

HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Creating the Authentic Chinese Hotel Experience: A Case Study of the SCHOTEL Brand

Student researcher: Yizhu (Bamboo) Liao, Senior

As the demand for hotels that reflect Chinese culture is growing, Chinese hoteliers are challenged to determine the best strategies to incorporate uniquely Chinese cultural elements into the hotel experience. The current research used semistructured interviews to examine the case of SCHOTEL hotels, a company that has incorporated Chinese cultural values into their products and overall brand. It was found that to effectively project Chinese culture, hoteliers must manage a combination of tangible and intangible elements. While tangible elements include color, structure, and décor/decorations, intangible elements contain music, smell, and service. In order to deliver a cultural experience to hotel guests, hoteliers should give the “multisensory” experience: sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch. To ensure the human dimension of the Chinese cultural experience in each hotel is achieved, SCHOTEL has developed a corporate culture that incorporates Chinese cultural values and applies a well-structured employee training system. Customer surveys are undertaken to ensure guests perceive the Chinese cultural image that hotels want to project.

The study identified four steps of developing a Chinese cultural hotel. The first step is to identify what kind of culture the hotel wants to express—culture positioning. The second step is to decide what product the hotel will offer to express the culture—product positioning. The third step is to identify the effective way to differentiate the service system—service positioning. The fourth step is to develop a strong employee training system to teach employees how

to convey the Chinese culture through daily interaction with guests—training positioning. A focus on traditional culture does not mean that hoteliers can ignore trends and changing expectations. With constant changes in the hospitality industry, hoteliers must adapt to change, even while maintaining their focus on traditional Chinese cultural values.

Research advisor Jonathon Day writes: “Yizhu’s research explores an important trend in Chinese hospitality. Chinese consumers are becoming more sophisticated in their hospitality service expectations. At the same time, they are adopting local brands and seeking authentic culturally authentic hospitality experiences. Yizhu’s research shows how hotel companies can meet these new demands.”



The author experiencing Chinese culture through writing Chinese calligraphy at a SCHOTEL hotel balcony.