Luxury Strategies in Hotel Websites in Japan: Move Analysis of overview texts of hotels’ websites

# 1. Introduction

Hotels nowadays have a variety of online distribution channels to communicate with (potential) customers. These channels can be described as “virtual sales offices” (Civak et al., 2017, p. 210) and categorized into direct channels such as hotel websites and social media, or mediated channels such as online travel agencies and global distribution systems (Civak et al., 2017). While social media have developed in recent years as a channel for hotels to appeal directly to customers, hotelier still believes that the website is the most important marketing tool surpassing social media and other channels (GuestCentric, 2021). Hotel websites are “critical in the development of trusting relationships with customers” (Wang et al., 2015, p. 108), and thus they are not merely a sales office online but virtually serves as “a face of the brand” (Som & Blanckaert, 2015) and their hotel experience could start even when they communicate with the hotel on the web. In other words, hotel websites are an official channel for information, communication, and advertising, which not only encourage online bookings, but also plays an important role in maintaining the hotel's image on the web.

Studies on hotel websites have become specialized in areas such as online booking intension (Wang et al., 2015; Emir et al., 2016; Li et al., 2017; Ghazali et al., 2021), website quality (Law & Cheung, 2006; Choi et al., 2007; Chang et al., 2014), marketing activities (Li et al., 2015), and users’ purchase intention and attitude (Kim et al., 2006; Li et al., 2015); however, only a few studies focused on the texts on the website in terms of language use and discourse structures. A hotel website usually has a short summary of the hotel (hotel overview) on the top page to attract readers which can be a great source for investigation especially for luxury hotels. This is because even in this multimedia age, luxury hotels usually have their own elaborately designed websites and almost never fail to display short but ingenious overview texts in a prominent place on the top page.

Figure 1 shows the top page of Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Marunouchi website as a typical example of a top page displaying a title and menu bar on top, a large image in the middle followed by an overview of the hotel. In this and many other examples, images take up a large portion of the web page, and indeed images play a critical role in consumer’s decision making on the website (Jeong, & Choi, 2005; Pan et al., 2013). However, this is not to say that images are superior to texts in terms of appealing to customers. Some studies showed that web’s capability of displaying both texts and images including movies was a key to success (Jeong, & Choi, 2005), and another showed people spent more time and effort reading texts when images were present on websites (Pan et al., 2013).



Figure 1 An example of a hotel overview on the top page of a hotel website (Retrieved September, 2021)

Kondo (2018a) investigated the linguistic strategies in hotel overviews of hotels in London to identify how luxury hotels appeal to the readers of the websites. A typical discourse structure was identified, and by comparing linguistic strategies adopted by higher-grade hotels with those adopted by lower-grade hotels, Kondo (2018a) discovered that higher-grade hotels used luxury strategies in their overviews. However, to examine whether the results obtained in the previous study are exclusive to hotels in London or whether they can be applied to hotels in other areas, overviews of hotels in other areas should also be analyzed. This study analyses overviews of luxury hotels located in Japan and aims to verify five hypotheses formulated in Kondo (2018a). This will allow us to examine whether the luxury strategies found in London hotel overviews is universal or unique as well as to explore whether there is a unique luxury strategy in the overviews of hotels in Japan.

# 2. Literature review: Hotel overviews on websites as a genre

This study examines hotel overviews on websites as a genre adopting a genre analysis approach by Swales (1990) and later by Bhatia (1993). Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) define a genre as a communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes which are recognized by members of the discourse community. The concept of genre has had a great influence on discourse analysis or ESP practice (Hyland, 2015). Variety of discourse analyses have been conducted in particular for academic genres such as research articles (e.g., Swales, 1990; Swales, 2004; Moreno & Swales, 2018) and personal statements (e.g., Ding, 2007; Chiu, 2015) and professional genres such as sales promotional letters (e.g., Zhu, 2010) and CSR reports (e.g., Yu & Bondi, 2017).

Although hotel overviews are different in that the discourse community is not constituted of “expert members” nor “members of the professional or academic community,” they have some features of promotional genres: “capturing the attention of the potential customer,” “offering and appraising the product or service in terms of the perceived interests, needs, or inhibitions of the potential customer,” and also “must be short and effective” (Bhatia, 1993, p. 46).

Bhatia (1993) applied Swales’ (1990) CARS model and developed a move structure for the promotional genre and proposed a move structure of advertisement (Bhatia, 2004; 2005). The move structure in advertisement proposed by Bhatia (2004) has been further applied in other studies. Some of them have similar move structures, such as tourism brochures (Luo & Huang, 2015), while other promotional genres, such as corporate and social responsibility reports (Bhatia, 2013), and press releases (Catenaccio, 2008), are considered to be “mixed” or “hybrid” genres, and move analyses were conducted with careful investigations.

There are several genre-based studies of hotel-related advertisements, including Bhatia (2004), Labrador et al. (2014), Luo and Huang (2015), Yaemwannang and Pramoolsook (2018), Kondo (2018a), and Kondo (2018b). Bhatia (2004) analyzed printed hotel advertisements and demonstrated the application of move analysis in advertisements. Labrador et al. (2014) compared 100 advertisements of small electronic devices in English and Spanish to find persuasive language. Vliet and Redeker (2014) analyzed 20 advertisements in magazines and modified Bhatia’s (2005) move structure model in advertisements. Luo and Huang (2015) conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses of 35 American tourism brochures and developed a specific generic structural model for tourism brochures. They found strategies implemented in each move that shaped the destination’s image. They combined move analysis and the publicity of tourism destination images to propose improvements in brochure writing. These studies have shown that hotel advertisements can function as a promotional genre.

As for studies on hotel website advertising, Yaemwannang and Pramoolsook (2018) adopted Vliet and Redeker’s (2014) nine-move structure model to analyze the structure of hotel websites in Thailand and identified specific writing strategies. Kondo (2018a) examined the texts of 124 hotel overviews on the official websites of 3–5-star hotels in London and identified the move structure. Further analyses showed differences between lower-grade and higher-grade hotels in strategies to appeal to their potential customers. Kondo (2018a) discussed these differences were a result of the luxury strategy of “evoking exclusivity” and “creating abstractness” adopted by higher-grade hotels. Yaemwannang and Pramoolsook’s (2018) analyzed the structure of the content areas of the whole homepage including images and logos, while Kondo (2018a) examined only the overview section provided on the top-level pages. As a result, Yaemwannang and Pramoolsook’s (2018) found a wide scope of strategies; for example, their strategy for “Move 1: Get attention” is to have an outstanding headline in a big and bold font and to use visual images to capture the reader’s interest. These strategies are related more to an effective website design. On the other hand, Kondo (2018a) focuses solely on texts and found strategies of conveying luxury. These studies show that the study of the language of hotel websites can expand beyond its application to writing and design, to how hotel websites can be used as a virtual communication channel to convey luxury online.

## Five Hypotheses

Hotel overviews in the English language on the websites of luxury hotels in Japan:

1. Have a similar organization to those found in the overviews of hotels in London which are composed of Move 1: Defining self, Move 2: Establishing features, and Move 3: Establishing connections. Move 1 and Move 2 have much higher implementation rates compared with the implementation rate of Move 3.
2. Use the luxury strategy of “evoking exclusivity” by not directly addressing or inviting readers. Therefore, the implementation rate of Move 3 is lower than that of the other moves.
3. Use the luxury strategy of “creating abstractness” by using abstract expressions in the core of the sentence and state concrete information in modifying phrases or clauses. Therefore, luxury hotels mention specific information on their facilities and location in the modifying phrases or clauses of Move 1, which makes Move 2 not compulsory, even though information on their facilities and locations are almost inevitable for overviews of lower-grade hotels.
4. Use abstract expressions that include “dream value” by using Move 2: Step 1: History/architecture.
5. Have a luxury strategy unique to hotels in Japan.

# 3. Procedures

Two sets of corpora were analyzed for this study: one was a collection of hotel overviews on the website of luxury hotels in London adapted from Kondo (2018a) and the other one was that of luxury hotels in Japan. The latter was the main effort of this study; the data was collected, refined, and tagged with Moves and Steps based on the Move structure developed in Kondo (2018a).

## 3. 1. Corpus 1: *London AA* (hotel overviews of luxury hotels in London)

Kondo (2018a) composed a corpus of 124 overviews on the official websites of 3-star to 5-star hotels in London selected by The AA Hotel Guide 2016 (AA Publishing, 2015), collected between March and April, 2017. Overview texts were defined as those texts containing general remarks about the hotel that were usually posted on the top-level page as shown in Figure 1. Titles or headings were also analyzed, if present. A hotel overview contained its hotel name at least once in most cases. As hotel names might affect the results of analyses, all hotel names in the corpus were replaced with “HOTELNAME.” To explore the strategies used by luxury hotels in this study, only the overviews of 5-star hotels, which were defined as luxury hotels by The AA Hotel Guide, were used in this study. This corpus was named *London AA*.

## 3. 2. Corpus 2: *Japan Forbes* (hotel overviews of luxury hotels in Japan)

As there is no such standard as The AA Hotel Guide’s rating that defines a luxury hotel in Japan, Forbes Star Award was used to refer to identify hotels equivalent to luxury hotels. Forbes Travel Guide annually makes a list of 5-star, 4-star, and Recommended hotels using a proprietary algorithm focusing on graciousness, thoughtfulness, and a sense of personalized service (Kester, 2017). Their expert inspectors anonymously evaluate properties against up to 800 objective standards (Kester, 2017). Compared to the rating standards of The AA Hotel Guide, which has been widely accepted in the UK, Forbes Travel Guide gives stars to a much smaller number of hotels. Taking this into consideration, this study regarded all the 5-star, 4-star, and Recommended hotels by Forbes Travel Guide as “luxury hotels” equivalent to the top 5-star hotels by The AA Hotel Guide.

Overview texts on the websites of 2018 Forbes Star Award Winners[[1]](#footnote-1) for Japan were collected from hotel websites including hotels located in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Hokkaido, and Okinawa in May 2018, and the corpus was compiled using the same procedure in Kondo (2018a). The number of hotels chosen as the winners was 29, but one of them that did not have an overview was excluded from the corpus; therefore, the number of the overviews in the corpus was 28 in total. This corpus was named *Japan Forbes* in this study. Table 1 shows general information about *London AA* and *Japan Forbes*.

Table 1 General Information about *London AA* and *Japan Forbes*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Corpus | Number of Hotels | Tokens | Average Tokens | Minimum Tokens | Maximum Tokens |
| London AA | 47 | 6289 | 132.55 | 21 | 348 |
| Japan Forbes | 28 | 2789 | 100.00 | 18 | 336 |

## 3. 3. Methods

First, moves and steps developed by Kondo (2018a) (shown in ) were assigned to *Japan Forbes* according to the communicative purposes of each sentence. When more than one communicative purpose was found in a sentence, the purpose in the core of the sentence or the main clause of the sentence was prioritized. Steps were assigned when there were sub-divisions of a certain move.

Table 2 Moves and Steps (Kondo 2018a)

|  |
| --- |
| Moves and Steps |
| *Move 0:* | *Headings* |
| *Move 1:* | *Defining self* |
| *Move 2:* | *Establishing features* |
|  *Step 1: History/architecture* |
|  *Step 2: Location* |
|  *Step 3: Facilities* |
| *Move 3:* | *Establishing connections* |

Results of move frequencies and implementation were compared with those of *London AA* to see whether hotel overviews of hotels in Japan had a similar move structure to London hotel overviews. The implementation rates were also examined to identify luxury strategies adopted in the Japan hotel overviews.

After moves and steps were assigned, keywords were derived according to the value of log-likelihood using CasualConc[[2]](#footnote-2). The BE06 corpus[[3]](#footnote-3) and each corpus (e.g., *London AA* as a reference for *Japan Forbes*) were used as a reference corpus.

Finally, qualitative analysis was conducted to confirm luxury strategies used for London hotel overviews as well as further discover luxury strategies unique to hotel overviews of hotels in Japan and to find what contributes to the uniqueness.

# 4. Results

## 4. 1. Move Frequencies and Implementation Rates

Move frequencies and implementation rates of *Japan Forbes* are shown in Table 3 The move with the highest implementation rate was *Move 1: Defining self* (82.1%), followed by *Move 2: Establishing features* (71.4%). It was common for hotel overviews to define their hotels and establish their features such as location, facilities, or history/architecture. *Move 3: Establishing connections* had the lowest implementation rate (53.6%) and was found not to be as common a move.

Table 3 Move Frequencies and Implementation Rates of *Japan Forbes*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total number of overviews | 28 |
| Number of overviews that have *Move 1: Defining self* | 23 (82.1%) |
| Number of overviews that have *Move 2: Establishing features* | 20 (71.4%) |
| Number of overviews that have *Move 3: Establishing connections* | 15 (53.6%) |

Moves usually appeared in the order of *Move 1*, *Move 2*, and *Move 3*. Eighteen overviews out of 28 started with *Move 1*, two overviews with *Move 2*, and the remaining eight overviews with *Move 3*. Similarly, six overviews ended with *Move 1*, 12 with *Move 2*, and the remaining 10 overviews with *Move 3*. Table 4 shows an example of the overview that contains all moves. In this example, *Move 1* was used once before *Move 2* and then one more time after *Move 2*. As this example shows, in most cases, moves occurred in the order of *Move 1*, *Move* 2, and *Move 3*, and some of the moves occurred repeatedly.

Table 4 Example of a Hotel Overview Containing All Moves in *Japan Forbes*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Move | Texts |
| *Move 1:**Defining self* | Luxury Lifestyle Hotel in the Center of Tokyo |
| *Move 2:* *Step 2: Location* | HOTELNAME is located between Tokyo Tower and the Imperial Palace, offering easy access to key locations, including the Ginza shopping district, Tokyo Station and various cultural attractions. |
| *Move 1:**Defining self* | Meaning “personal style” in Hindi, HOTELNAME is deeply rooted in local culture and history. |
| *Move 3:**Establishing connections* | We are committed to providing an unscripted, Japanese-inspired experience that will help our guests feel truly connected to the heart and soul of Tokyo. |

Table 5 shows an example that contains *Move 2* and *Move 3* only. As this example shows, *Move 3* was the second most common starting move. Five overviews in this analysis consisted of only one move, an example of which was shown in Table 6. In this overview, although *Move 2: Step 1: History/architecture* was assigned to this sentence, it also mentioned the hotel’s location (*Tokyo*) and facilities (*award-winning cuisine*). As this example shows, and also as was the case with the London hotel overviews, a sentence sometimes had several different purposes, though only one move was assigned to each sentence based on the purpose that characterized the core of the sentence.

Table 5 Example of a Hotel Overview Containing *Move 2* and *Move 3*in *Japan Forbes*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Move | Texts |
| *Move 3:**Establishing connections* | Welcome to HOTELNAME, a luxury garden oasis in the heart of Tokyo. |
| *Move 2:* *Step 1: History/architecture* | Our gardens were formally established in 1861, in what we called the Meiji era, but it is said this area was already appreciated as beautiful camellia hills with a long history dating back some 700 years. |
| *Move 3:**Establishing connections* | You can relax in your room overlooking our vast Japanese garden. We hope you will experience the best of Japanese hospitality. |

Table 6 Example of a Hotel Overview Containing *Move 2* Only in *Japan Forbes*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Move | Texts |
| *Move 2:* *Step 1: History/architecture* | This legendary Tokyo landmark has welcomed royalty, heads of state, celebrities and international business leaders for over 120 years, offering discreet, highly personalized services, restrained elegance, award-winning cuisine and refined, impeccable Japanese hospitality. |

Figure 1 shows the comparison of the move implementation rates of *Japan Forbes* with *London AA*. As this comparison indicates, the tendencies are similar. *Move 2* followed by *Move 1* were two important moves for hotel overviews, while *Move 3* was more of an elective move. Kondo (2018a) found that the implementation rates of *Move 3* in *London AA* were much higher by lower-grade hotels as compared to 5-star hotels and discussed not establishing connection was one of the strategies to create luxury. This strategy was found to be commonly used by luxury hotels in both Japan and London.

Figure 2 Move Implementation Rates of *Japan Forbes* and *London AA*

*Move 2: Establishing features* was the only move that had steps, and the implementation rates of each step were different as shown in Table 7 and Figure 3. The step with the highest implementation rate was *Step 3: Facilities* (50.0 %), followed by *Step 2: Location* (39.3%). *Step 1: History/architecture* (21.4%) was found to be far less common.

Table 7 Implementation Rate of Steps in *Move 2* of *Japan Forbes*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of overviews | 28 |
| Number of overviews that have *Step 1: History/architecture* | 6 (21.4%) |
| Number of overviews that have *Step 2: Location* | 11 (39.3%) |
| Number of overviews that have *Step 3: Facilities* | 14 (50.0%) |

Figure 3 shows the comparison of the implementation rates of each step in *Move 2* of *Japan Forbes* with *London AA*. Same as with the move implementation mentioned above, the tendency of the implementation of steps in both corpora was similar. *Step 3* was the most frequent step in both corpora and was implemented by 50.0% by *Japan Forbes* and 66.0 % by *London AA* and, followed by *Step 2*, which was implemented 39.3% in *Japan Forbes* and 53.2% in *London AA*. *Step 1* was the least common step in both corpora, implemented 21.4% in *Japan Forbes* and 29.8% in *London AA*.

Kondo (2018a) found the implementation rates of both *Step 2* and *Step 3* in lower-grade hotels in London were much higher, more than 70% in both 3-star and 4-star hotels. Considering this, for luxury hotels, which feature they describe in *Move 2: Establishing feature*, whether it be location, history, or facilities, is more elective than it is for lower-grade hotels.

Figure 3 Implementation Rates of Steps in *Move 2* of *Japan Forbes* and *London AA*

## 4. 2. Keywords

To compare the characteristics of the words uniquely used in each corpus, keywords were derived from *Japan Forbes* and *London AA* using BE06 as a reference corpus and shown in Table 8. The results of *Japan Forbes* and *London AA* were similar in that both contained words related to hotels and the hotels’ facilities: *HOTELNAME*, *hotel*, and *spa*. *Dine* in *Japan Forbes* and *cuisine* in *London AA* were also related to dining facilities of the hotels. Words indicating locations were *Tokyo*, *Japan*, and *Ginza* for Japan, and *London*, *Mayfair*, and *Hyde* [*Park*] for London. Words referring to qualities were *luxury* and *5-star*. For others, *guest* was observed in both corpora. Words only seen in *Japan Forbes* were *hospitality*, *offer*, *your*, and *enjoy*, while those unique to *London AA* were *suite*, *room*, and *bar*. This suggests that the focus of hotels in Japan was more on “hotel/guests-do-what” and the focus of hotels in London, more on “hotel-has-what.”

Table 8 Keywords of *Japan Forbes* and *London AA* (BE06 as a Reference Corpus)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Japan Forbes* | *London AA* |
|  | Keywords | Log-likelihood | Freq. | Keywords | Log-likelihood | Freq. |
| 1 | HOTELNAME | 543.07 | 46 | HOTELNAME | 1249.06 | 121 |
| 2 | hotel | 288.13 | 41 | hotel | 727.20 | 103 |
| 3 | Tokyo | 261.98 | 26 | London | 533.44 | 104 |
| 4 | luxury | 208.16 | 24 | luxury | 521.98 | 62 |
| 5 | Japanese | 134.23 | 15 | suite | 359.86 | 40 |
| 6 | Japan | 123.91 | 14 | Mayfair | 270.10 | 27 |
| 7 | guest | 93.55 | 13 | 5-star | 227.10 | 22 |
| 8 | spa | 90.23 | 9 | guest | 195.30 | 28 |
| 9 | hospitality | 77.64 | 9 | spa | 164.99 | 18 |
| 10 | offer | 70.77 | 18 | room | 140.37 | 38 |
| 11 | dine | 69.02 | 9 | cuisine | 137.18 | 14 |
| 12 | 5-star | 59.03 | 5 | luxurious | 127.40 | 15 |
| 13 | Ginza | 59.03 | 5 | bar | 122.67 | 27 |
| 14 | your | 58.53 | 26 | dine | 122.32 | 17 |
| 15 | enjoy | 57.39 | 12 | Hyde \* | 120.15 | 14 |

\* *Hyde* was always used in the proper noun *Hyde Park*.

Keywords using each corpus as a reference corpus, *London AA* as a reference corpus for *Japan Forbes* and vice versa, are shown in Table 9. The result shows the words used uniquely in one corpus and not as uniquely in the other; therefore, these words will be the keys to revealing the different attractions of the hotel or hotel experience to be mentioned in the overviews in each corpus. The keywords are mostly proper nouns indicating a name of a place or a landmark, examples of which were *Tokyo*, *London*, [*the*] *Imperial* [*Palace*], and *West* [*End*]. *Japanese* and *British* shows that the style of the country is one commonly used attraction. This can be because hotels are often used by visitors from another country. The word *country* in *Japan Forbes* was used for the same purpose.

Table 9 Keywords of *Japan Forbes* and *London AA* (*Japan Forbes* and *London AA* as a Reference Corpus)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Japan Forbes* | *London AA* |
|  | Keywords | Log-likelihood | Freq. | Keywords | Log-likelihood | Freq. |
| 1 | Tokyo | 58.93 | 26 | London | 80.84 | 104 |
| 2 | Japanese | 34.00 | 15 | Mayfair | 20.99 | 27 |
| 3 | Japan | 31.73 | 14 | star | 17.10 | 22 |
| 4 | hospitality | 14.67 | 9 | suite | 13.35 | 40 |
| 5 | station | 13.41 | 10 | British | 13.21 | 17 |
| 6 | Ginza | 11.33 | 5 | park \*2 | 12.52 | 24 |
| 7 | nature | 11.33 | 5 | Hyde \*3 | 10.88 | 14 |
| 8 | culture | 10.61 | 7 | tea | 10.88 | 14 |
| 9 | island | 9.07 | 4 | English | 10.88 | 14 |
| 10 | lifestyle | 9.07 | 4 | afternoon | 10.10 | 13 |
| 11 | Marunouchi | 9.07 | 4 | private | 10.10 | 13 |
| 12 | Osaka | 9.07 | 4 | Knightsbridge | 9.33 | 12 |
| 13 | Imperial \*1 | 8.63 | 6 | end \*4 | 9.33 | 12 |
| 14 | your | 8.35 | 26 | street \*5 | 7.10 | 16 |
| 15 | again | 6.80 | 3 | classic | 7.00 | 9 |

\*1 *Imperial* was always used in the proper noun *the Imperial Palace*.

\*2 *Park* was always used in a proper noun, such as *Hyde Park* and *the Royal Park*.

\*3 *Hyde* was always used in the proper noun *Hyde Park*.

\*4 Eleven out of 12 uses of *end* were in the proper noun *West End*.

\*5 *Street* was always used in a proper noun, such as *Bond Street* and *Oxford Street*.

Distinctive keywords for *Japan Forbes* were *hospitality, nature, culture, island, lifestyle, your,* and *again*. Hotels in Japan talk about the attraction of its country, including the nature and the culture as in (1), a sentence of *Move 1*. This example implies that the guests will enjoy an *enriching and indigenous* Japanese experience when they stay at the hotel that is inspired by *Japanese touches and culture*. This overview also mentions its specific facilities, hotel rooms, but its focus is on what the hotel offers and therefore what the guests can enjoy. Example (2) is a sentence of *Move 3: Establishing connections*. In this sentence, *hospitality* is used twice, first from the guests’ perspective and then from the hotel’s perspective. The guests enjoy the refined hospitality offered by the hotel. The hotel offers an elegant environment and superior hospitality that guests will enjoy more than they have expected. Words and phrases used around *hospitality*, such as “*sophisticated refinement,*” *“impeccably elegant environment,*” and“*superior,*” add a luxurious sense to this sentence without directly using the word *luxury*.

1. With an intimate collection of 39 guestrooms, including 6 specialty rooms, this retreat is inspired by traditional Japanese touches and culture offering a truly enriching and indigenous experience.
(*Move 1: Defining self*)
2. Our guests enjoy a hospitality of sophisticated refinement that extends to every aspect of their lifestyle, HOTELNAME offers an impeccably elegant environment and superior hospitality to exceed the expectations of the modern traveler, be it for business or pleasure.
(*Move 3: Establishing connections*)

Distinctive keywords for *London AA* are *star, suite, tea, afternoon,* and *private*. The word *star* is mostly used in the phrase of “*five-star*” or “*Michelin starred”*[[4]](#footnote-4). The words *tea* and *afternoon* are mostly combined together to be *afternoon tea*, which is a typical British food tradition. As (3) and (4) show, these sentences from hotels in London focus on “hotel-has-what” and express how high quality it is. The phrase “*Afternoon Tea*” in (3) is described as “*award winning*” and “*the perfect way to enjoy a leisurely afternoon*.” The word *suites* in (4) is described as “*breathtaking*” and to “*fuse comfort, stylish design and the latest innovation*.” From these, guests can imagine what the hotel has for them is of the highest in quality. As in (5), hotels and the hotel’s features are modified with various adjectives or adjectival phrases. In this case, “*hideaway*” represents the hotel, and it was modified with “*five-star intimate* *private*” to convince the readers how luxurious the hotel is. The hotel’s features are also described as high quality as in “*exceptional levels of comfort.*” The phrase “*private butler*” is something more than an ordinary butler, and “*staff who outnumber guests two to one*” can be something beyond necessity. As these example sentences show, distinctive keywords for *London AA* are found in *Move 2*: *Establishing features*. By describing the high quality of the features, or “hotel-has-what,” overviews can add a sense of luxury.

1. Our award winning Afternoon Tea is the perfect way to enjoy a leisurely afternoon, and you can indulge in an array of delicious sandwiches, French pastries and freshly baked scones. (*Move 2: Step 3: Facilities*)
2. Breathtaking luxury hotel suites fuse comfort, stylish design and the latest innovations; Marcus Wareing offers two Michelin-starred dining; and a rooftop pool and luxury spa provide a retreat overlooking Hyde Park.
(*Move 2: Step 3: Facilities*)
3. This five-star intimate private hideaway in the heart of London comprises 30 luxurious rooms and suites with Savoir beds, exceptional levels of comfort, personal butler, 24 hour room service and staff who outnumber guests two to one. (*Move 2: Step 3: Facilities*)

# 5. Luxury Strategy in Overview Texts

In this section, the author conducts qualitative analysis to find out how hotels used luxury strategies of “evoking exclusivity” and “creating abstractness” by contrasting the results of *Japan Forbes* with those of *London AA* and also further examining sentences in the corpus.

## 5. 1. Evoking Exclusivity

The implementation rate of *Move 3* was 53.6%, not as high as the other moves; therefore, it is apparent that luxury hotels often skip this process of welcoming or greeting guests in the overview. Table 6 was an example of an overview consisting of *Move 2* only. In this overview, they do not use a specific expression to welcome guests. They mention their history, service, and facilities formed in their long history. They appeal to the readers by calling attention to their hospitality in the final part of the sentence: “*refined, impeccable Japanese hospitality*.” The services, facilities, and hospitality are for their “guests,” but the guests are not necessarily “you,” the readers of the website. This can serve to evoke exclusivity. In other words, for some hotels, the hotels should have attractive features, but they do not have to be available for everyone as they are exclusive, luxury hotels.

Sentences (6), (7), and (8) below are also an overview consisting of only one move, *Move 1*. In (6) and (7) this hotel defines itself as a “*top luxury hotel*,” “*an elegant oasis*,” and “*the ideal luxury destination*.” The word *luxury* is used in both sentences. *Elegant* (*elegance*) in (7) is the concept which was found that the concept of “luxury” concurrently had (Kondo, 2019). The phrase “*oasis of space and calm*” could be a metaphoric expression of the concept of “comfort”, which is another quality that luxury has (Kondo, 2019). By contrasting this oasis with “*the bustling city*,” the privacy, security, and calmness of the hotel room are accentuated. In this way, these first two sentences are filled with luxurious expressions, setting aside the specific information of the location and the facility. Example (8) provides more specific information about the hotel, mentioning “*14 floors of the 52-story tower*” and “*top class gourmet dining options*.” Nevertheless, specific information was put into modifying phrases, and the core of the sentence states abstract quality by mentioning that “*an unparalleled level of comfort and personalized service*.” The is the strategy of “creating abstractness” which will be discussed in the next section. These phrases express the highest quality, such as “*top luxury*,” “*ideal luxury destination*,” “*a 360 degree view*,” “*Mount Fuji*,” “*an unparalleled level of comfort*,” and “*top class gourmet dining options*,” implying that this hotel is not easily approachable. Without a link, or specific information about the hotel, or any connections between the readers and the hotel, this hotel does not sound available for many readers, which creates exclusivity, and accordingly “luxury.”

#### Example overview without *Move 3*

1. Top Luxury Hotel Located in the Heart of Shinjuku
(*Move 1: Defining self*)
2. An elegant oasis of space and calm, HOTELNAME is the ideal luxury destination in Tokyo where guests can enjoy a 360 degree view of the bustling city and Mount Fuji.
(*Move 1: Defining self*)
3. Occupying the top 14 floors of the 52-story tower, the hotel offers guests an unparalleled level of comfort and personalized service as well as top class gourmet dining options at the heart of the vibrant city. (*Move 1: Defining self*)

Even though the strategy of not using *Move 3: Establishing connections* has been discussed, half of the hotels implemented *Move 3*; therefore, there may be another way to express luxury with *Move 3* rather than simply not including it. As mentioned earlier, *Move 3* was mostly put at the end of an overview unless it was at the beginning. Table 5 was an example of an overview that begins and also ends with *Move 3*. The sentences of this overview are shown in (9), (10), (11), and (12) below as an example of an overview with *Move 3*:

#### Example overview with *Move 3*

1. Welcome to HOTELNAME, a luxury garden oasis in the heart of Tokyo. (*Move 3: Establishing connections*)
2. Our gardens were formally established in 1861, in what we called the Meiji era, but it is said this area was already appreciated as beautiful camellia hills with a long history dating back some 700 years.
(*Move 2: Step 1: History/architecture*)
3. You can relax in your room overlooking our vast Japanese garden. (*Move 3: Establishing connections*)
4. We hope you will experience the best of Japanese hospitality. (*Move 3: Establishing connections*)

In this overview, the hotel welcomes the readers in the first sentence (9), like they are actually welcoming guests at the hotel. Followed by the *HOTELNAME* is an appositive noun phrase to the hotel, “*a luxury garden oasis in the heart of Tokyo*.” Thus, in this sentence the hotel establishes connections with the readers by welcoming them, and at the same time, defines itself. In the second sentence (10), they introduce the history of their gardens*.* From this sentence, the readers will learn that the origin of this hotel was the “*camellia hills*,” which were appreciated from the early 14th century. The facts that their gardens had been appreciated for more than 700 years, and also that they reconstructed it after it had been destroyed in World War II and have preserved them since 1861[[5]](#footnote-5) are evidence of the hotel’s pride that reinforces their identity. Therefore, although *Move 2* was assigned to this sentence, it also expresses how their identity has been formed in the long history of Japan.

At the end of the overview, they again try to make connections with the readers. In (11), they use the second person pronoun “you” and describe what guests can do at the hotel. Contrasting with (6), (7), and (8), this approach lets the readers imagine that it should be “you,” the readers of the website, that can relax in the hotel room overlooking the garden. In (12), they conclude the overview by assuring the readers of the Japanese hospitality the hotel will offer when they visit the hotel.

This overview reflects the actual welcome happening at the hotel when the hotel staff welcome the guests to the hotel. Also, the *Move 3* sentences mentioned above play a role in reinforcing the hotel’s identity by establishing connections while defining itself as in (9) and presenting the creation in the history, *garden* in (11) and *hospitality* in (12). This “reinforcing identity” can be an approach that luxury hotels can use to attract potential guests.

## 5. 2. Creating Abstractness

Both in London AA and Forbes Japan, the implementation rate of *Move 2: Establishing features* was not high enough to be a compulsory move as it was in the case of lower-grade hotels in London AA. However, it was also found that it did not mean that the information about hotels’ features was not mentioned. It was mentioned in modifying clauses or phrases of the sentences in *Move 1: Defining self*.

Examples (6), (7), and (8) again, were the sentences comprising an overview that had *Move 1: Defining self* alone. However, by reading this overview, readers will also learn about the hotel’s features to some extent: it is located in the center of Shinjuku, it has a restaurant with a 360-degree view, and its rooms are located on the top 14 floors of a 52-story building. All these specific features are in the prepositional phrase for (6), in the relative clause for (7), and in the participle phrase for (8). Accordingly, this overview can convey information about their features without stating them in a separate sentence of *Move 2: Establishing features.*

By putting concrete information in a modifying phrase of *Move 1* and having the core of the sentence dedicated to defining the hotel using abstract expressions, the sentence as a whole can maintain abstractness without failing to put some specific information about the hotel. Examples (13) and (14) below are the example sentences of *Move 1* with modifying phrases that have specific information about the hotel’s features. (Modifying phrases are underlined by the author.) Both sentences have a participle phrase in the beginning starting with “*Located. . .”*

#### Example sentences of *Move 1: Defining self*

1. Located in the prestigious district of Nishi-Umeda, HOTELNAME pays tribute to Japanese cultural heritage, while lavishing guests with contemporary extravagance. (*Move 1: Defining self*)
2. Located along the famed street of Midosuji, also intimately known as the Champs Elysées of Osaka, HOTELNAME is the ideal abode for the discerning traveler. (*Move 1: Defining self*)

Example (13) describes an abstract concept to define the hotel by mentioning “*HOTELNAME pays tribute to Japanese heritage*,” and it also has information on the location, *Nishi-Umeda*, in the participle phrase at the beginning. Example (14) is another example sentence of *Move 1*. The overview does not have *Move 2: Step 2: Location*, but the specific street name, *Midosuji*, is stated in the participle phrase at the beginning. In the core of the sentence, the hotel is defined as “*the ideal abode for the discerning traveller*.” The combination of “*ideal*” and “*for the discerning traveller*” implies that this luxury hotel is not for everyone but for those discerning individuals who can recognize the worth of the hotel. Therefore, this sentence also expresses exclusivity.

Examples (15) is a *Move 1* sentence, in which information about the location was also stated in the prepositional phrase at the beginning. It plays an important role in this overview to apply the strategy of “creating abstractness” by putting specific information in the modifier and making the core of the sentence abstract. If this sentence was reorganized in the opposite way, by putting abstract quality in the modifier and specific information in the core of the sentence, the luxurious sense might be lost. Example is a reorganized sentence of making the *Move 1* sentence into *Move 2* by placing an abstract quality in the participle phrase. The convenience of the hotel’s location is now in the core of the sentence , and it might give an impression to the readers that *Tokyo Station*, *Ginza*, and *the Imperial Palace* are more important, and that those who choose this hotel will do so because they want to visit these landmarks. This approach of describing oneself from the “me” perspective, using social references (in this case, landmarks), was found more common among lower-grade hotels (Kondo, 2018b). On the other hand, for , location is an additional feature and the hotel being the most intimate property is the main information. This approach of describing oneself from the “I” perspective, understanding the social position of oneself and responding to it, was found more common among luxury hotels (Kondo, 2018b). In this way, the hotel’s high quality in addition to the convenient location will express luxury in this overview.

#### Example sentence of *Move 1*

1. Within arm’s reach of Tokyo Station, Ginza and the Imperial Palace, HOTELNAME presents its most intimate property. (*Move 1: Defining self*)

#### Reorganized sentence of *Move 1* (15) into *Move 2: Step: 2 Location*

1. Presenting its most intimate property, HOTELNAME is located within arm’s reach of Tokyo Station, Ginza and the Imperial Palace. (*Move 2: Step 2: Location*)

It should be noted that there was a case where modifying phrases of *Move 1* were also abstract as in (17). Information in the modifying phrase, “*Paying homage to a legacy that dates back more than half a century,*” is about the history, which could serve as *Move 2: History/architecture*. Information on the hotel’s history and architecture can be specific information about the hotel, but in this description, nothing concrete is stated. The impression this sentence can convey to the readers is that this modern hotel stands on a foundation of long, Japanese history, culture, and hospitality.

1. Paying homage to a legacy that dates back more than half a century, the completely reimagined modern masterpiece is a sophisticated celebration of its country’s culture and a tribute to *omotenashi* – Japanese hospitality. (*Move 1: Defining self*)

## 5. 3. Dream

History, culture, and hospitality blended with overview texts can be an examples of “dream” that is evoked to the readers. Chandon et al. (2016) state that “brand history and heritage, creation legends, or information about exceptional quality craftsmanship and materials” can be examples of “dream value” (p.301). In this section, using abstract expressions that evoke “dream” is discussed and proposed to be a separate strategy to create luxury in texts.

Sentences of *Move 2: Step 1: History/architecture* refer to the history and architecture of the hotel, hotel’s facilities, or the area where the hotel is located. This lets the readers know how the hotel’s identity was formed. Example (10), again, was a sentence of *Move 2: Step 1*. As mentioned earlier, the hotel introduces their gardens and the long history of the gardens relating them to the hotel, describing how the hotel recreated the gardens and traced the origin of the hotel back to the 14th century. This overview does not have *Move 1: Defining self*, but it is clear that their garden, which was mentioned from the beginning to the end of the overview (see also Table 5), is an important piece of how their identity has been formed. Example (18) is an example of a *Move 1* sentence that defines the hotel evoking dream. The modifying phrase has specific information, but it was not about the hotel’s feature but about the origin of its name. In this way, hotels define themselves by describing how their identity has been created, which consequently becomes part of the dream value these hotels have.

1. Meaning “personal style” in Hindi, HOTELNAME is deeply rooted in local culture and history.
(*Move 1: Defining self*)

Even though *Move 2 Step 1: History/architecture* was the least common step (Table 7 and Figure 3) in *Japan Forbes*, history and culture, as well as hospitality created in Japanese history and culture were mentioned throughout the overview texts. For example, though (13), (17), and (18) were sentences of *Move 1*, they referred to the hotel’s culture or cultural heritage that has been created during Japan’s long history. The hotels identify themselves by describing how the hotels are related to the history and culture of their country. What has been created in Japan’s history and culture and their attitude towards them can be an identity for the hotels and dream for the readers.

Another dream value for hotels in Japan is “hospitality.” The word “hospitality” was a high-ranked keyword only observed in *Japan Forbes* but not in *London AA*. The word *hospitality* was used by six hotels in *Japan Forbes*, all of which were operated by Japan-based companies. This explains that hospitality is such an important factor for Japan-based hotels that they try to show their hospitality even in the overview texts. Three out of nine occurrences of *hospitality* were in the phrase of “*Japanese hospitality*,” as in (17) and (12). In the phrase of “*omotenashi – Japanese hospitality*” in (17), the word *omotenashi,* which is a Japanese translation of *hospitality*, is accompanied by “*Japanese hospitality*.” This indicates that hotels and the readers should be aware that Japanese hospitality is something distinct from the world-wide concept of hospitality.

“Omotenashi” is understood by many as a fundamental spirit of Japanese hospitality, but the concept of “omotenashi” is different from that of Western hospitality, as “omotenashi” is considered to have originated from the tea ceremony (e.g., Sato & Al-alsheikh, 2014; Terasaka & Inaba, 2014; Thompson, 2017). Thompson (2007) pointed out the following differences. In the Western culture, hotels were regarded as a product, and the product itself was considered as important, while in Japanese culture, in addition to the service, thoughts and spirit behind the service were also deemed to be important (Thompson, 2007). This difference in hospitality was also seen in the findings from the keywords: different perspective between hotels in Japan, “hotel/guests-do-what,” and hotels in London, “hotel-has-what.” In the case of Japanese hotels, their thoughts and spirit generated in the long, Japanese history and toward its culture were expressed, for example, by showing their respect. This is expressed in the phrases of “*pays tribute to Japanese cultural heritage* ” in (13) and “*Paying homage to a legacy*” in (19). Hospitality is one way to show their thoughts and spirit that can be a distinctive dream value for hotels in Japan.

# 6. Conclusion

In this section, the author summarizes the results of the quantitative and the qualitative analyses by verifying each hypothesis.

#### Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 “Hotel overviews in the English language on the websites of luxury hotels in Japan have a similar organization to those found in the overviews of hotels in London which are composed of *Move 1: Defining self*, *Move 2: Establishing features*, and *Move 3: Establishing connections*. *Move 1* and *Move 2* have much higher implementation rates compared with the implementation rate of *Move 3*.” was retained. The overview texts in *Japan Forbes* were categorized into *Move 1*, *Move 2*, and *Move 3*, and, in the case of *Move 2*, further into *Move 2: Step1*, *Step 2*, and *Step 3*. The implementation rates of each move and step showed similar tendencies to those of *London AA* (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

#### Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 “Hotel overviews in the English language on the websites of luxury hotels in Japan use the luxury strategy of ‘evoking exclusivity’ by not directly addressing or inviting readers. Therefore, the implementation rate of *Move 3: Establishing connections* is lower than that of the other moves” was retained. The implementation rate of *Move 3* was relatively low and about the same as *London AA* (Figure 1), which indicates that hotels in Japan did not always take the strategy to establish connections in their overviews. About half of the hotels did make connections, for example, by welcoming the readers of the website in the same manner as the hotel invites guests at the hotel site. However, the other half of the hotels did not directly invite the readers, but rather, they mentioned their attraction to the guests, but not necessarily to “you” the readers. An important finding in the implementation of *Move 3* was that it was also possible for hotels to reinforce identity while establishing connections, which could be another strategy.

#### Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 “Hotel overviews in the English language on the websites of luxury hotels in Japan use the luxury strategy of ‘creating abstractness’ by using abstract expressions in the core of the sentence and state concrete information in modifying phrases. Therefore, luxury hotels mention specific information on their facilities and location in the modifying phrases or clauses of *Move 1*, which makes *Move 2* not compulsory, even though information on their facilities and locations are almost inevitable for overviews of lower-grade hotels” was retained. The implementation rate of *Move 2* was not as high as to be called a compulsory move. It was implemented even slightly lower than that of *London AA*. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis confirmed that there were cases where specific information on their features was mentioned in modifying clauses. One important note is that there were also cases where modifying phrases served to reinforce the hotel’s identity by stating Japan’s long history, culture, and hospitality in relation to the hotel or the origin of its name.

#### Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 “Hotel overviews in the English language on the websites of luxury hotels in Japan use abstract expressions that include ‘dream value’ by using *Move 2:* *Step 1: History/architecture*” was partly correct. The implementation rate of *Move 2:* *Step 1* was not relatively high and lower than that by *London AA* (Figure 3). Dream value in the case of Japanese hotels was related with Japan’s history and culture, and, additionally, what was created in them. One clear example of this creation found in the corpus is Japanese hospitality. Thoughts and spirit behind the service are important for Japanese hospitality, and there were several cases where thoughts and spirit generated in the long Japanese history and toward its culture were described. This also suggests that hotels in Japan focus more on “hotel/guests-do-what,” including hospitality, in a line of the history and culture, rather than looking at the quality of “hotel-has-what” right at the moment.

#### Hypothesis 5

“Hotel overviews in the English language on the websites of luxury hotels in Japan have a luxury strategy unique to hotels in Japan” was partly supported. Even if it may not be unique to hotel overviews in Japan, a new strategy related to “dream” was found. The strategy involves hotels establishing their identity by referring to their attitude towards and what is made from the history and culture of Japan and consequently evoking a dream for (potential) customers. History and culture are something people cannot retrieve from the past, but people can have access to what has been made in the history and culture. It can be the history and architecture of the hotel as described in *Move 2*, and in the case of hotels in Japan, Japanese hospitality is one distinctive example that was not found in London hotel overviews. Therefore, for hotels in Japan, when defining themselves, referring to creations of the history and culture that have contributed to being part of the hotel’s identity is one strategy that luxury hotels take. This is also how the hotel reinforces their identity. As Phau and Prendergast (2000) argue that identity is an important component of luxury, “reinforcing identity” can also be deemed important to express luxury.

#### In Conclusion

The overviews of hotels in Japan consisted of almost the same organization in terms of the move implementation, but there was a difference in how the hotels in Japan and those in London execute luxury strategies. The difference was the reflection of their culture, which can be further applied as a strategy using a different way of evoking the readers’ dream. The author proposes “evoking a dream” as a luxury strategy and modifies the strategy in Kondo (2018a) “creating abstractness” to “creating abstractness while reinforcing identity”. For hotels in London, “hotel-has-what,” the hotel’s facility, location, or the hotel’s architecture, and how high in quality they are were the main focus, while for hotels in Japan, “hotel/guests-do-what,” what the hotel offers to the guests, what their association is with the country’s history and culture, and how the hotel’s identity was created in relation to the history and culture were more distinctively described. Even if the organization of the overview is similar, what could be a dream can be different. Practical linguistic approaches to execute the strategies should be examined to further apply the findings obtained from this study.

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1. 2018 Forbes Star Award Winners were announced on February 2018 on the official website of Forbes Travel Guide. The hotels were identified on Forbes Travel Guide 2018 Star Award Winners at https://www.forbestravelguide.com/award-winners [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CasualConc is a concordance program for macOS created by Dr. Yasuhiro Imao of Osaka University. The program can be downloaded from https://sites.google.com/site/casualconc/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The BE06 Corpus is “a one-million-word reference corpus of general written British English that was designed to be comparable to the Brown family of corpora” (Baker, 2009). https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.14.3.02bak [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Michelin starred* in *London AA* was used to describe restaurants in the hotel. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Visit the official website of Chinzanso to find more information on the history of the gardens:
https://hotel-chinzanso-tokyo.jp/garden/history.html [↑](#footnote-ref-5)