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STAYCATION: A MYSTERIOUS POWER TO RESTORE STUDY ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic still imprisons people's travel in China, which leads to the mental health crisis, especially for students of generation Z. Simultaneously, the staycation which is one of the relatively safe ways of traveling under the epidemic prevention and control have been promoted by the government and received attention. The purpose of this research is to investigate how to make students restore from staycation travel products and promote their study engagement, which is a background of insufficient research in education. Based on the research design of the survey, valid data were collected with an online questionnaire survey among 415 college students studying in Macau and were analyzed. Study findings supported the hypothesized relationships and revealed that a positive relationship between staycation involvement and study engagement of students. In addition, the relationship between staycation involvement and study engagement is mediated by restoration, psychological capital and intrinsic motivation. For university educators, these insights are beneficial in developing innovative instructional approaches to solve issues with students' mental health. As a consequence, this research spans the social science discilines of psychology, tourism and education. The study's theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: staycation, engagement, restoration, psychological capital, education, generation Z

Introduction

A new age known as 'post-pandemic' has started with the COVID-19 pandemic under control. But the pandemic's consequences have persisted and led to a variety of problems. The extraordinary rise in mental illness brought on by travel restrictions, social marginalization, and immobility (Lin et al., 2021). Due to the border being closed, people have lost faith in and optimism for the future of outbound tourism (Wong et al., 2021). The staycation, a not particularly novel type of travel (Alban, 2020), has gained popularity in the post-pandemic market (Farr, 2020). Staycation is frequently thought of as family reunions or camping trips in surrounding parks. Scholars are more likely to identify a staycation as a day of local travel that visitors or locals engage in at or close to home rather than visiting overseas (Lin et al., 2021). It has also gained popularity since it offers a sustainable tourism method as well as an economical and secure tourism route in domestic tourism (Wong et al., 2021).

College students are experiencing greater psychological, economic, and employment stress than ever before as a result of the pandemic. They replied to the policy of 'not leaving school unless essential' due to the necessity for pandemic prevention, which extended their time at college and heightened their desire to leave 'home' (Dong et al., 2022). College students also experience pressure and difficulties as a result of the intense competition, intricacy, and uncertainty of the modern economy, which is made worse by constantly evolving technology, as the global economy evolves (Ali et al., 2021). Students in

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college are in a crucial stage in their psychological and personal development (Zhu, 2022). To guarantee the educational impact and the learning quality of students and to address the issues with the development of their mental health, society and academics must pay attention.

The generation born between the mid-to-late 1990s and the 2010s is commonly referred to as generation Z (Gen Z) (Tang et al., 2020). In addition to making up the majority of today's college students, Gen Z is a crucial component of the travel industry. They are thought to have a substantial purchasing power at $143 billion (Raynor, 2021). But few studies have concentrated on Gen Z in the tourism market, which is out of step with the way things are done right now.

This study offers a method to improve college students' psychological well-being and academic achievement through staycation in an effort to contribute to university education and tourism while addressing the information gaps and other issues faced by college students listed above. Under the consequences of the pandemic, it is necessary to continue talking about the connection between the improvement of each person's psychological state, intrinsic motivation, and engagement in their studies through travel. The research aims to investigate how to staycation involvement affects students' psychological capital and study engagement. Specific objectives are:

(1) Discuss how to develop students' intrinsic resources in the tourism environment, so as to enhance their intrinsic motivation for study engagement.

(2) Assess the mediating role of psychological capital in travel (staycation) involvement and study engagement.

Staycation in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era

The definition of staycation has gradually expanded from the meaning of resting and spending free time at home to carrying out various leisure and tourism activities nearby or within driving distance of home (De Bloom et al., 2017). On this basis, Fox (2009) proposed that the norm for a staycation is a driving distance of 50 miles from home. This definition is also gradually recognized by the travel habits of residents of Northern Europe and North America, who typically own a second home for vacations (Jacobsen et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has exerted an unprecedented influence on the tourism industry, hence the concept of a staycation is promoted as the antithesis of outbound and long-distance travel and refers to vacations taken locally or across the entire nation (Lin et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2022).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, people opted for staycation over long-distance travel in order to protect the environment because they considered that a sustainable travel mode could reduce the consumption of natural resources and other actions that were detrimental to the long-term sustainability of society (Ram et al., 2013; Yan et al., 2022). Tourists are aware that staycation can escape crowded and physical exhaustion (Molz, 2009), despite the fact that the characteristic of remoteness with traditional travel has offered unique and charming attraction to tourists. At the same time, traditional travel and staycation have proven to be beneficial for fostering a sense of personal wellbeing (De Bloom et al., 2017). In this view, the distinction between staycation and regular domestic travel is made by the degree of dedication and upscale motivational elements that are specifically associated with staycation (Yan et al., 2022).

In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, some academics believed that staycation might become the new norm for travel, which might help people recover their faith in tourism (Wong et al., 2021). According to Yan et al. (2022), the modified protection motivation can shed light on why people opt for staycations rather than other forms of travel. The theory of planned behavior is enhanced by modified protection motivation articulations, which more clearly illustrates how an individual perceives and internalizes risks in a more balanced way (Braje et al., 2021). It can be seen from this that the popularity of staycation during the Covid-19 pandemic is probably the result of tourists' cognitive assessment of the severity of the pandemic (Yan et al., 2022). However, staycation requires people to devote a lot of time and money, which contrasts with a healthy lifestyle and represents tourists' decisions on travel in an epidemic situation. To fully comprehend the profound changes that the tourist sector has undergone as a result of COVID-19, it is necessary to explore the behavior patterns of staycation travelers and a series of variables related to tourism.

Model and hypotheses

Travel involvement, a psychological state of attachment to travel (Dimanche et al., 1993), displays a person's interest in travel-related activities (Prayag and Ryan, 2012). Strong travel involvement means that travelers might use more effort looking for and preparing their travels (Wong and Tang, 2016). As combined with the background of current research, travel involvement encourages visitors to actively seek out tourism offerings with restorative functions. Despite the fact that seeing a new place is more likely to aid travelers in recovering (Lehto, 2013), some people may favor low-risk excursions, which makes staycation appealing in the post-pandemic era (Wassler and Fan, 2021).

To prevent being fatigued in daily life and at work, people should regularly recover their attention, in accordance with the theory of attention recovery (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; von Lindern, 2015). The inability to accomplish tasks due to mental illnesses like weariness brought on by over use of directed attention (Rosenbaum and Wong, 2015). According to Chen et al. (2016), certain travel activities have restorative effects on people and encourage their connection to the physical and spiritual worlds. Restorative travel experiences can help people reduce stress (Edensor, 2000). Beautiful areas with a natural green landscape or man-made environments with indications of amusement, relaxation, and enjoyment are examples of restorative environments (Rosenbaum and Wong, 2015). Additionally, in the post-pandemic era, travelers who are very engaged would desire an even greater level of healing experience (Lin et al., 2021).

A healthy state of growth of the mind is known as psychological capital (Abbas et al., 2014). Psychological capital is described as "one's positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance" (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 550) and is regarded as a helpful tool and required condition to encourage positive behavior, excellent performance, optimistic attitude and happiness (Luthans and Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Four psychological elements make up this construct: self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience. Specifically, hope represent goal-directed pathways and energy; self-efficacy represent a sense of assurance in handling difficult tasks; optimism represent enthusiastic aspirations for success; and resilience represent the capacity to recover from challenging situations (Luthans et al., 2007; Lin et al., 2021).

Travelers are permitted to rejuvenate and reenergize energy for reconstructing a good outlook by submerging themselves in the restorative setting where concentration can be readily eased and happiness can be achieved (Wong et al., 2021). Traveling helps revitalize psychological resources (Luthans et al., 2007), making it easier to cultivate a healthy mental attitude that is cheerful, self-assured,

upbeat, and resilient (Lin et al., 2021). Furthermore, researchers have demonstrated that restorative tourism experiences have helped people overcome their psychological hurdles following the COVID-19 pandemic and rebuild their psychological capital (Wong et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021). As a result, we suggest that the restorative appeal derived from staycation events can encourage positive mental recuperation, and that this association can be mediated by restoration, in the assumptions that follow. The following hypotheses are generated by the discussion above:

Hypothesis 1: Staycation involvement is positively related to restoration.

Hypothesis 2: Restoration is positively related to psychological capital.

Hypothesis 3: Restoration mediated the relationship between staycation involvement and psychological capital.

Individuals' innate drive to perform the task at hand out of desire or delight, unaffected by other forces or outcomes, is referred to as intrinsic motivation (Amabile et al., 1994; Ali et al., 2021). Engaged workers are more productive and increase the competitiveness of their companies in today's global market (Bakker and Bal, 2010; Taneja et al., 2015). Given that intrinsic motivation covers an employee's attention and intensity of vigor and energy, it aids in the increasing employee engagement at work (Maehr and Meyer, 1997; Siu et al., 2013). Nevertheless, studies on the internal motivational factors that influence student study engagement in the education and tourism context, particularly in a rising country like China, have not been done, nor have motivational antecedents of study engagement.

Positive feelings were a reflection of students' inherent personal resources (Ouweneel et al., 2011). Psychological capital, as a kind of internal resource, assist students in becoming more inclined to dedicate in more time and effort to complete tasks. Specifically, in the dimension of hope, students have mastered the ability of clear goals and concentrated guidance; self-efficacy is reflected inthe increase of students' participation in learning; optimism is reflected in students' deeper engagement in their academic work in the light of participation and absorption, and show the resilience of not being afraid of challenges. All of these elements boost intrinsic motivation (Ali et al., 2021).

College students should be inspired to pursue exceptional academic success as future employees by fostering positive study engagement and strengthening their psychological capital resources in order to cope with the rapid changes in the contemporary society (Ali et al., 2021). Work engagement serves as a model for study engagement, which is the measurement's subject. In addition, it is demonstrated that the the positive emotions can be used to predict the likelihood of students' personal resources, which will afterwards predict their interest and positivity in their studies (Ouweneel et al., 2011). Moreover, students who believe in themselves and self-effective in their academics have a greater rate of engagement for their study (Siu et al., 2013). To put it another way, students with strong psychological capital typically exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation, which is advantageous for engaging in their studies (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ali et al., 2021). Taking these factors into consideration, the following hypotheses are put forth:

Hypothesis 4: Psychological capital is positively related to intrinsic motivation.

Hypothesis 5: Intrinsic motivation is positively related to study engagement.

Hypothesis 6: The relationship between psychological capital and study engagement will be mediated by intrinsic motivation.

Figure 1 depicts the corresponding hypotheses as well as the research model.

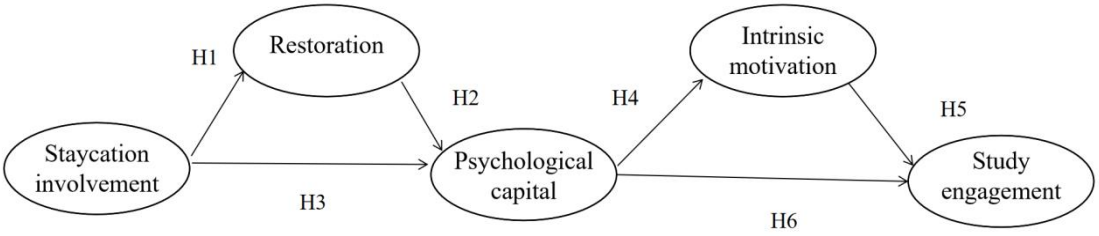

Figure 1. Proposed model of the effect of staycation involvement on study engagement.

Source: collated in this research

Methodology

Sample and procedure

To test the proposed model, data were gathered from students who are enrolled in several universities in Macau. Just like earlier researchs, this research uses the iterative translation process to ensure the accuracy of the research's translation (Ali et al., 2018; Ali et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2021). Before the formal data collection, three doctoral students majoring in tourism management conducted a pretest on the temporary questionnaire. After that, 15 respondents participated in a pilot test to identify the questionnaire's clarity of translation and presentation, and finally determined the questionnaire design. Some questionnaire's items were rephrased during the translation process (Ali et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2021). 437 college students from different Macau universities were chosen at one-month to participate in a survey-based questionnaire by convenient sampling.

Measures

Staycation involvement

In order to measure travel involvement, Lin et al. (2021) provided us with a four-item scale. 'I brought myself joy by participating in different things to do here during staycation,' is an example item. The recruitment uses a 9-point Likert scale with an anchor ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 9 (completely agree). The α value and the composite reliability (CR) values for this scale are both above 0.94, making the scale of staycation involvement dependable.

Restoration

A second-order scale with 8 items from Wong et al. (2021) is used to measure the restoration. A sample item is 'I enjoyed taking the opportunity for this staycation because it was a big break from my regular schedule..' A 7-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) is used to score the items. Both the α value and the CR values exceed 0.89, making the scale of restoration reliable.

Psychological capital

To evaluate psychological capital, a scale with 11 items which combined with Wong et al. (2021) and Lin et al. (2021) is used. The second-order scale is quantified in accordance with their recommendations (e.g. Lin et al., 2021) that embodies optimism, self-efficacy, hope, and resilience. A sample item is 'I will find ways to get out when I faced with a difficult or challenging situation during the daily life.' This scale also uses the 7-point Likert scale and its reliability is obvious, which can be seen from the fact that the α value and the CR values for each sub-scale exceed 0.91.

Intrinsic motivation

Developed by Lubatkin et al. (2006), a scale with 15 items is used to gauge intrinsic motivation, but all mentions of the term 'work' were changed to 'study' (Ali et al., 2021). One sample item is 'The grades I can get motivate me very much.' Similarly, a 7-point Likert scale is used and the reliability of this scale is evident as the α value and the CR value exceed 0.93.

Study engagement

A brief scale that examined the dedication, vigor, and absorption of work engagement through 9 items was employed (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Lu et al., 2011; Ali et al., 2021), in which the words 'study' or 'research' were used in place of 'work' or 'job' (Zhang et al., 2007).. One of the sample items is 'I am passionate about my academic work.' Reliability is evident as α and CR surpassed 0.91.

Data analysis

Among the 437 distributed, 415 questionnaires were returned (a 95% response rate) from May to June 2022. Of our sample, more than 70% students participate in leisure tours; 54.6% were female students; higher grades account for more; and more than half of the students travel more than three times a year. More details are showed in Table 1.

Table 1: Samples' demographic characteristics (N = 415).

Variable	Percentage	Variable	Percentage
Gender		Types of staycation participated	
Male	45.4	Leisure tour	72.6
Female	54.6	Community- based tour	27.4
Grade		Annual travel frequency	
Freshman	12.7	Less than 3 times	47.6
Sophomore	11.4	3–5 times	37.5
Junior student	23.6	6–8 times	9.2
Senior student	31.2	Above 8 times	5.7
Postgraduate	21.1		

Table 2: Factor analysis, reliability test, descriptive statistics and construct correlations

	Mean	S.D.	AVE	CR	1	2	3	4	5
Staycation involvement	6.45	1.46	0.81	0.96	0.94				
Restoration	5.06	1.09	0.78	0.95	0.62**	0.89			
Psychological capital	5.47	1.05	0.74	0.92	0.66**	0.95**	0.91		
Intrinsic motivation	5.12	1.07	0.73	0.93	0.32**	0.37**	0.42**	0.94	
Study engagement	5.26	1.15	0.77	0.94	0.53**	0.60**	0.62**	0.47**	0.91

Note(s): ** = $p < 0.01$. N = 415.
Cronbach's alphas are presented on the diagonals.
S.D. = Standard Deviation; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability.

Convergent reliability was obvious, and construct validity was also proven by the fact that constructs consistently scored higher than 0.73 on the value of average variance extracted (AVE) in this research. Moreover, the justification for discriminant validity was also demonstrated by compariing AVE values with squared correlations between relevant constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The SPSS 26.0 was used to run the normality tests and it was revealed that the values of skewness and kurtosis fell between -1 to +1, indicating that each item of the measurement had a generally normal distribution (Kline, 2016). Using AMOS 26, we also carried out the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the model fit of the measurement. According to the CFA (see Table 3), there was an obvious match between the measurement model and the data, as shown by the comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.92, the non-normed fit index (NNFI) of 0.89, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) of 0.91, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.06. Besides, other relevant statistical results of this research are shown in Table 2, including the mean value, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among variables.

Results

Before conducting hypothesis tests using different models, we examined the direct connection between staycation involvement and study engagement. Between this two factors, a significant correlation was found ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.05$). It is still unknown if the association is mediated, as we proposed, by restoration, psychological capital, and intrinsic motivation.

The results of the author's testing of various layered models against the research model are shown in Table 3. All of the proposed relationships between the variables were examined using the five-factor research baseline model. Moreover, just as other studies have taken a similar approach (Ali et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2020; Khan and Ali, 2018), the author examined different paths, specifically model 1 (combined restoration and psychological capital), model 2 (combined intrinsic motivation and study engagement), model 3 (combined intrinsic motivation with study engagement and psychological capital with study engagement), model 4 (intrinsic motivation and study engagement were combined into one component, while staycation involvement, restoration, and psychological capital were combined into one factor), and model 5 (combined a single factor made up of all five variables). From the results in Table 3, it can be seen that the hypothesized five-factor model exhibited good fit, but also has the best data of model fit among alternative models.

Table 3: Model comparison

Model	Structure	χ^2	df	CFI	NNFI	TLI	RMSEA
Baseline model	Five-factor	1655.018	654	0.918	0.886	0.912	0.063
Model 1: combing R & PsyCap	Four-factor	1689.059	657	0.886	0.823	0.886	0.082
Model 2: combing IMO & SE	Four-factor	1691.073	658	0.813	0.788	0.801	0.086
Model 3: combing R & PsyCap,and IMO & SE	Three-factor	3469.418	661	0.789	0.712	0.771	0.117
Model 4: combing SI, R, & PsyCap, and IMO & SE	Two-factor	4564.794	664	0.721	0.698	0.714	0.124
Model 5: combing SI, R, PsyCap, IMO & SE	One-factor	5876.381	671	0.534	0.512	0.526	0.142

Note(s): R = Restoration; PsyCap = Psychological Capital; SI = Staycation Involvement; IMO = Intrinsic Motivation; SE = Study Engagement

The results of the path analysis are listed in Table 4. The outcome ($\beta = 0.566$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates that the involvement and restoration of the students in the staycation proposed by Hypothesis 1 is positively correlated; in other words, higher-involved students would have greater level of attention restoration following their staycation. The positive association between restoration and psychological capital proposed by Hypothesis 2 is confirmed by the results ($\beta = 0.754$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that restorative experiences aid students in developing hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience. The results ($\beta = 0.346$, $p < 0.001$) support the Hypothesis 4's prediction that there is a positive relationship between psychological capital and intrinsic motivation, namely, that students' psychological capital can enhance their intrinsic motivation. Similarly, the result of Hypothesis 5 ($\beta = 0.252$, $p < 0.001$) shows that intrinsic motivation is positively linked to study engagement.

Table 4: Structural parameter estimates

Paths	Path coefficient (S.E.)
Staycation involvement → Restoration	0.566*** (0.082)
Staycation involvement → Psychological capital	0.101** (0.035)
Restoration → Psychological capital	0.754*** (0.093)
Psychological capital → Intrinsic motivation	0.346*** (0.057)
Psychological capital → Study engagement	0.437*** (0.059)
Intrinsic motivation → Study engagement	0.252*** (0.062)

Note(s): ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$

The association between the staycation involvement and the engagement of study in students' studies was explored using the path analysis to see if restoration and intrinsic motivation act as a mediator. Afterward, bootstrap tests were used with AMOS 26 to examine the mediated effect (Cheung and Lau, 2008). As can be seen in Table 5, the confidence interval of the total effect, the direct effect and the indirect effect of the three paths does not include zero. This means that the intermediation statement was supported. Thus, Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 6 were supported.

Table 5: Test of intermediary relationships

Paths	Total effect		Direct effect		Indirect effect	
	Lower 2.5%	Upper 2.5%	Lower 2.5%	Upper 2.5%	Lower 2.5%	Upper 2.5%
SI → R → PsyCap	0.402	0.658	0.008	0.160	0.308	0.582
PsyCap → IMO → SE	0.253	0.596	0.163	0.521	0.028	0.175
SI → R→ PsyCap → IMO→ SE	0.229	0.473	0.009	0.256	0.139	0.336

Note(s): SI = Staycation Involvement; R = Restoration; PsyCap = Psychological Capital; IMO = Intrinsic Motivation; SE = Study Engagement.

Conclusion

This research determined how Chinese students' involvement in staycation while studying in Macau affected their engagement in their studies and related factors. In order to clarify how staycation involvement affects study engagement, we put forth and tested a mediational model. The results partially supported the proposed beneficial associations. These results demonstrate that students' staycation involvement may have benefits, such as developing personal resources and increasing the engagement of study. The results of this study confirm earlier findings that psychological capital helps improve study engagement (Ali et al., 2021). In other words, the students with a high level of psychological capital are more positively engaged in studying. Recent academic research have discovered that restorative experience in staycation is effective against COVID-19 related distress (Wong et al., 2021). The findings contributes to a deeper comprehension of the advantages of staycation, expanding them to benefiting the students' engagement to study. These findings have repercussions for educational endeavors, especially for students of Gen Z. Furthermore, the discovery of a link between staycation involvement and study engagement also adds fresh information to the body of knowledge on staycation involvement, restoration, psychological capital, intrinsic motivation and the engagement of study.

Theoretical and practical implications

Our empirical results back up the idea that involvement of staycations is related to the individual's intrinsic resources and engagement at work. This paper suggests that through encouraging positive travel involvement, resources like psychological capital and intrinsic drive strengthen, resulting in more study engagement. As a result, this research has contributed to broaden the application of the work engagement theory to sample populations of students. In addition, the growing number of studies on psychological capital in tourism and educational settings is significantly expanded by this study. The results of this study demonstrated a significant protective effect of students' psychological capital against study engagement. This is a notable conclusion given the rising proportion of students who say they experience stress linked to their studies in the post-pandemic era (Bano et al., 2019) as well as evidence supporting studies on the benefits of the engagement of study on students' employment and mental health (Steinhardt et al., 2011; Ali et al., 2021).

This study has various implication. Theoretically, it looked at the connection between study engagement and staycation involvement, expanding the literature on staycations in travel and constructing positive psychology theories against the backdrop of the post-pandemic era. Second, it is a study that investigates the psychological benefits and behavior of students brought by staycation from the perspective of tourism, providing data that supports the positive psychology theory. Through psychological capital as an intermediary variable, this study shows a novel way to assess a person psychological (spiritual)

sustainability. Third, through empirically examing the intermediary roles of restoration, psychological capital and intrinsic motivation between staycation involvement and study engagement, this research contributes to futher enrich the existing literature as this intermediary relationship is rarely discussed in the context of tourism and education.

In practice, the findings of this study have significant ramifications for students, teachers, and even other working groups in the context of education. In the post-pandemic era, tourism, specifically staycation products, may present a chance to assist students and workers in coping with the intense strain from their academics or jobs and to enhance their mental health (Cao et al., 2019). This is of great benefit to students' sustainable learning and future career planning. Schools should provide students with more choices of outdoor experiences to promote their participation in tourism activities, so that they can learn to cope with stress and negative thinking, after that achieve better academic results. In addition, in the restorative tourism environment, people can get a higher level of internal resources and then show a better personal performance, which means bringing hope to the tourism industry that has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. For tour operators, they need to carefully design staycation products to meet the increasing psychological needs. For example, design more staycation products, which tourists can have a quiet natural space, or let tourists immerse themselves in modern buildings and enjoy rich artificial recovery stimulation.

Limitation and future research

It is necessary to draw attention to the current research's numerous shortcomings since they could be used to guide future studies in different directions. First, this study's generalizability to college students in other countries or organizations may be constrained because our sample consisted only of Macau students. We recommend that future studies broaden the sample of this study to include additional university-level or zone-based populations. Second, this study does not specify a certain staycation, and different types of staycation may lead to different effects. Future studies can explore the psychological impact of specific staycation such as camping on tourists. Third, future research can use experiments or longitudinal designs to see whether the association between travel involvement and study engagement will change over time.

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