


A REVIEW ON THE ONLINE COMPLAINTS OF 4-STAR HOTELS IN HANOI

Adrian Wee Tiong Weng^A, Justin Matthew Pang^B



ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received: Jun, 18th 2024 Accepted: Aug, 16th 2024</p>	<p>Objective: The objective of this study is to examine the online complaints made by hotels guests staying in 4-star hotels in Hanoi on the popular travel website, Booking.com. The aim is to find out the reasons for the complaints and suggest possible solutions for them.</p>
<p>Keywords: Online Reviews; Content Analysis; Hotels; Hanoi; Vietnam.</p>	<p>Theoretical Framework: The key concept underpinning this research paper is online reviews. Negative online reviews or sometimes referred to as negative word of mouth have been explored at length in academia and found to be quite detrimental to a hotels' brand and performance.</p>
	<p>Method: This research paper utilizes the content analysis research method. Negative reviews posted on 23 hotels listed on Bookings.com were collected and analyzed for themes or categories. Out of a total of 12,633 hotel reviews, 358 negative reviews including 532 complaints in eight major categories were recorded.</p> <p>Results and Discussion: Research findings reveal that the negative reviews focused on rooms, bathrooms, staff, facilities, breakfast, location, reservations and promotions.</p> <p>Research Implications: The findings indicate that online complaints are becoming more pertinent in today's digital marketplaces and due attention must be paid on these negative reviews by hoteliers in Vietnam to avoid any adverse consequences.</p> <p>Originality/Value: This study provides unique insights on the application of online reviews in Vietnam. No research has been made on the subject matter in Vietnam yet.</p> <p>Doi: https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2024.v9i9.4909</p>

UMA REVISÃO SOBRE AS RECLAMAÇÕES ONLINE DE HOTÉIS DE 4 ESTRELAS EM HANÓI

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo deste estudo é examinar as reclamações on-line feitas por hóspedes de hotéis 4 estrelas em Hanói no popular site de viagens Booking.com. O objetivo é descobrir os motivos das reclamações e sugerir possíveis soluções para elas. Estrutura teórica: O principal conceito que sustenta este trabalho de pesquisa são as avaliações on-line. As avaliações negativas on-line ou, às vezes, chamadas de boca a boca negativo, foram exploradas exaustivamente no meio acadêmico e consideradas bastante prejudiciais para a marca e o desempenho de um hotel.

Método: Este trabalho de pesquisa utiliza o método de pesquisa de análise de conteúdo. As avaliações negativas publicadas em 23 hotéis listados no Bookings.com foram coletadas e analisadas quanto a temas ou categorias. De um total de 12.633 avaliações de hotéis, foram registradas 358 avaliações negativas, incluindo 532 reclamações em oito categorias principais.

Resultados e Discussão: Os resultados da pesquisa revelam que as avaliações negativas se concentraram em quartos, banheiros, funcionários, instalações, café da manhã, localização, reservas e promoções.

Implicações da Pesquisa: Os resultados indicam que as reclamações on-line estão se tornando mais pertinentes nos mercados digitais atuais e que os hoteleiros do Vietnã devem dar a devida atenção a essas avaliações negativas

^A Doctor in Business Administration. British University Vietnam. Van Giang, Hung Yen, Vietnam.

E-mail: adrian.w@buv.edu.vn Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2587-5300>

^B Doctor in Hotel and Tourism Management. RMIT University Vietnam. Hồ Chí Minh, Vietnam

E-mail: justin.kong@rmit.edu.vn Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7961-3066>

para evitar consequências adversas. Originalidade/valor: Este estudo oferece percepções exclusivas sobre a aplicação de avaliações on-line no Vietnã. Ainda não foi feita nenhuma pesquisa sobre o assunto no Vietnã.

Palavras-chave: Avaliações On-line, Análise de Conteúdo, Hotéis, Hanói, Vietnã.

UNA REVISIÓN DE LAS QUEJAS EN LÍNEA DE LOS HOTELES DE 4 ESTRELLAS DE HANOI

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El objetivo de este estudio es examinar las quejas en línea presentadas por los huéspedes de hoteles de 4 estrellas de Hanoi en el popular sitio web de viajes Booking.com. El objetivo es averiguar las razones de las quejas y sugerir posibles soluciones para ellas. Marco teórico: El concepto clave que sustenta este trabajo de investigación son las reseñas en línea. Las reseñas negativas en línea, a veces denominadas "boca a boca", se han estudiado en profundidad en el mundo académico y se ha descubierto que son bastante perjudiciales para la marca y el rendimiento de los hoteles.

Método: Este trabajo de investigación utiliza el método de análisis de contenido. Se recopilaron las críticas negativas publicadas en 23 hoteles de Bookings.com y se analizaron por temas o categorías. De un total de 12.633 reseñas de hoteles, se registraron 358 reseñas negativas que incluían 532 quejas en ocho categorías principales.

Resultados y Discusión: Los resultados de la investigación revelan que las críticas negativas se centraron en las habitaciones, los baños, el personal, las instalaciones, el desayuno, la ubicación, las reservas y las promociones.

Implicaciones de la Investigación: Los resultados indican que las quejas en línea son cada vez más pertinentes en los mercados digitales actuales y que los hoteleros de Vietnam deben prestar la debida atención a estas críticas negativas para evitar consecuencias adversas. Originalidad/Valor: Este estudio proporciona una visión única sobre la aplicación de las reseñas en línea en Vietnam. Todavía no se ha realizado ninguna investigación sobre este tema en Vietnam.

Palabras clave: Reseñas en Línea, Análisis de Contenido, Hoteles, Hanói, Vietnam.

1 INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry in Hanoi, Vietnam is very competitive. Revenue from Hotels in Vietnam is projected to reach US\$1.58bn in 2024 (Statista Search Department, 2024). And this revenue is expected to grow at an annual rate of 7.37%. The number of hotels and other accommodation competing for the market reached about 40.1 thousand with approximately 780 thousand rooms (Statista Search Department, 2023). In light of this intense competition, it is imperative for hoteliers to better understand their customers' needs and wants. Satisfying the customer's needs and wants will not only encourage return stays but also spread valuable positive feedback on the property.

Hotels employ a number of means to better understand their customers, including utilizing feedback cards in guest rooms, incorporating short surveys upon check out and staffs querying hotel guests on their stay whenever the opportunities arise. Nonetheless as Ekiz et al. (2012) noted, guests are often reticent to share their experiences on their stay in the hotel. Apparently, most hotel guests, for various reasons, are unwilling to voice their satisfaction or dissatisfaction to their service providers, at least not directly.

In this regard, the internet can be very helpful. Over the years, the number of online reviews on all types of services from airlines to restaurants to hotels has proliferated. The internet enables customers to easily and anonymously voice their satisfaction and dissatisfaction on the services provided on the many online platforms available including travel websites, review sites and social media.

The abundance of information online is useful to both hoteliers and customers. The information enables hotel managers to better understand their customers and improve hotel performance. On the other hand, the information is also pertinent to travelers as it provides them with relevant and useful information to make holiday and travel arrangements (Dickinger & Mazanec, 2008).

More than a decade ago, Sparks and Browning (2011) noted the growing reliance on the internet before making travel decisions. This reliance on the internet and online reviews only grew with the ubiquitous use of the smartphone as a source for information and subsequent decision making. As a result more research in this area of online reviews has become imperative.

Previous research studies indicate that negative comments can influence customer willingness to book hotels. This research aimed to analyze negative online customer reviews or complaints on four star hotels in the Hoan Kiem area of Hanoi from Booking.com. The primary aim is to provide relevant parties including hotel managers with helpful suggestion for improving hotel performances.

This study only used online reviews from Booking.com. With Booking.com, only paying customers who stayed in the hotels are eligible to write the reviews. This is important, as user generated reviews are seen to increase trustworthiness. Also, potential travelers are more likely to trust the opinions, and advices posted online when they know it comes from customers who have actually experienced stays, pleasant or otherwise in the hotels concerned.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Berezina et al. (2015) customer satisfaction can impact considerably on a hotels' performance. The idea is when hotel customers are satisfied, they will retain a positive attitude towards the property and increase the likelihood for a repeat stay. On the other hand, when hotel customers are dissatisfied, they will develop more negative attitudes and reduce their plans to stay at the property again.

One key measure of customer satisfaction is service quality (Berezina et al. 2015) which generally relates to how customers perceive the standard of service provided. And service quality has two distinct components, tangible and intangible (Prentice, 2013; Torres & Kline, 2013). The intangible component generally refers to how responsive and reliable are the services rendered. The tangible component, on the other hand relates to the facilities and equipment used to provide the services sought (Ramanathan & Ramanathan, 2011).

To ensure repeat stays, hoteliers often focused on customer satisfaction. Key studies suggest that increasing customer retention and loyalty is important as it can improve hotel profitability. Tyrrell and Woods (2005) note that it is more economical to keep existing customers than to obtain new ones. Gefen (2002) further points out that loyal customers are not only cheaper but they also tend to spend more. Additionally, they are often a good source of referrals, making valuable recommendations to friends and family (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999).

Nonetheless, dissatisfied customers can also be useful. Dissatisfied, complaining customers can highlight areas of concern in the hotel that may require attention (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Further, in what is called the service recovery paradox, Hoffman & Bateson (2010) notes that customer satisfaction can increase for guests who experienced poor service at the start but quickly addressed by the hotels in question. This in turn, demands greater flexibility and responsiveness on the part of the hotel.

However, when disaffected customers' are not addressed quickly, negative consequences can result such as poor repeat stays and negative online reviews. Negative reviews, more commonly referred to in academia as negative word of mouth (WOM) has been explored extensively in various studies and has been found to be detrimental to a hotel brand or property. Negative reviews do not only discourage customers from buying, but they also damage the hotel's brand and reputation (Sundaram et al., 1998). In today's social media world, where negative online reviews can spread very quickly, that can spell disaster for hotels.

The literature suggests the growing importance of online reviews. They are increasingly seen as a relevant and valuable source of information that travelers refer to when making their travel plans. Online reviews written by experienced travelers, in particular, are seen to be the preferred information source and the most influential (Pan et al., 2007). They are seen to be more credible and more trustworthy due to the absence of vested interest.

Several research studies have been made on negative online reviews and its impact on hotels and they reveal several noteworthy insights. Ye et al. (2009) examined the influence of

online reviews on travelers utilizing data from Tripadvisor. The authors found that online reviews had a positive influence on hotel bookings. The reviews enabled travelers to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the condition and standard of the hotels. This in turn, helped travelers decrease the risks, perceived or otherwise of booking the hotels.

El-Said (2020) performed a quantitative study on a sample of 432 Egyptian consumers who has had previous experiences with online hotel bookings. Results from the study revealed that, whilst positive reviews do not significantly affect booking intentions, negative reviews can and do have a strong impact. Further brand image, star ratings and price can have a moderation effect on the relationship.

Phillips et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study on online reviews from 68 online platforms in Switzerland and found that online reviews present a significant influence on hotel performances like room revenues and occupancy rates. And the influence of the online reviews was especially prevalent for premium and luxury hotels. Additionally, the authors found that the most important quality of the hotel that affected their performances were quality of the rooms, internet availability, and building facilities.

Ekiz (2012), explored the nature of online complaints on luxury hotels in Turkey. The author analyzed 1,000 online complaints posted on TripAdvisor to better understand the needs and expectations of luxury hotel guests. Ekiz (2012) noted that the complaints were often detailed, and focused on their negative experiences suggesting that guests are more likely to share their negative experiences over and above their positive experiences. She also identified six main categories in the complaints, namely staffs, rooms, food and beverage, facilities and value for money.

In Asia, Lertputtarak and Samokhin (2018) examined online reviews of 4-star hotels in Pattaya, Thailand listed on Booking.com. The authors identified seven key categories of customer complaints. Like Ekiz (2012) they include personnel that were rude, indifferent or unprofessional, rooms that were dirty or noisy, bathrooms that were smelly or broken, breakfast that afforded little selection and of poor quality, facilities that were closed or non-existent and finally inconvenient or congested location.

All the studies made previously point to the growing importance of online reviews to travelers. More and more travelers are combing the many hotel reviews made available online before finalizing their travel plans. This study focused on analyzing the online reviews of 4-star hotels in the old quarter of Hanoi and aims to highlight any additional insights specific to the area and suggest suitable recommendations to the relevant parties concerned.

3 METHODOLOGY

Data comes from hotel reviews made available on Bookings.com from Jun 2022 to Jun 2023. Bookings.com was selected because it remains one of the most popular travel websites. Together with Tripadvisor, Airbnb and Expedia, Bookings.com are the top 4 most visited travel and tourism websites in the world.

One big attraction of the Bookings website is the ability for frequent travelers to review their experiences. For many travelers, Bookings remains a key outlet for them to vent their satisfaction and dissatisfaction on their stays in the hotels listed there. Ekiz et al. (2012) noted that more and more travelers are also using these same reviews before finalizing their travel and hotel arrangements.

Tourism is a major industry in Hanoi. Hanoi attracted more than 18.7 million visitors in 2022 earning more than 60 trillion VND in sales revenue for the city. 1.5 million of those visitors were international from countries like China, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia (Dangcongsan.vn 2023).

This study established 3 criteria for data selection. First, only complaints or negative reviews made by guests who stayed in hotels listed as 4-star in Bookings were selected. Second the old quarter of Hanoi was selected because the area is dotted with many smallish and stylish hotels that caters to the international traveler. Third, only reviews that were rated as poor and very poor were selected. Bookings.com allows customers to rate their overall stay experiences with the hotels on a 5-point Likert scale (1 means very poor, 2 means poor, 3 means fair or average, 4 means above average or good, and 5 means very excellent).

Content analysis was utilized for this study. Rather than using the traditional interviews, negative online reviews posted on Bookings.com were methodically collected for data. According to Krippendorff (2018) content analysis is a suitable qualitative research method to systematically analyze and interpret meanings from text, images, and other forms of communication. Additionally, thematic analysis was used to identify emerging and recurring themes.

According to Patton (1990) thematic analysis is a widely used method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns or themes. It affords the user several key advantages including its ease of use, ability to summarize large data sets and generate rich and ‘thick’ description (Braun & Clarke 2006). It is also deemed more rigorous and systematic (Cresswell 2014). Further thematic analysis often includes a clear and transparent process of data collection,

analysis, and interpretation which can be replicated by other researchers to ensure trustworthiness of the findings.

A total of 23 4-star hotels in Hanoi were selected for this study. These hotels listed in Bookings.com tended to be small, stylish and located in the fashionable tourist area of Hoan Kiem. Negative reviews for these hotels, found in Booking from 2022 to Jun 2023 were collected and analyzed. The reviews were first read and reread by the researcher to recognize common words and phrases used. This also enabled the researcher to become familiar with the dataset. The data were then manually categorized and then noted for its type and frequency. Recurring categories or themes provided the basis for the findings of this study.

To limit the potential for subjectivity and biases in the study, the researcher included another researcher in the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Recurring and emerging categories were discussed at length with this researcher at various times.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The reviews made on Bookings.com were overwhelmingly positive. Of the 12,633 hotel reviews examined on 23 hotels listed in the Old Quarter of Hanoi, there were only 494 negative reviews or complaints. Less than 4% of the reviews were deemed as negative. Further, 136 of the negative reviews had little or no description and consequently, were not included in the study. Of the remaining 358 negative reviews, 532 complaints in eight major categories were recorded. These are illustrated in Table 1. Detailed examples of customer complaints are included in the appendix.

The most number of complaints made were on the hotel **rooms**. 148 of the 532 complaints were about the hotel rooms. Common grouses included old and smelly rooms, small or no windows, bug infested beds, and paper-thin walls that provided little sound insulation. Levy, Duan, and Boo (2013) noted similar complaints related to rooms, that included room size, room cleanliness and noise pollution due to poor soundproofing. A typical complaint on hotel rooms was, 'it's very shabby and totally not a four-star hotel. Lots of scuffs and stains are everywhere. Dust in every corner of the rooms as they don't seem to vacuum but only sweep.'

Table 1

Most common customer complaints and their frequency

Complaints	Frequency	% frequency
Rooms	148	0.28
Bathrooms	99	0.19
Staffs	79	0.15
Breakfast	41	0.08
Location	6	0.01
Facilities	54	0.10
Bookings	45	0.08
Promotions	61	0.11
Total	532	

Source: Booking.com, 2023.

The second most complaints made were on **bathrooms**. There were 99 complaints made on bathrooms. The focus of the complaints were on cleanliness and broken equipment. Bathroom cleanliness included moldy walls, stained shower curtains and dirty toilet floors. Broken equipment in turn refers to water heaters that do not work, leaking taps and clogged plumbings that lead to flooded toilets. Typical complaints on the bathrooms were, ‘The drain in the shower was clogged and flooded the whole bathroom’ and ‘the plumbing in the bathroom was very noisy. I could hear the water running through the pipes all night long.’ Similarly, Levy, Duan, and Boo (2013) found the most common complaints with regards to the bathroom were problems with the showers, bathtubs, sinks, and toilets.

Staffs’ behavior also attracted considerable attention. Personnel was the third most frequent complaint in the review with more that 79 complaints. Numerous complaints were made about the hotel staffs’ inability to communicate in English. One guest noted that, ‘the staff does not speak English, and therefore has no idea how to help you. They just look at each other and don't know what to tell you’. Another guest observed that the staff lack of English skills may prevent them from ‘understanding the problems that the customers had and their inclination to resolve them’.

Other guests complained about staffs not giving them due attention and not being friendly. One guest observed that the, ‘staff are not friendly or welcoming, they do not greet guests when going in and out.’ Another guest noted that the staff even seemed indifferent, ‘the staff look and behave like they don’t want to be there.’ Geronikolas (2012) warns that rude behaviors or at least the perception of impolite behaviors can be a key factor that can drive customers away in the hotel industry. Consequently, hotels need to be wary of how employees behave in front of customers.

Hotel facilities similarly drew a lot of flak from customers. There were 54 complaints about hotel facilities. Some of the complaints were focused on the closures of hotel facilities like restaurants, gyms and pools due to recent covid measures. Other were more focused on the inadequacies of the facilities such as pools that are too small or elevators that do not work. One guest put it this way, ‘the elevator only reaches the 7th floor, but the room is on the 9th floor, so guests have to carry their own suitcases up 2 floors, the stairs are narrow and there is no staff to help carry luggage’.

A significant number of customers expressed their dissatisfaction on **bookings or hotel reservations**. 45 complaints were made specifically on bookings or reservations, and they were mostly focused on booking cancellations and on the hotel not giving customers what they specifically asked for. One guest noted, ‘the hotel canceled the reservation upon our arrival and offered to bring us for the same price to a different hotel. This hotel has a very different standard though without hot water or any comfort.’

One guest noted that Bookings.com listing were not updated frequently enough. Apparently, he booked a hotel that has already been closed for quite some time, ‘I made a ‘reservation’ on Booking.com’, and when I arrived in Hanoi, the door was shut? When I asked the store next door, ‘they said the hotel was closed permanently’. Another guest experienced that same, ‘the hotel is still accepting reservations but was closed when we arrived.’ One other guest noted concurred, ‘This hotel is regularly doing over booking, and force its customers to cancel the booking just the day we are about to stay and arrange us in lower level ‘sister’ hotel nearby.’

A considerable number of complaints were made on **ads and promotional**. They mentioned that the ads and promotions on bookings.com did not reflect reality. One guest observed that ‘this hotel is a prime example of Instagram vs reality. We booked this based on the photos on booking.com and sad to say we were very disappointed.’ Another guest described it this way, ‘The room we were given was not as described and looked nothing like the rooms advertised on booking.com.’ The adage buyers beware seems to apply to hotels listed on bookings.

The customers affected were sorely disappointed with the misleading ads and promotions. They felt cheated somewhat that the room and services provided did not match the ads and pictures posted on bookings.com. One guest commented rather crudely that, ‘the room did not correspond to the photos shown. The hotel attracts four stars on the Internet, but it does not even correspond to two stars.’

There were 41 complaints about **breakfast** and restaurants. Common complaints about breakfast included, poor quality, limited options, ala carte and not buffet, dining room that was

too small and congested. A number of the customer complaints were also focused on the hotel not providing breakfast when they mentioned they would. Soriano (2002) noted the 4 key dimension of service quality in hotel and restaurant includes quality of food (must be fresh and clean), quality of service (should be quick and responsive), prices that reflect value and ambience. To ensure customer satisfaction all 4 dimensions must be paid careful attention.

Complaints on **location** though were less frequent, 6 to be precise. Hotel location can be a big factor influencing hotel selection, and correlates closely with overall customer satisfaction (Stringam, Gerdes, & Vanleeuwen, 2010). For this study, the majority of the guests booked the hotels because of their central location in the Hoan Kiem area but they were still unprepared for the noise and congestion they invariably included. One hotel guest complained that, ‘even though we were on the seventh floor, we felt like the bed was standing in the middle of the busiest street in Hanoi’

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Previously, Covid and the threat of Covid provided a good excuse for hotels to provide subpar products and services to customers. However, after a 2-year hiatus, the tourists are back, embarking on multiple revenge travel and demanding that service quality and facilities return to pre-covid levels if not better. Failure to do so by the service provider will only push potential customers to their rivals.

The condition of the hotel rooms and bathrooms was often a sore point for the hotel guests. Common complaints included rooms that were old, dirty and smelly. To address the complaints, hotel managers should regularly audit the rooms and toilets they have in their inventory. They should also put in place a comprehensive schedule for intensive cleaning and refurbishments to make sure their rooms and toilets reflect their 4-star hotel status.

Hotel guests were also not satisfied with the staff and the service quality. A number of the customers complaints focused on the staffs inability to speak English which in turn impact on their ability to render quality service. As such hotel managers should focus on staffs training, especially language skills. Common grouses included unfriendly, unhelpful, impolite and indifferent staff addressed in part with more careful training and instructions.

Further, hotel facilities did not escape guest complaints. Complaints included hotel facilities that were closed or broken. To avoid complaints swimming pools should be cleaned as a lot of the guests wrote about unsafe and unclean pools. Gym equipment and elevators

should also be fixed and cleaned regularly. Guests cannot be expected to use the stairs to go to their rooms in a 4-star hotel.

Several of the guests were rather unhappy with hotel bookings. Common grouses included cancelled reservations or reservations that were changed without prior notice to affected guests. To avoid complaints with regards to reservations, hotel managers should make it best practice to keep guest reservations as much as possible and to offer compensation for any changes or cancellations. The idea is hotel managers should keep their promises to customers or at least not make promises they cannot keep.

On the main, good reviews overwhelmed negative reviews. However, some customers questioned the numerous good reviews on Bookings.com. One guest put it this way, 'I honestly don't understand where these good reviews come from, I travel a lot and have never had such an experience.' Another guest similarly seemed surprised by the many positive reviews online, 'unfortunately we didn't have a great experience at this hotel which is surprising given the reviews we read prior to booking this hotel.'

One guest presented a possible reason for all the positive reviews, 'the staff were nice during they stay but started almost begging for a positive review and said things like we need good reviews so we can earn money to improve after covid.' Another guest proffered bribery as an alternative reason, 'the staff wanted to bribe us with a free cab ride to the airport in exchange for a positive review. I will not put aside my dignity for \$13.' Other guests noted the frequent tendency for the hotels to quickly cancel guest bookings to prevent customers from giving negative reviews on bookings.com.

Exaggeration is common for most businesses when it comes to sales and promotions. But these actions are not without its consequences. One likely outcome of such an endeavor is the hotels inability to meet the customers raised expectations. There are expected minimum service levels and facilities with the 4-star ratings that the hotels purport to assume. Inability to meet these expectations would inevitably lead to disappointment, complaints and ultimately loss of business reputation to both the hotel operator and bookings.com.

On the part of the hotel managers, this study suggests that they should respond to the complaints promptly and professionally. Quickly responding to the complaints made will mitigate any negative feedback from customer. Further they should be honest with their star ratings and promotional photos. Misleading and deceptive promotional photos in the age of social media and internet will only antagonize guests. Customer who feels cheated by the service provide will make sure they share their negative experiences online to as many people as possible.

On the part of Bookings, they should implement a more rigorous process for verifying the hotel's star ratings for the hotels listed on their website. And not simply accept the hotel's star rating at face value. There are expectations of service levels and facilities that comes with the 4-star ratings that should be taken into account. Further promotional videos and pictures should also be vetted to ensure accuracy and authenticity

6 CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

Previous studies indicate that online reviews are becoming more and more important. Travelers almost always search for information on the internet before making their travel arrangements. As such, online reviews, especially negative online reviews will have a considerable impact on hotel bookings. This paper explores the complaints made by disgruntled hotel guests on 4-star hotels in the Hoan Kiem area of Hanoi with Bookings.com, a popular travel website, with more than 400 million unique visitors per month. The aim is to examine and to analyze the content of negative online reviews on four-star hotels in Hanoi from Booking.com and give recommendations to hotels for improvement.

The data was obtained from 23 four-star hotels in Hanoi listed on Booking.com and a total of 358 reviews were collected. The results revealed that there are eight major category of customer complaints, including rooms that old and dirty, bathrooms that were leaky or smelly, staffs that were unfriendly or indifferent, facilities that were closed or broken, reservations that were cancelled or change, deceptive promotions, unappetizing breakfast and noisy locations. These complaints, if not addressed adequately have the potential to go viral and negatively impact the image of the hotel property

There are several limitations to this study. This study only used online reviews from Booking.com. To ensure a bigger perspective, more research can be done utilizing reviews from multiple travel sites. This study is also limited by its small sample size, namely 23 hotels and 358 negative reviews. This limits the generalizability of the finding of the study.

Another limitation of this study is the potential for subjectivity in interpretation. The researcher was aware of this potential limitation and took steps to mitigate it, such as involving another researcher in the analysis and interpretation process and triangulating the study results with findings from other research papers.

Finally, this study focused only on the content of the social media posts. Less consideration was taken on the context in which the posts were produced. This context can and

will influence the meaning of the posts. Future research considering the context of the online reviews should be conducted, this could include adding online interviews to explore context when exploring online content.

REFERENCES

- Albazzaz, A., Birnbaum, B., Brachfeld, D., Danilov, D., Kets de Vries, O., & Moed, J. (2003). Lifestyles of the rich and almost famous: The boutique hotel phenomenon in the United States. *High Tech Entrepreneurship and Strategy Group Project*.
- Bambauer-Sachse, S., & Mangold, S. (2011). Brand equity dilution through negative online word-of-mouth communication. *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, 18(1), 38-45.
- Berezina, K., Cobanoglu, C., Miller, B. L., & Kwansa, F. A. (2012). The impact of information security breach on hotel guest perception of service quality, satisfaction, revisit intentions and word-of-mouth. *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*, 24(7), 991-1010.
- Bowen, J. T., & Shoemaker, S. (2003). Loyalty: A strategic commitment. *Cornell hotel and restaurant administration quarterly*, 44(5-6), 31-46.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Dangcongsan.vn. (2023, August 29). *Hanoi welcomes 187 million visitors in 2022, 47 times higher than the figure of 2021*. en.dangcongsan.vn Retrieved from <https://en.dangcongsan.vn/daily-hot-news/hanoi-welcomes-187-million-visitors-in-2022-47-times-higher-than-the-figure-of-2021-602261.html>
- Dickinger, A., & Mazanec, J. (2008). Consumers' preferred criteria for hotel online booking. In *Information and communication technologies in tourism 2008* (pp. 244-254). Springer, Vienna.
- Ekiz, E. H., & Au, N. (2011). Comparing Chinese and American attitudes towards complaining. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 23(3), 327-343.
- Ekiz, E., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Memarzadeh, F. (2012). Air the anger: investigating online complaints on luxury hotels. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 3(2), 96-106.
- El-Said, O. A. (2020). Impact of online reviews on hotel booking intention: The moderating role of brand image, star category, and price. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 33, 100604.
- Ekinci, Y., Dawes, P. L., & Massey, G. R. (2008). An extended model of the antecedents and consequences of consumer satisfaction for hospitality services. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42(1/2), 35-68.

- Gefen, D. (2002). Customer loyalty in e-commerce. *Journal of the association for information systems*, 3(1), 2.
- Geronikolas, N. (2012). Customer Defects in the Hotel Industry: The Five (5) Most Common Factors Driving Business Away. *Hub Pages Inc.*
- Herr, P. M., Kardes, F. R., & Kim, J. (1991). Effects of word-of-mouth and product-attribute information on persuasion: An accessibility-diagnostics perspective. *Journal of consumer research*, 17(4), 454-462.
- Hoffman, K. D., & Bateson, J. E. (2010). *Services marketing: Concepts, strategies, & cases.* Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.
- Jean Harrison-Walker, L. (2001). E-complaining: a content analysis of an Internet complaint forum. *Journal of Services marketing*, 15(5), 397-412.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lertputtarak, S., & Samokhin, D. (2017). Customer complaints about four star hotels In Pattaya, Thailand. *E-review of Tourism Research*, 14(5/6).
- Levy, S. E., Duan, W., & Boo, S. (2013). An analysis of one-star online reviews and responses in the Washington, DC, lodging market. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 54(1), 49-63.
- Mattila, A. S., & Mount, D. J. (2003). The impact of selected customer characteristics and response time on e-complaint satisfaction and return intent. *International journal of hospitality management*, 22(2), 135-145.
- Pan, B., MacLaurin, T., & Crofts, J. C. (2007). Travel blogs and the implications for destination marketing. *Journal of travel research*, 46(1), 35-45.
- Phillips, P., Barnes, S., Zigan, K., & Schegg, R. (2017). Understanding the impact of online reviews on hotel performance: an empirical analysis. *Journal of travel research*, 56(2), 235-249.
- Phuong Anh, D.T. (2023, September 28). *Hoi An hotels hauled up for inflating star ratings.* Vietnam Express International. Retrieved from <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/places/hoi-an-hotels-hauled-up-inflating-star-ratings-4656147.html>
- Prentice, C. (2013). Service quality perceptions and customer loyalty in casinos. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25(1), 49-64.
- Ramanathan, U., & Ramanathan, R. (2011). Guests' perceptions on factors influencing customer loyalty: An analysis for UK hotels. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 23(1), 7-25.
- Reichheld, F. F., & Schefter, P. (2000). Your secret weapon on the web. *Harvard Business Review*, 78(4), 105-113.
- Shoemaker, S., & Lewis, R. C. (1999). Customer loyalty: the future of hospitality marketing. *International journal of hospitality management*, 18(4), 345-370.

- Soriano, D. R. (2002). Customers' expectations factors in restaurants: The situation in Spain. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 19(8/9), 1055-1067.
- Sparks, B. A., & Browning, V. (2011). The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust. *Tourism management*, 32(6), 1310-1323.
- Statista Search Department (2023, November 30th). Number of rooms in tourist accommodations in Vietnam 2019 - 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1083294/vietnam-number-of-rooms-in-tavel-accommodations/>
- Statista Search Department (2024, February 28th). Hotels - Vietnam market insights. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/outlook/mmo/travel-tourism/hotels/vietnam>
- Stringam, B. B., Gerdes Jr, J., & Vanleeuwen, D. M. (2010). Assessing the importance and relationships of ratings on user-generated traveler reviews. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 11(2), 73-92.
- Sundaram, D. S., Mitra, K., & Webster, C. (1998). Word-of-mouth communications: A motivational analysis. *Advances in consumer research*, 25(1).
- Torres, E. N., & Kline, S. (2013). From customer satisfaction to customer delight: Creating a new standard of service for the hotel industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25(5), 642-659.
- Tyrrell, B., & Woods, R. (2005). E-complaint. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 17(2), 183-190.
- Vo, N. T., Hung, V. V., Tuckova, Z., Pham, N. T., & Nguyen, L. H. (2022). Guest online review: an extraordinary focus on hotel users' satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 23(4), 913-944.
- Ye, Q., Law, R., Gu, B., & Chen, W. (2011). The influence of user-generated content on traveler behavior: An empirical investigation on the effects of e-word-of-mouth to hotel online bookings. *Computers in Human behavior*, 27(2), 634-639.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Bitner, M. J., & Gremler, D. D. (2006). *Services marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill/Irwin.