highly in terms of expenditure (AUD \$271 million) with an average growth rate of 4.3% during the year 2017-2018 (Tourism Western Australia, 2020). With such a high projected growth rate, there are further opportunities for the development of tourism experiences in Western Australia. In particular, interstate and Chinese visitors might be targeted toward taking seaplane services to experience the world-renowned Margaret River wine region, Rottnest island, the Pinnacles and the wilderness camp ‘Kooljaman’ at Cape Leveque. In recent years, luxury seaplane services offered by *Swan River Seaplane*, *Horizontal Falls*, *Red Baron Seaplanes* have gained attention from local and international tourists as well (Richardson, 2018).

Participants

Participants were recruited from Qualtrics’s consumer panel in Australia and China. Filtering questions were used to ensure that Australian respondents reside outside the state of Western

Australia and Chinese respondents were from metropolitan cities in China including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, Chongqing, Tianjin, Nanjing, and Chengdu. Australian (Chinese) interstate respondents must be born in Australia (China) and reside in Australia (China) for the majority of their life and have resided in Australia (China) for the past 5 years of their life. Furthermore, all respondents must have a strong desire to visit WA in the future. In addition, students, unemployed and retirees were filtered out to capture the appropriate respondents with potential interest toward luxury travel experiences. The filtering question also ensured that the respondents have prior travel experience.

A total of 351 responses were collected online of which 309 (Australia sample: 155 and China sample: 154) were considered valid and useable through data cleaning. The final responses meet the appropriate sample size (i.e., minimum 300) for SEM as advised by Comrey and Lee (2013) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). This further aligns with the recommended ratio of observations to estimated parameters (N:q) as 10 to 1 (Schreiber et al., 2006). A brief overview of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Total (n=309)	Australia (n=155)	China (n=154)
		Percent	Percent	Percent
Gender	Male	58.90	58.70	59.10
	Female	41.10	41.30	40.90
Age	23-30	10.03	10.32	9.74
	31-40	43.37	24.52	62.34
	41-50	21.68	20.00	23.38
	51-60	11.00	18.71	3.25
	61 and above	13.92	26.45	1.30
Education	Certificate	15.90	30.30	1.30
	Advance diploma	12.00	12.90	11.00
	Graduate certificate	10.70	11.00	10.50

	Bachelor degree	46.30	27.10	65.60
	Postgraduate Degree	13.30	15.50	11.00
	Others	1.90	3.20	0.60
Marital status	Single	16.50	25.20	7.80
	Married	71.50	54.80	88.30
	Widow	1.60	2.60	0.60
	In a relation	6.10	9.70	2.60
	Divorced	4.20	7.70	0.60
	Income (AUD)	25,000 and under	8.40	7.70
25,000-50,000		14.90	20.00	9.70
50,001-75000		19.40	26.50	12.30
75,001-100,000		14.90	16.80	13.30
100,001-125,000		10.70	9.70	11.70
125,001-150,000		9.40	8.40	10.40
150,001-175,000		7.10	1.30	13.00
175,001-200,000		7.40	1.30	13.60
Above 200,000		4.90	3.20	6.50
Prefer not to say		2.90	5.20	0.60
Occupation	Manager	43.40	25.20	61.70
	Professional	26.90	23.20	30.50
	Technician	9.10	10.30	7.80
	Community service	2.60	5.20	0.00
	Machine operator	1.90	3.90	0.00
	Clerical/Administration	8.70	17.40	0.00
	Sales	3.90	7.70	0.00
	Laborer	2.30	4.50	0.00
	Others	58.90	58.70	59.10

Research Procedure

This research was conducted at the end of 2016 and before the official launch of the first luxury seaplane service in Western Australia in 2017. It employed a self-administered online survey questionnaire to collect data from a consumer panel in Australia and China. The respondents were exposed to a short video (1 minute and 39 seconds) outlining the seaplane services and showcasing the novelty of aircraft take-off and landing in water as well as the aircraft design and overall look, as a stimulus for the survey. Having viewed the stimulus, the respondents indicated their perceived luxury, novelty, evaluation, and purchase intention of the luxury seaplane service. The measurement of constructs was adapted from established scales (see Table 2): luxury perception (Vigneron and Johnson 2004), novelty of the service (Toyama and Yamada, 2012), service evaluation (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2008), purchase intention (Bian and Forsythe, 2012), self-directedness, and other-directedness (Shukla and Purani, 2012). All these constructs were measured on a 7 point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The survey questionnaire concluded with the respondents' demographic profile (gender, age, marital status, income, and education). For the respondents from China, the survey instrument was translated into Chinese by two bilingual researchers (through a fee-paying professional service) using the back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970).

Data analysis

Following Hair et al. (2009), an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis and Varimax rotation was conducted to test the unidimensionality of the constructs. The scale items with low factor loadings were removed in this process. The conceptual model and hypothesised relationships were tested through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and AMOS 25. Necessary assumptions for the SEM were checked. For instance, the univariate and multivariate normality assumption were assured as

the statistics for Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test were non-significant (>0.05). The absence of multicollinearity was assured as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores were less than 3.0 (Hair et al., 2010). Also, the Common Method Bias (CMB) was examined through Harman's single-factor test. An EFA with unrotated solution revealed the single-factor explaining 48.39% of the variance which is less than 50% (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012; Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 2001). Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step-procedure was followed for testing the research model and hypothesised relationship. In the first step, the measurement model was tested for the construct reliability and validity (i.e., convergent and discriminant). The second step utilised a structural model for testing the hypothesised relationships. A multi-group SEM (with median split) and chi-square difference tests were conducted to examine the influence of moderating variables.

Table 2: Scale items for construct measure

	EFA loading	Alpha reliability
Perceived Luxury		0.805
Crafted/Manufactured	0.709	
Best quality/Good quality	0.730	
Superior/Better	0.802	
Very powerful/Fairly powerful	0.719	
Novelty of the service		0.857
This service offers an unusual experience	0.760	
This service offers new discoveries	0.750	
This service offers new experiences	0.740	
This service is new for me	0.791	
Service evaluation		0.944
Unfavourable/Favourable	0.822	
Negative/Positive	0.819	
Bad/Good	0.871	
Dislike very much/Like very much	0.839	
Purchase intention:		0.921
The probability I would consider buying this service is high.	0.727	
I would buy this service if I happened to see it.	0.792	
I would actively seek out this service in a place to purchase it.	0.735	
If I were going to purchase a similar service, I would buy this brand.	0.724	
Self-directedness		0.836
I often buy luxury service that reflect my own image	0.840	
My choice of luxury services depends on whether they reflect how I see myself but not how others sees me	0.704	
I am highly attracted to unique luxury services	0.876	
Other directedness		0.726
I like to experience new luxury services before others do	0.867	
I dislike luxury services that everyone else has experienced	0.935	
Purchasing luxury services make me a leader rather than a follower	0.807	

Results

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

An EFA was conducted to test the unidimensionality of the constructs as the measurement items were adapted within a specific context (i.e., luxury seaplane services) in this research

(Hair et al., 2009; Hurley et al., 1997). The EFA showed satisfactory factor loading and unidimensionality of the constructs. The sample adequacy ($KMO > 0.70$) and reliability (Cronbach alpha > 0.70) of the constructs were satisfied, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for all the constructs (Nunnally, 1978).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

A CFA was undertaken to test the reliability and validity of the constructs. After a series of item purification, the measurement model provided an excellent fit with $\chi^2 = 294.94$, $df = 194$, $\chi^2/df = 1.52$, $RMSEA = 0.04$, $SRMR = 0.05$, $PClose = 0.94$, $CFI = 0.98$, and $TLI = 0.98$ (Hu and Bentler, 1999). As shown in Table 2, the composite reliability (CR) of the constructs, ranged between 0.758 and 0.946, provided internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores (>0.50) provided convergent validities of the measures (Malhotra, 2010). Moreover, the square root of the AVE values were higher than the pair-wise inter-construct correlations and so the discriminant validity was achieved (Table 3) (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 3: Validity measure for the constructs

	CR	AVE	MSV	1	2	3	4
1. Purchase intention	0.924	0.753	0.319	0.868			
2. Novelty of the service	0.865	0.620	0.463	0.493	0.787		
3. Service evaluation	0.946	0.814	0.463	0.564	0.681	0.902	
4. Perceived luxury	0.813	0.522	0.341	0.511	0.584	0.581	0.723

Note: Figures in the diagonal (values given in bold) are the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE); those below the diagonal are the correlations between the constructs.

Structural model

A structural equation modelling analysis was conducted with the demographic variables of age, gender, income, and education as control variables. There is no impact of demographic variables on the evaluation of luxury seaplane services among Australian respondents. However, the evaluation is weaker among older Chinese respondents. Income has a significant

positive impact on purchase intention for both samples. Older respondents from Australian sample also demonstrated a stronger purchase intention. While controlling for the four demographic variables the model fit did not degrade: $\chi^2 = 444.96$, $df = 296$, $\chi^2/df = 1.50$, $RMSEA = 0.04$, $SRMR = 0.06$, $PClose = 0.98$, $CFI = 0.96$, and $TLI = 0.96$. According to the path analyses, H1 to H3 were supported (Table 4). To ensure that the findings are not affected by demographic variables, the structural model was tested with age, gender, occupation, and income as covariates. None of the covariates are significant, suggesting that the findings are not affected by these demographic variables (all p 's $> .05$).

Table 4: Summary of the hypothesis testing

		Relationship			β	P-value
Total (n=309)	H ₁	Perceived luxury	→	Service evaluation	.270	***
	H ₂	Novelty of the service	→	Service evaluation	.881	***
	H ₃	Service evaluation	→	Purchase intention	.497	***
Australia (n=155)	H ₁	Perceived luxury	→	Service evaluation	.220	.018
	H ₂	Novelty of the service	→	Service evaluation	.998	***
	H ₃	Service evaluation	→	Purchase intention	.365	***
China (n=154)	H ₁	Perceived luxury	→	Service evaluation	.311	***
	H ₂	Novelty of the service	→	Service evaluation	.809	***
	H ₃	Service evaluation	→	Purchase intention	.611	***

Invariance test

An invariance test was conducted to validate the research model and hypotheses (H₁ to H₃) across the two sub-samples (Australia: 155, China: 154). The relationships hypothesised in H₁ to H₃ were supported in both group of respondents (Table 4). The model level comparison did not show significant difference ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.71$, $\Delta df = 3$, $p = 0.08$) between two sub-samples. However, considering the $p < 0.10$ in the model level comparison, a path level comparison was undertaken across two sub-samples. The result showed that compared to the Australian sample,

the positive relationship between service evaluation and purchase intention (H_3) is stronger for China sample ($\Delta\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.01$).

Table 5: Moderating influence of self directedness and other directedness

Sample	Relationship	Path coefficient (β)		$\Delta\beta$	P-value for the difference	Result
		High self-directedness	Low self-directedness			
Australia	H_1	0.339*	0.081	0.259	0.182	H_1 is only significant for Australian respondents with high self-directedness. Thus, H_4 is supported.
China	H_1	0.368*	0.387**	-0.018	1.000	There is no difference.
Sample	Relationship	Path coefficient (β)		$\Delta\beta$	P-value for the difference	Result
		High other-directedness	Low other-directedness			
Australia	H_2	0.397*	0.618***	-0.221	0.682	There is no difference.
China	H_2	0.656***	0.358*	0.298	0.009	H_2 is stronger for Chinese respondents with high other-directedness. Thus, H_5 is supported.

Moderating effects

A multi-group analysis was employed to test the moderating influence of consumers' perceived self-directedness (H_4) and other directedness (H_5). At first, the median score (3.00) for perceived self-directedness was calculated for the Australian sample. The sample was then divided into two groups: high values (>3.0) and low values (<3.0) for the construct. Next, the research model was run for the Australian sample with the aforementioned two sub-groups. The path level comparison showed that the positive relationship between perceived luxury and service evaluation is only significant for the Australian respondents with high perceived self-directedness ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, H_4 is supported.

The same procedure was followed to test the moderating influence as postulated in H₅. The Chinese respondents were divided into two subsamples, high and low in perceived other directedness, based on the calculated median score of 3.67. After running the model, the path level comparison revealed that the positive relationship between novelty of the service and service evaluation is stronger for the Chinese respondents with high perceived other-directedness ($\Delta\chi^2 = 0.30$, $p = 0.009$). Thus, H₅ is supported. Notably, the relationship between novelty of the service and service evaluation remain significant for Chinese respondents with low perceived other-directedness, suggesting that other-directedness may enhance the effect of novelty on service evaluation but such an effect does not depend on consumers' other-directedness.

Although not postulated as hypotheses, this research further examined: (a) the moderating influence of perceived self-directedness on the positive relationship between perceived luxury and service evaluation for Chinese sample, and (b) the moderating influence of perceived other-directedness on the positive relationship between novelty of the service and service evaluation for Australian sample. In both cases, the moderating influence was non-significant. A result summary of the hypothesised relationships is presented in Table 5.

Discussion

This research examines the role of luxury perception and novelty on luxury seaplane service evaluation. In addition, the behavioural intention and moderating influence of self-/other-directedness are tested. The findings show that consumers' perceived luxury and novelty of the service positively influence the evaluation of luxury seaplane services. The findings have been validated across Australian and Chinese respondents. The luxury seaplane services are perceived as expensive, exclusive and provide emotional gratifications to the tourists which in

turn generate the hedonic desire to experience the service. The conspicuousness of the seaplane services is reflected through the superior quality and exquisiteness in value offerings that are expected to provide a stunning and memorable tourist experience. The feeling of prestige also provides an emotional well-being perception to the travellers (Ahn et al., 2015).

Although there have not been any past studies on the luxury seaplane services, the findings support the theoretical expectations and empirical findings in past studies conducted within luxury branding context (e.g., Ko et al., 2016; Phau and Pendergast; Vigeneron and Johnson, 2004). In particular, the notion that luxury services maintain the feeling of prestige and uniqueness to generate a positive and favourable assessment from the consumers has been reinforced. This notion has been evident in this research that luxury seaplane services are not only exclusive but also have the novel traits that influence the tourist behaviour. This research further validates the positive relationship between service evaluation and purchase intention. The notion of forming positive attitude and showing willingness to experience a service has been well-argued in past literature underpinned by the Theory of Reasoned Action (Sheppard et al., 1998). Noteworthy, the positive relationship between service evaluation and purchase intention is stronger for the Chinese sample than the Australian sample. This perhaps explains the Chinese consumers' psychological desire to explore the luxury seaplane services in an international travel context. This finding also relates to the Chinese consumers' face consciousness and extravagant tendencies while traveling overseas (Lu et al., 2016; Mok and Defranco, 1999).

The findings further show that the positive relationship between perceived novelty of the service and service evaluation is stronger for the consumers with a higher level of perceived other directedness. This research argues that the novelty of a seaplane service is related to the

consumers' level of unfamiliarity and high arousal point. Chinese consumers, belonging to a collectivist society, are more concerned about their desirable social representations (Hofstede, 1980; Lin et al., 2013; Sabiote-Ortiz et al., 2016). In particular, within the context of luxury consumption, Chinese consumers tend to value the display of consumption experience to other people (see Aliyev and Wagner, 2018 for a review). Therefore, the consumers who have a higher degree of other directedness form a positive attitude toward the luxury seaplanes because of the related novelty in the service. Similar to the context of luxury seaplane services, other past studies have shown that consumers are willing to be noticed by others while visiting a conspicuous destination (Sirgy and Su, 2000; Correia et al., 2016; Phillips and Back, 2011). On the other hand, Australian consumers, belonging to an individualistic society, are more concerned about their inner feelings than the public display (Hofstede, 1980; Lin et al., 2013; Sabiote-Ortiz et al., 2016). In line with this theoretical expectation, this research finds that the positive relationship between perceived luxury and luxury seaplane evaluation is only significant for the Australian consumers with a higher level of perceived inner self-directedness. Another plausible explanation of this finding could be that the Australian consumers with a high level of status value prioritise inner gratification and they do not worry much about displaying conspicuous luxury seaplane experience to others (Dubois and Czellar, 2002).

Conclusions and Implications

To the researchers' best knowledge this is the first study to assess the tourist behaviour within the context of luxury seaplane services. In particular, two key selling points of luxury seaplane services (i.e., perceived luxury and novelty of the service) are identified in this research. Conceptually, the study validates the luxury antecedents of perceived luxury and novelty that affect consumer perceptions, evaluation and purchase intention toward a unique luxury service namely seaplanes. The results clearly show that unique luxury services are driven by the

perception of luxury as well as the novelty of the service. This also extends the literature on special interest tourism by showing that perceived luxuriousness and novelty are key motivator for the consumption of special interest tourism experience such as luxury seaplane services. More importantly, a positive attitude and the willingness to experience the luxury service are key motivations for both tourists and locals, as underpinned by the theory of reasoned action. Theoretically, the study extends existing socio-psychological theories and theoretical frameworks in order to better understand the underlying consumer psychology and motivation toward luxury services within the context of tourism recreation as well as special interest tourism.

Our findings also address the recent calls for more research on the cultural differences in luxury service consumption (e.g., Zhang et al., 2021). Extending the current literature, our findings demonstrate a clear cultural difference on how perceived luxury and novelty of the service motivate luxury service consumption for Chinese and Australian tourists. This also provide significant implications to the emerging industry of special interest tourism, whereby cultural differences in tourists' motivation have been proposed but have not been empirically tested (e.g., Wen & Wu, 2020). To our knowledge, this is the first study to show that Chinese (Australian) tourists' evaluation and intention toward luxury service consumption, an arguably niche and special interest tourism experience, is driven by perceived luxury (novelty). Most importantly, the current research also pinpointed self-directedness as a psychological mechanism that underlie this cultural difference. Existing research has shown that tourists from collectivist (individualistic) society tends to consume luxury products or services due to the desire for self-presentation (self-expression) and public display (uniqueness) (e.g., Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Lin et al., 2013; Li and Shu, 2007; Sabiote-Ortiz et al., 2016; Shukla and Purani, 2012). Many studies have proposed the concept of self as an important driver of these

cultural difference, but limited research has empirically demonstrated the role of self-directed constructs. Our finding may therefore provide a unique and interesting theoretical basis to explore how self- and other-directedness may act as a salient mechanism that propel cultural difference in the consumption of luxury service.

The self-concept theory (Singelis, 1994) revealed the importance of consumer's self-construal such as self- and other-directedness motivation to engage with a novel luxury service, while Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension framework confirmed that the appeal of 'novelty' within luxury service context is not universal, and likely to vary across cross cultural conditions. For example, the results show that the novelty appeal of luxury seaplane service has a positive effect on service evaluation, apart from Australian tourists who have a low level of self-directedness. Furthermore, the study finds that unique and novel luxury services are deemed highly prevalent and sought after by Chinese consumers mainly due to cultural and personal differences (e.g., belonging to a collectivist and restrained society, are more concern about their desirable social representations). Taken together, the findings of this study contribute to the conceptual development of personal and cultural differences within recreation literature.

Moreover, testing the moderating influence of consumers' perceived self-directedness and other-directedness provides rigour into the analysis. Specifically, the moderation analysis allows us to examine the boundary conditions of the novelty and luxury effects on consumers' service evaluation and compare consumers from two different countries. To our knowledge, this is the also the first study to demonstrate that cultural differences and self-directness may qualify the effect of novelty and luxury on the consumption of luxury services. This provides an unique theoretical basis for future studies to explore how other cultural dimensions and self-related constructs may serve as boundary conditions for the effect of luxury service attributes

on motivation, intention, and consumption. Taken together, the research framework tested in this paper provides a better understanding of the consumers' assessment of luxury services and provide further insights from a cultural perspective toward the premiumisation of existing as well as the design of novel luxury service.

Managerially, luxury seaplane service providers can benefit from this research in several ways. First, it is important to ensure the luxury characteristics of the service. The luxuriousness, craftsmanship, sophistication and superiority of the service should be reflected in the advertising and communication materials of the service. For instance, Swan River Seaplanes in Western Australia promises that “Whether you are a solo traveller, a couple or a group, our engaging all-inclusive day tours can take you to Western Australia’s most incredible places in a quick, convenient and thrilling way! Exclusive and interactive, you will enjoy a captivating experience from the moment you step out of your hotel and embark on a tour of a lifetime!” (Swan River Seaplanes, 2020). This value proposition attracts the potential tourist to explore a memorable travel experience.

The novelty of the service can also be capitalised on the basis of the geographic and naturalistic sights in which the seaplanes range their operation. This will also help to identify the market segments that are interested in particular activities. For example, Southern Seaplane in the USA offers ‘seaplane fishing’ through which tourists can experience the day long surf fishing in Louisiana barrier (Clatworthy, 2018). The seaplane service providers in Western Australia may emphasise on the distinct aspects of the state’s natural sights (e.g., river, winery, islands) and communicate the scenic beauty through advertising and other promotional materials. On the other hand, Maldives’ seaplane operator Trans Maldivian Airways target the tourists who are primarily sun seekers, divers, snorkelers, and those in pursuit of tranquil spa retreats. However,

most of these seaplane services function as non-luxury, ordinary ‘air taxis’ to travel between islands, airports, and resorts (Transmaldivian, 2019). Thus, novelty may be added to elevate the perceived value and luxuriousness of these seaplane services.

This research also suggests that Chinese consumers’ perceived other directedness influences the relationship between novelty and evaluation of the service. In this regard, seaplane service provider may consider including augmented services to enhance the Chinese consumer satisfaction. For example, in addition to photoshoot services, there might be options for live broadcasting into the social media while consumers are flying on seaplanes. The service provider may also provide the travellers with short video clippings of their journey. These evidence of memory moments will work as the catalysts in fulfilling the consumers’ need for social status and desired public representations. Beyond luxury seaplane services, our findings may also inform the design of special interest tourism products and experiences. In fact, much research on special interest tourism is focused on cultural, food, and even dark tourism (see Wen and Wu, 2020). Very little research consider niche markets within the luxury tourist segments. The insights generated from this research therefore highlights the importance of luxuriousness, novelty, and cultural differences when designing luxury special interest tourism products and experiences. For instance, the same learning can be applied to the emerging tourism trends on luxury outback tours, private and luxury cultural walks, glamping, astro-tourism or space tourism.

Limitations and Future Research

There are few limitations of this research that might be addressed in future studies. First, this research examines the role of perceived luxury and novelty on the service evaluation. However, consumers’ perceived value, knowledge, materialism and status seeking might have strong

influence on the evaluation of luxury seaplane services. Second, luxury products and services often relate to the consumers' need for uniqueness. This personality trait might have moderating role in between the service evaluation and behavioural intention. Future research may examine these constructs with the context of luxury seaplane services. Third, few seaplane crash incidents have recently made the travellers cautious about the safety of the service (e.g., Dole, 2018). Therefore, perceived risk and safety might be incorporated into the future research. Fourth, the current research conducted an online survey on relatively small sample size to examine the conceptual model in predicting consumers' attitude and intention toward luxury seaplane services. Future research can validate and extend the current findings by conducting empirical experiments on larger sample to enhance the generalisability of the findings and examine the effect of novelty and luxuriousness on Australian interstate and international tourists' actual behaviour. Finally, although back-translation has been used widely by researchers and still remains a commonly applied method in cross-cultural studies, recent research have highlighted its limitations (see Behr, 2017 for a review). It is important to note that the current research utilised a professional service for back-translation thus our findings may need to be interpreted with this potential limitation in mind.

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