Article

Cruise Travelers' Service Perceptions: A Critical Content Analysis

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Abstract: This paper examines the main elements of online reviews left by popular cruise ships' travelers. The eight most popular cruise ships were selected. We aimed to pinpoint the service quality experiential perceptions of cruise travelers regarding their higher or lower value for money ratings. Leximancer 4.5 software was used to derive the linkage and co-occurrence between service concepts in the online narratives of 2000 guests from Cruisecritic.com. The evaluation showed 10 areas addressed by the descriptions of the cruise's perceived quality. These are "ship," "staff," "food," "entertainment," "room," "area," "embarkation," "excursion" "disembarkation," and "port." Furthermore, the results highlight themes like "ship," "staff," "food," "entertainment," "room," and "area" as belonging to the high-satisfaction group (excellent/very good), while "embarkation," "disembarkation," "excursion," and "port" belong to the low-satisfaction group (poor/terrible). The study offers useful insights into cruise travelers' general perceived experience according to user-generated content, and enables the identification of the main themes associated with different satisfaction groups.

Keywords: cruise; travel; service quality; content analysis; ship industry; guest perception; online reviews

1. Introduction

Cruise tourism is a rapidly developing, worldwide market [1]. Developing countries as well as developed countries are attempting to participate in cruise tourism, which can make an important economic contribution [2–5]. Cruise tourism is one of the most rapidly upwardly mobile sectors in the tourism industry, generating approximately USD 134 billion yearly [6]. The industry estimates that the number of functioning vessels will grow from 264 ships in 2018 to around 472 cruise ships by the year 2027 [7]. The growing number of passengers as well as operating ships and ports support this statement [8–11]. Consistent with the growth of the cruise industry, this is exerting a dual influence on the economies of the destination ports [12,13].

Although cruise tourism is among the tourism phenomena that are experiencing significant growth [1], it has not received much attention from an academic point of view [13,14], especially in terms of cruisers' service quality perceptions. This is worrying, since service quality studies can assess how successful service ambassadors fulfill tourists' needs according to tourists' perceptions, helping cruise ship staff to prioritize tourists' needs, wants, and expectations [15].

The delivery of expected service quality is broadly accepted as an essential antecedent of customer satisfaction as well as loyalty, which can ultimately lead to greater competitive performance [16]. Additionally, service quality as well as customer satisfaction is predominantly multifaceted for the service sector [17]. This is valid for the cruise industry, which has a complex service process spanning from embarkation to disembarkation [18].

Due to the homogenous characteristics of the core service delivered (i.e., moving tourists and products from one place to other), cruises accomplish differentiation through the delivery of a superior quality of service [19]. A number of investigations have demonstrated that service quality ingenuities have turned out to be vital for organizations to be able to compete with rivals [20] as well as sustain customer satisfaction [21]. Hence, for cruise companies, service quality and its role have had key significance in the last decade in the main corporate policy of differentiation [22].

Despite the growing amount of cruise-related research and recent calls for further research [23,24], the literature remains scarce, especially regarding service quality. Limited studies on cruise service quality have often used questionnaires to gather data [19,22]. To our knowledge, there is no study in the literature that focuses on the service quality perception of tourists, investigated using content analysis, on cruise ships. While a number of investigations have used content analyses by collecting reviews within different service-based industries, these studies collected user-generated content to define perceived service quality from the tourist angle [25,26]. Furthermore, such studies concluded that further research should gauge the possible factors that can influence the service perceptions of travelers. These so-called factors directly affect the user-perceived quality of specific leisure products. Therefore, bearing in mind the new quality perceptions obtainable via online word of mouth (e-WOM), the current research examines the main themes in relation to service quality and which service attributes lead to higher/lower levels of satisfaction. Given the importance of the cruise segment in the tourism sector and the few studies in the field, our research findings will add to the literature and shed light on how to determine the best strategies for the cruise industry. Even though perceived value for money as well as service quality have been revealed to be associated with travelers' positive WOM, the current studies are still vague as regards the service components that are considered to represent higher value for money [25,27]. To the best of our knowledge, no known study has investigated the attributes of service quality of cruises using tourists' online reviews.

Based on the gaps highlighted above, the current research sought to analyze online reviews from cruise passengers. The two primary objectives of this research were to find the dominant themes in relation to perceived cruise quality and to examine which concepts were linked with higher and lower value for money ratings from the tourists' perspective.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Service Quality in the Cruise Industry

Studies about cruises are scarce. This is likely because cruise research, as well as tourism studies overall, lack an overarching theme and a clear hypothetical outline [28]. Furthermore, works in relation to cruise tourism have paid attention to different topics—for instance, tourist satisfaction [29] and port experiences [30] as well as their motivations [31–33], antecedents of visitors' experience at a cruise destination [34], the service supply chain [35], the undesirable environmental effects of cruise tourism in different regions [36,37], host countries' perceptions of the cruise industry [38] and security concerns [37]. Much of the previous literature on cruises' perceived service quality is based on traditional pen and pencil questionnaires that measure perceived service quality. Conversely, it could be argued that employing surveys during travel can be a burden, in terms of not just cost but also further matters such as safety and travelers' relaxation [39]. Consequently, social media platforms on which passengers can share their experience are becoming an alternative data source [25].

Only a few studies have focused on the cruise domain using online reviews [40,41]. Service quality is the most prevalent factor found in the literature [42]. Moreover, it is also a key factor in competition between organizations. To achieve the upper hand, businesses need to produce a high-quality product and service to satisfy their customers in a competitive sphere.

This is valid for the cruise line industry. In the cruise line industry, a number of features influence tourists' perceived cruise quality. These characteristics include both tangible and intangible features [43]. Some researchers have revealed a predictor role of service quality regarding customer satisfaction in the cruise sector [22,44,45]. For example, a study conducted in Hong Kong analyzed the role of perceived service quality in determining travelers' satisfaction as well as their intentions to revisit. A related study explored five service quality attributes: accommodation, food and beverages, entertainment, other facilities, and staff. Furthermore, the study showed that food and beverage facilities and staff performance are the most important antecedents of satisfaction. However, in that study there was dissatisfaction with some other attributes: "attractiveness, variety and organization of entertainment," "sport/fitness, shopping and child care facilities," and "seating space in F&B outlets" [46]. One research surveyed 254 passengers and 153 prospective passengers to ascertain the onboard attributes of a cruise. The findings exposed that existing as well as prospective passengers commonly considered entertainment, leisure and sporting facilities, cabin, restaurants and food, fitness and health offerings, children's activities, and staff when deciding to book a cruise [47]. A study done by Lee and colleagues gauged the relationships between quality factors (i.e., physical environment quality, interactional quality, and outcome quality), satisfaction, affective commitment, and behavioral intentions across gender and age groups. Their research reported that both interactional quality and outcome quality were significantly correlated to cruise passengers' satisfaction [44]. Furthermore, a recent study focused on the antecedents of passenger loyalty, and the moderating effects of service recovery on the relationships between the antecedents and customer loyalty were tested statistically. The outcomes of the study confirmed that service quality and customer satisfaction had positive impacts on customer loyalty [45]. Similarly, one study on cruise experiences gathered questionnaire from 330 American cruisers. The findings demonstrated that food quality, staff, entertainment, amenities, ports of call, children's activities, and room amenities considerably affected the perceived cruise quality [22]. One study employed the SERVQUAL scale to determine the association of cruise travel service quality and satisfaction. The research revealed that service quality is the forerunner of fulfillment, just as travelers' perceived value and satisfaction play a significant role in their decision to return or revisit [48]. In the cruise industry, scholars have explicitly noted that improving the service quality is a prerequisite for the success of a cruise organization [35,42,43,47,48]. In addition, the study accounted for eight cruise travel service features: food and drink quality, staff service, amusement, room amenities, attractions for youngsters, and accommodation quality. It is well documented that cruise travelers generally have elevated standards regarding service quality and that the apparent service quality influences the general assessment of cruise travel [19].

2.2. Cruise Service Quality Dimensions

In the hospitality field, customer experience has been studied broadly through service quality because marketing effectiveness requires an understanding of how consumers perceive their experience [49]. To measure consumer satisfaction levels and perceived service quality, the SERVQUAL instrument has been introduced and modified to specific tourism and hospitality industry settings [50,51]. However, in terms of cruises, three dimensions, as advanced by Brady and Cronin—(1) physical environment (i.e., the physical setting of the cruise ship); (2) interaction (i.e., employee services); (3) outcome (i.e., the benefits the cruise customer receives during a service encounter)—have been widely accepted. In comparison, cruise quality attributes represent the most recognized and used dimension of service quality in the industry [2,22].

More specifically, Chua et al.'s study documented that cruise passengers' quality dimensions (physical environment, interaction, and outcome) were significantly correlated with passenger satisfaction. Similarly, another study reported that the onboard facilities of a cruise affect travelers' service perceptions such as entertainment, leisure and sporting activities, additional amenities, basic goods and services such as the room, room service, and food, as well as entertainment activities for kids [47]. In addition, one study confirmed that the desirable and undesirable features affected travelers'

assessments of cruise travel. That study revealed that staff, food/drink, ship amenities, ports of call, child/teen facilities, rooms, prices, excursions, and cruise security were the most important service elements for cruise travelers [52]. One study completed by the Cruise Lines International Association found that rooms, food, entertainment, spa/wellness offerings, and excursions were essential in the eyes of travelers when selecting cruise travel [48,53]. A study conducted in North America demonstrated that the physical environment, staff interaction, and outcome dimensions were linked with cruise customer satisfaction and loyalty [44].

2.3. Role of Web Reviews in Service Quality Studies

As stated previously, scholars have generally employed questionnaires to find and confirm the key elements of cruise tourists' perceived quality [19,22]. Research concerning cruises can also use Web-based investigations. This gives an opportunity to investigate service quality perceptions. Therefore, current research uses online reviews as an alternative to the traditional survey method. Although service quality has been studied widely in the literature, there is still ambiguity about which service attributes establish service quality. It is critical to understand the key service attributes leading to tourist satisfaction. From a methodological point of view, most scholars have largely employed survey methods to measure service quality in the service-based industries [54]. Nevertheless, a few recent studies have emphasized the benefits of using user-generated content on the Internet. It could be quite important to determine these key attributes in a broader context [25,26]. Online platforms (such as Twitter or Facebook) lead consumers to share perceptions about products and services [38]. Nowadays, a growing number of tourists read and share online travel-related content, particularly if they are displayed or generated by their associates [55]. Customer online reviews are advancing the development of word-of-mouth (WOM) on the Internet [38,56]. They are especially relevant for service industries because of intangible characteristics, which include purchase risks [57].

Scholars have recognized these reviews as a natural setting for the study of travelers' perceived quality [58]. Nowadays, travelers can effortlessly post their comments online for other individuals to read. Generally, online reviews are acknowledged as available, trustworthy, and secure by both travelers and scholars [59,60]. In the eyes of executives, using online reviews has advantages such as collecting customer feedback in an economical and rapid way [58,61,62]. Scholars formerly investigated online reviews to find the key elements of tourists' general perception in different domains of hospitality. For example, one study conducted in China scrutinized shopping tourism [63]. Another study examined romantic tourist attractions in Australia [64]. Additionally, one study investigated destination image formation agents for China's inbound tourism [59]. Furthermore, a study examined the service quality perception of airline passengers [25]. Research by Rodrigues et al. focused on perceptions of service quality in medical tourism [26].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Context

The eight cruise ships were chosen from CruiseCritic.com for their popularity. This website annually chooses the best and most popular cruise ships according to tourists' ratings. Assessment categories include Cabins, Dining, Entertainment, Public Rooms, Fitness Recreation, Family, Shore Excursion, Enrichment, Service, and Value for Money.

3.2. Data Collection

Convenience sampling was utilized to ensure the number of reviews required to use Leximancer software, and to match the sample size of previous related research. For example, one study examined passengers' service quality observations about carriers (*n* = 1200 surveys) [25], another collected online reviews to analyze medical tourists' perceptions (*n* = 603) [26], one investigated guests' service perceptions toward World Heritage sites (*n* = 226) [58], while another concentrated on sentimental travel industry attractions in Australia (*n* = 167) [63]. For each cruise ship, 250 reviews were collected, making a total of 2000 reviews that added up to 445,702 words. Following the methodology used by other researchers [26,58], only English reviews were taken into consideration for the current research. The reviews shared by tourists online were collected from Cruisecritic.com and kept in an Excel (csv. Comma Delimited) database. The data were collected by the research team in the form of passenger reviews posted on Cruisecritic.com between June and August 2019. The database included the title of the review, the review content, and the tourist score on a 5-point scale with the following classifications: terrible (1), poor (2), average (3), very good (4), and excellent (5). However, the data lacked a detailed demographic description of Cruise Critic reviewers; therefore, passengers' characteristics were not taken into consideration.

3.3. Methodological Approach

Tourists post their perceptions on an online platform and rely on those platforms' reviews shared by other tourists when deciding on their travel [65]. Content investigation of web surveys has been progressively utilized in the exploration of travel industry settings.

In the past decade, content investigation has had expanding ubiquity as an effective method to comprehend the fast-developing domain of the Internet. Both subjective and quantitative examinations can be utilized to process textual information [57]. Accordingly, content investigation can be operationalized with organized quantitative or unstructured subjective methodologies. These involve ascertaining words and registering obvious content highlights or creating insight into what is composed [66]. This examination used Leximancer programming, which researches words' occurrences as co-events in a survey to discover primary ideas (i.e., gatherings of ordinarily connected words) and organize them into topics [66]. Leximancer, utilized with its own calculations, is used for researching the faculties inside entries of text by mining the primary ideas. It is a quantitative way to deal with subjective investigation by using different calculations for stages [59]. Furthermore, the related program helps researchers by creating an inductive archive of fundamental topics with as little intervention as possible [66]. Referenced programming screens quantitative activities as per the Bayesian measurable hypothesis, utilizing calculations and utilizing nonlinear elements [62]. The formulation capitalizes on three fundamental units: words, ideas, and subjects. What is more, Leximancer discovers correlations between narratives. Related frequencies are used to make a representation called a "concept map." Related ideas are situated close to each other on the map.

4. Findings

4.1. General Description of Cruise Travel Perceived Quality

An idea map was made to exhibit the shared topics and ideas found in the surveys, as well as the recurrence of events and co-events. The analysis showed 10 major themes: "ship," "staff," "food," "entertainment," "room," "area" (public spaces), "embarkation," "excursions," disembarkation," and "port" (see Figure 1). Leximancer software enabled us to compose this map, which contains concepts (illustrated by the smaller gray nodes) that are grouped into themes (shown by the larger shaded circles). The content analyses revealed the existence of 10 themes in cruise travelers' online descriptions of perceived cruise quality. Table 1 shows the abovementioned themes and concepts and their relevancy percentages.
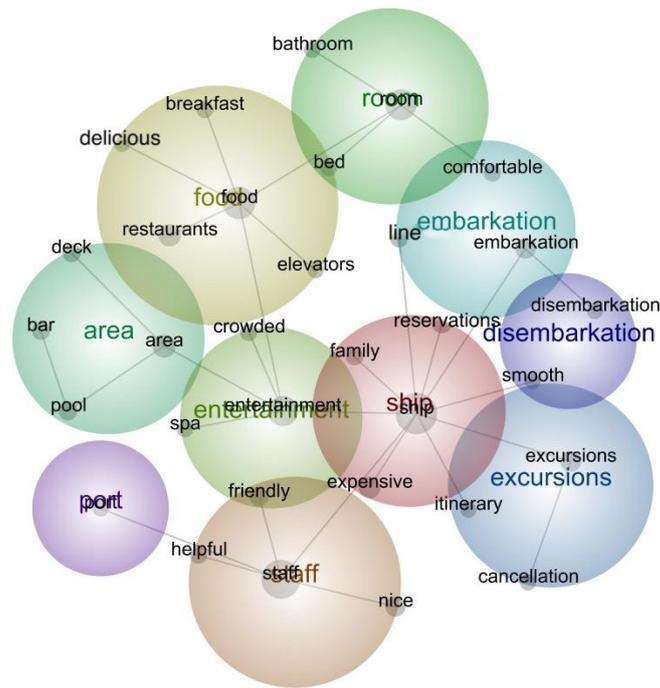
Figure 1. Concept map.

Table 1. Main themes, concepts, and relevancy percentages.

Themes	Concepts	Relevancy (%)
Ship	ship	100%
	family	36%
	reservation	17%
	expensive	11%
Staff	staff	78%
	friendly	38%
	helpful	36%
	nice	21%
Food	food	56%
	breakfast	48%
	restaurants	47%
	delicious	22%
	elevators	19%
Area (public spaces)	area	33%
	pool	30%
	deck	22%
	bar	20%
Rooms (cabins)	room	55%
	bathroom	48%
	bed	38%
Entertainment	entertainment	53%
	crowded	27%
	spa	26%
Embarkation	embarkation	15%
	line	11%
	comfortable	9%
Excursions	excursions	19%
	cancellation	15%
	itinerary	15%
Disembarkation	disembarkation	11%
	smooth	9%
Port	port	11%

4.2. Analysis of Different Satisfaction Groups

A second aim of this study was to analyze how cruise travelers with different overall evaluations (4 or 5 out of 5 points vs. 1 or 2 out of 5) responded to the perceived cruise quality in web reviews. The outcomes of the analysis demonstrate that cruise travelers who gave a cruise a 4 ("Very good") or 5 ("Excellent") rating more often shared narratives around the themes of ship, area (public space), staff, entertainment, and food.

The results of the analysis demonstrated that cruise travelers who rated cruises 4 ("Very good") or 5 ("Excellent") for the value for money generally shared narratives around "area" (public space), "entertainment," "room," "food," "staff," and "ship." An assessment of the themes for this group found that their highest-connected concepts were as follows: area (public space) (80% likelihood of co-occurrence), entertainment (71%), comfortable (69%), helpful (67%), room (66%), food (61%), deck (61%), breakfast (61%), friendly (61%), bathroom (59%), staff (58%), bed (57%), spa (56%), and ship (55%).

In general, they were the group who used the most expressive terms for their perceived cruise quality. Typical comments from this group include the following:

> "The staff did their best to make this a memorable cruise. Top [marks] to our Butler and the cleaning staff. The food was fantastic in all the restaurants we visited. The staff in the Haven went above and beyond the call of duty. If [I] had any complaints at all it would only be that the Shore Excursions were to short and rushed. The ship was clean in all areas [;] not only the haven, [but] all public areas."

> "The food is excellent, always hot and varied, with a choice of restaurants; there's a variety of enjoyable entertainment, something for everyone really. But what stands out more than anything is the excellent staff: nothing is too much trouble; always friendly and helpful."

> "We had the best time. The food was outstanding, the drinks were amazing, and the staff went above and beyond to make us very comfortable. The cruise director, Clay, really made our cruise something to remember. He was very professional and funny at the same time. We loved how he handled things. We will definitely cruise Norwegian again."

> "The ship is gorgeous, the food was delicious, [the] bed was so comfortable, and the entertain[ment] was top-notch! The Haven staff went above and beyond to get to know us and make us feel like VIPs."

In contrast, those who rated their cruise perceptions as "poor or terrible" were grouped quite closely in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Different satisfaction groups' evaluation of perceived cruise quality.

An evaluation of the perceptions associated with this group's accounts showed that the regularly repeated concepts were expensive (49%), reservation (48%) line (47%), elevator (40%), cancellation (38%), embarkation (38%), port (34%), excursion (30%), and disembarkation (30%) (Figure 2). Instances of undesirable narratives regarding the abovementioned concepts emphasized the embarkation/disembarkation process, excursions, cancellations, and reservation problems. Passengers expressed their problems with the embarkation/disembarkation process as follows:

"Embarkation was slow, slow, slow, as was disembarkation. Disembarking the ship was 30 min behind after only 60 min. We decided to walk off before our time to make our travel connections and found no line, either getting off the ship or at customs."

"The embarkation and disembarkation were the worst part of the trip. It took a long time and I felt sorry for older people and those with small children waiting so long in line."

Some passengers shared negative experiences regarding cancellations, expenses, excursions, as well as the port. Example negative reviews by cruise travelers are below:

"The excursions were expensive and not very good. We took an excursion to a brewery, which turned out to be a bus ride to a STORE."

"I really thought this was a more reputable company. I guess that [the] agent really needed the commission. There seems to be no reason for them not to remove the travel insurance from my invoice. We still booked a very expensive cruise with them and will, more than likely, spend money on the ship for extras and excursions. I would think they would want to keep the future customer satisfied and happy!!! In this case, this company has really missed the customer service boat!!!! Shame on them!!!"

"Crowded, crowded, crowded. Elevators were hard to come by, even staircases were crowded. No matter when you walked around, even early [in the] morning, this ship felt crowded. Also, most people had the Ultimate Beverage Package....so most people were DRUNK."

"Port and shore excursions were overpriced, [with] not many options. Overall, this cruise was not worth our time and money. Kids did not like it. Adults were very disappointed about the food, port and shore excursions and the overall services. We will not recommend this cruise to any of our friends and or famil[y]."

"Due to questionable and expensive cabin pricing, delayed embarkation, cancellation of a port, and questionable/lack of explanations from company, we do not plan on choosing this cruise for future travels."

5. Discussion and Conclusions

In contrast to most previous studies in service perception research, this study highlights cruise travelers' natural language use in shaping their perceived cruise quality. We preferred to use user-generated content. Thus, we obtained 2000 cruise travelers' narratives from Cruisecritic.com. Leximancer 4.5 was utilized to help analyze the data collected. The first objective of this research was to analyze online user-generated content in order to develop concepts, which will give deep insight into travelers' perceived cruise quality. This objective was expressed in a concept map (see Figure 1) of cruise tourists' general views of perceived quality. The results of the analysis showed 10 major themes: "ship," "staff," "food," "entertainment," "room," "area" (public spaces), "embarkation," "excursions," disembarkation," and "port." The theme of the ship (cruise) had 100% relevancy with other concepts, which is a measurement that covers the service quality component [22]. This theme is associated with the totality of the travel perceptions. In the study, ship and family concepts were mentioned repeatedly in the reviews. Groups who rated the cruise quality highly (very good and excellent) referred to both the ship and their family in their narratives, which means that those who selected to cruise with their spouse and children were satisfied with their travel. The findings of this study also confirmed the importance of the staff, the second most important theme. Travelers mostly

mentioned the characteristics (e.g., helpful, friendly) of the staff. The staff theme was also found to be an important component in previous service quality scales [22]. Furthermore, onboard services, such as food and entertainment, as well as the quality of the ports, are the most well-known elements in service quality investigations [52]. Food was another dominant theme in the study. There are some previous studies that focused on the importance of food. For instance, the satisfaction of customers concerning food and beverages was a vital element determining travelers' intention to repurchase and spread positive WOM in the hotel industry [67]. Moreover, the quality of the food affects passengers' perceived quality during travel [19], while another study reported that satisfying the food expectations of cruise passengers is essential to guest satisfaction [30].

The public areas theme was another dominant concept in this study. A study reported that cruise guests give more importance to public space (decks, etc.) than to their individual lodgings [57]. A cabin, for the most part, is utilized only for changing clothes and resting, while impressive open zones give travelers an assortment of amenities and ways to get exercise [68]. Entertainment was another theme about which cruise travelers shared narratives in this research. High-quality entertainment plays a noteworthy role in cruise travelers' satisfaction as well as the brand image creation process [19]. In parallel with these findings, one study stated that entertainment on cruises makes good memories and assists with creating a favorable brand image [57]. Cabin quality was another theme that showed up in the current research [69]. One study confirmed that the cabin quality is an important service quality antecedent that leads to customer satisfaction for cruise travelers [46]. Another study stressed the significance of room noiselessness [70], while one study found that beds and toiletries were key components of cruise inboard lodge quality assessment [71]. One study conducted on 212 cruise travelers' impressions of Cyprus found that the perception of the onboard accommodation is one of the most significant components in the assessment of the service quality offered by cruise companies. In the same study, embarkation and disembarkation were a dominant theme [72]. Another study confirmed that embarkation and disembarkation processes are significant factors affecting the satisfaction level of guests [73]. In addition to the aforementioned findings, one study found that smooth embarkation and disembarkation is essential for the perception of a faultless cruise experience [57]. The port theme was also identified in the present research. Previous cruise research has stressed that port quality as well as price perception/sensitivity are critical reasons that cruise travelers select/repurchase a specific cruise line [13,22].

The current research's second objective was to determine whether cruise passengers who rate the cruise quality as higher (4 or 5 out of 5) or (1 or 2 out of 5) lower value for money write different sorts of reviews in relation to the perceived quality [25,27]. The outcomes of this investigation illustrated that cruise travelers who rated the cruise quality as 4 ("Very good") or 5 ("Excellent") more often shared narratives around the themes of "ship," "area" (public space), "room," "staff," "entertainment," and "food." In contrast, those who rated their cruise quality as 1 (terrible) or 2 (poor) out of 5 shared narratives with words like "expensive," "reservation," "line" (queue), "elevator," "cancellation," "embarkation," "port," "excursion," and "disembarkation."

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings stated herein contribute to the current knowledge and enhance our understanding of the perceived service quality of cruise travelers. Although the current research has some similarities to the limited previous studies gauging perceived service quality in the cruise industry, it is dissimilar from past research. The key emphasis of this research was the dominant themes in relation to perceived cruise quality and the concepts that are linked with higher and lower value for money rating from tourists' perspective. Moreover, consumer behavior studies in the cruise industry remains scarce [22]. By bridging this gap, the research adds a number of theoretical contributions to the cruise literature. First, the current research identified the main narrative themes linked with higher (4 or 5 out of 5) and lower (1 or 2 out of 5) ratings of cruise value for money. Certainly, the content analysis revealed that

these two tourist groups have different definitions of cruise quality in mind when writing their online reviews, so the narratives posted to the travel site by the two groups contain opposing themes.

Second, this research goes beyond previous cruise studies that concentrate on a few particular tours [48,52] by scrutinizing a larger set of features as well as utilizing cruise travelers' online reviews posted to Cruise Critic's online platform. Subsequently, it builds up an extensive picture of the connections between the characteristics of cruise ships and clients' service perceptions.

Third, although cruise service quality has been reviewed in extant research, there is still vagueness as to which service traits build up the service quality [57]. It is important to comprehend the key service characteristics leading to travelers' fulfillment. From a methodological perspective, the vast majority of researchers have utilized the survey strategy to gauge service quality in the cruise sector [2,22,74]. However, a couple of recent studies have mentioned the upsides of examining travelers' online reviews on the web. In this way, this study goes beyond the traditional survey method and also concentrates on travelers' reviews in relation to perceived cruise quality.

5.2. Managerial Implications

Considering tourists' appraisals as an expression of perceived quality can help decision makers in the cruise industry to ascertain the key features that can lead to a positive post-purchase attitude and diminish negative perceptions for cruise travelers. Hence, tourists' evaluations not only offer a profitable way for cruise firms to gather responses from their visitors but also a chance to realize ways to produce positive post-purchase intentions. To secure good guest feedback and positive word of mouth intention, cruise companies should deliver the desired service quality starting from the port where they embark and continuing right up to the disembarkation process. The examination showed 10 themes that account for passengers' perceived cruise quality: "ship," "staff," "food," "entertainment," "room," and "area" (public spaces) belonged to the high satisfaction group (Excellent/Very Good), while "embarkation," "excursion," "disembarkation," and "port" belonged to the low satisfaction group (Poor/Terrible). It seems from these results that the success of the cruise is intensely associated with the perception of area (public spaces), food, entertainment, and staff factors, while dissatisfaction appeared in relation to excursions, the embarkation/disembarkation process, cancellations, and ports. Therefore, cruise firms need to pay attention to undesirable incidents associated with these concepts to find the key reasons for them as well as implement strategies to limit future undesirable events and their negative effects on travelers' perceived quality.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

The current research has some limitations that need to be considered. First, only eight cruise ships were considered in this research. Future studies can give a wider vision of cruise travelers' Internet-based narratives by including other types of cruises (for example, family vs. luxury) and more firms in the samples. Enlarging samples may allow future researchers to evaluate the differences in links between satisfaction levels and the core themes of cruise travelers' experience for each firm. Second, we only concentrated on one platform, Cruisecritic.com. Future research could include user-generated content from another online platform (for example, Tripadvisor) to evaluate the congruence with this study's results. The current research did not take into account the different groups of cruise lines (i.e., mass market, first-class, and luxury) in analyzing perceived quality. The impact of the cruise line on the cruise experience is also worth studying. It would be interesting to study how cruise travelers' quality perceptions differ depending on the groups or classes of cruise lines. Additionally, a question that merits more research is whether the themes of travelers' overall perception differ consistently with the demographic profile of the travelers (e.g., sex or nationality) or not. This might offer us more understanding concerning the market segmentation in the cruise industry. Future studies could also utilize other qualitative approaches to augment the current results on cruise travelers' outlooks.

discussion and results parts and checked the latest version of the paper. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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