A NETNOGRAPHY EXAMINATION OF TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS: A CASE STUDY OF THE ST REGIS HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR

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ABSTRACT

There has been a growing reliance on consumer generated content as a source of knowledge for hospitality product decision-making. People post their views, ratings, and reviews of products and services on such platforms, and companies and research organizations are interested in analyzing and extracting all of the comments. It is critical for hotels to take advantage of online customer review information in order to better understand their customers and enhance hotel efficiency. However, analyzing guest reviews is challenging as it contains abundance of data.

Using The St Regis Kuala Lumpur as a case study, the objective of the paper is to profile the hotel online reviews using a Netnography approach, identify the hotel attributes that guest comment based on the hotel online reviews and examine the guest satisfaction attitude based on the hotel online reviews.

A total of 388 reviews from TripAdvisor were collected. The findings revealed that most of the hotel guests who left comments were international tourists, and couples. Many of whom left excellent ratings for the hotel. The findings show there are nine attributes that are frequently mentioned namely, amenities, location, price, service, cleanliness, food and beverages, hotel and room environment.

The results also show that guests left both positive and negative reviews in few common categories such as hotel cleanliness, hotel environment and amenities. Among all the attributes mentioned, satisfied guests tended to leave positive comments for things like hotel cleanliness, hotel and room environment, while dissatisfied guests emphasised the amenities or the lack thereof.

The findings of this study make several theoretical and managerial inferences with regards to identifying hotel attributes that contribute to guest satisfaction and improves the understanding of what satisfies and dissatisfies guests from the comments left by the guests on TripAdvisor. The paper concludes with limitations and suggests future research.

KEYWORDS: Online hotel reviews, hotel attributes, customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, Netnography.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

With technology advancement, travellers nowadays opt to share their travel experience in a non-traditional way, via online mode which consist of positive and negative comments (Ekiz, Khoo-Lattimore, Memarzadeh, 2012). One of the methods is through online travel agencies (OTAs), such as Tripadvisor, Expedia, and Cleartrip. These online travel agencies do not own any hotel but host websites that attract customers with large collections of hotel information, price comparisons, discounts, and review comments (Masiero, Viglia & Nieto-Garcia, 2020).

Although considerable amount of research has emphasized the importance of customer satisfaction for both customers and hotels, research on hotel customer satisfaction mainly focus on the attributes of service quality based on the perceptions from hotel customers, and little research has attempted to examine the attributes of hotel customer satisfaction from the perspective of online hotel review — the real feedback of hotel customers (Dong & Zhang, 2014).

Thus, using The St Regis Hotel Kuala Lumpur, a luxury 5-star hotel as a case study, this study attempts to

- (1) profile the hotel online reviews using Netnographic approach,
- (2) examine the guest satisfaction levels based on the hotel online reviews and
- (3) identify the hotel attributes that guest comment based on the hotel online reviews.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative methods and a single case study that uses secondary data derived using Netnography to research the hypothesis posed in this research paper.

This study used the approach from a content analysis study on guest reviews, Traveller reviews are defined as an unstructured, but complete text distributed into a series of complete sentences called comments by individual online reviewers. Individual comments are evident irrespective of the lengths of the paragraphs and a full stop is deemed as ‘a point that marked the end of a sentence’ (Full Stop”, 2007).

Comments were categorized into positive, negative and/or neutral. Every comment can be assigned to one of more categories with specific attributes. Neutral are associated with the situation where consumers may not have a strong feeling towards a particular item being evaluated which adopted for this study. Using a taxonomy of consumer comments by Lei and Law (2015), a “+1+ is numerically assigned to a specific attribute of a category (e.g., positive, negative or neutral) whatever the textual meaning of the sentence fits the category and the attributed.

All reviews, both textual and photographic were carefully examined. Given the enormous amounts of data collected, a cut-off date was assigned. Data was monitored and collected until April 2020.

A total of 388 reviews were collected and initially recorded in Microsoft Excel manually. Multiple languages were used in the reviews such as English, Chinese, Japanese and Malay. However, all the non-English reviews were excluded to avoid misinterpretation. After sorting and ensuring all the data had been presented accurately, the data were converted to qualitative analysis software NVIVO 11 to complete the data analysis

CONCLUSION

Being able to provide high-quality, meaningful experiences to hotel guests is unquestionably important in hotel establishment. Ensuring what makes customer satisfied requires knowledge in identifying what guests deem as important when evaluating the hotel experience provided to the guest. Although recognising the factors that contribute to determining a guest’s choice of hotel are complicated, the importance of identifying the hotel attributes that influence guest hotel choice and the features that are perceived as significant by guest assist hoteliers in making optimal decision from a hotel development and pricing strategy standpoint.

Not only it is beneficial for hotels, the positive experience guest received during their stay will stimulate them to contribute positive word-of-mouth about the hotel to their friends and family and these types of

guests tend to be more loyal. Therefore, understanding expectations and perceptions of hotel guest is one of the critical factors in achieving customer satisfaction in hotels.

CONTRIBUTION/PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

By examining and monitoring the attributes that have emerged from the online customer reviews, it enables hotels to understand the voice of every guest. Concurrently, by analysing these comments, hotels will be able to see the larger picture and pinpoint the important attributes and critical discussion about the underpinnings of satisfied and dissatisfied hotel customer.

A failure to obtain any input from guests would have a negative impact on hotels. In addition, the attributes identified can assist the hotel to identify top concerns, so that they know which aspect of their hotels needs more attention.

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