

ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS OF HOTELS/RESORTS AND SPAS

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ABSTRACT

Research zooming in on the discussion of spa reviews and its connection as part of guests' holistic hotel experience is scarce, yet spa service is considered an important and necessary amenity in most luxury hotels and resorts in order to uphold their luxury image and positioning [4]. To close this gap, drawing from Lewin's [3] environment-behavioral theory, this research explores the impact of hotel guests' online reviews about resort spas on their holistic hotel experiences. According to Jensen [2], 97 percent of consumers consult product reviews while 85 percent of consumers seek out negative reviews before making a purchase. The extant hospitality research has primarily utilized TripAdvisor as the main source to investigate the effects of online hotel reviews on consumer decision-making and behaviors. We aim to identify themes, text characteristics, online review dimensions, and positive and negative aspects that guests' address in their review to define specific attributes that drive customers to give high ratings for the hotel/resort and spa services.

All existing TripAdvisor reviews for the hotels and resorts located on the Island of Oahu in Hawaii were collected in February 2019 (N=58,670). 1,504 reviews about spas located in 73 hotels were identified for the further analysis. The average number of reviews per spa was 20.54. To examine the spa reviews, an advanced machine-learning natural-language processing tool, Leximancer v3, was utilized for text analytics [1]. In step one, a broad conceptual structure of reviews was explored. In step two, rating categories (high versus low) were introduced for more detailed text proximity analysis.

The reviews were measured for the presence of concepts, their frequency and interconnections. Leximancer produced 6 main themes and extracted 62 concepts, including spa, service, and restaurant. Experience theme was interrelated with spa. Concept massage landed on the border of spa experience themes. When review ratings were examined, collectively rating 1 and rating 2 landed in the identical "old" theme. Located on the opposite side of the conceptual map, rating 5 demonstrated a strong connection to massage, spa-restaurants, food, amazing, best, experience and recommend concepts. Spa and massage concepts were likely connected to food attributes.

This study contributes to consumer-decision making and hospitality consumer-generated content line of research, and extends understanding of hotel experience design, evaluation criteria and patterns. Moreover, study results offer better understanding toward how a positive spa massage experience influences or contributes to the higher consumer-generated ratings within luxury hotel/resort. Hotel "friendly staff", "service", "location", and "stay" are nodes that linked with "best", "experience", and "recommend" characteristics. These text characteristics conjure up the highest rating of the holistic hotel/resort experience customer online reviews. As such, the results of this study demonstrate the applicability of visual and textual analytic methods, which can help managers innovate and enhance customers' holistic hotel experiences.

Keywords: online reviews, spa, rating, experience, hotel

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