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WHAT DRIVES SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION OF HOTEL GUESTS? AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS BASED ON TRIPADVISOR

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WHAT DRIVES SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION OF HOTEL GUESTS? AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS BASED ON TRIPADVISOR

Abstract

Understanding the drivers of hotel guest satisfaction and dissatisfaction is basic for hotel managers. In this research, we use a large database of more than 30,000 reviews that were posted on TripAdvisor to investigate this issue. We use Power BI to assign a sentiment score to each review and to extract the main phrases from them. This allows us to create two datasets of words and phrases (one derived from the reviews of satisfied guests and one derived from the reviews of dissatisfied guests) in order to compare them. In order to compare both datasets, we perform a quantitative analysis. We find that some of the concepts are mentioned almost equally by both types of guests (the staff, the room, the food options and the infrastructure of the hotel, mainly the pool area), while others appear more predominantly in one of the cases (e.g. the bathroom and prices are mentioned much more frequently by dissatisfied guests). These results allow us to draw some conclusions for hotel managers.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the drivers of guest satisfaction and dissatisfaction is key in any industry. In the case of the hospitality industry, social media provides a great opportunity to this aim. Up to now, the literature has been more concerned on the drivers of satisfaction than of those of dissatisfaction (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2020). We believe that the main reason for this situation is that most of the reviews that are published in online review sites are positive. Alternatively, large databases include negative reviews which provide interesting information that can be used for managerial purposes.

Guest satisfaction matters for any type of hotel. Its importance lies in its influence on hotels performance based on variables such as consumption, revisit intention, and eWOM (Melián-González & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016). Literature considers that service quality is an important driver of client satisfaction (Caruana, 2002). Most of studies analyze service qualitative from a deductive view (Puri & Singh, 2018). This means that researchers rely on established models such as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1985), LODGQUAL (Getty & Thompson, 1994), and HOLSERV (Salazar et al., 2010) to represent service quality. In this line of research, another option is to use similar service quality dimensions to those of these models, such as staff courtesy and hotel ambiance (Amin et al., 2013; Padlee et al., 2019). In any case, all these studies assume a limited number of factors of service quality in the explanation of client satisfaction in hotels. This implies that additional factors regarding client perceptions, which may be important for client satisfaction, are not considered.

User-generated content (UGC) provides an opportunity to find out what tourists perceive and value (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). Social media such as TripAdvisor collects tourists' ratings and comments about their experience in hotels. Thus, the qualitative facet of these ratings (i.e., client's comments that describe what tourists consider most relevant about their stays) can be used to determine what makes a hotel client to be satisfied or unsatisfied. Because the analysis of UGC can be performed without the usage of predetermined categories, results provide a richer view of the experience of clients.

Additionally, most of studies about client satisfaction in hotels seek to explain what leads to a high client satisfaction (Xu & Li, 2016). Thus, it is assumed that the same factors that cause client satisfaction also generate low client satisfaction. Nevertheless, there is evidence that this is not the case (Gu & Ryan, 2008; Xu & Li, 2016). This research seeks to contribute to extend the knowledge of the factors that cause both client satisfaction and dissatisfaction, respectively, in the hotel industry. In this context, our research questions are the following: Which factors cause guest satisfaction? Which factors cause guest dissatisfaction? Are the factors that lead to higher customer satisfaction the ones that also lead to low customer satisfaction?

METHODS

We downloaded all the reviews that all the hotels in the island of Gran Canaria, Spain, had got during the 2019 year. We decided to use the year 2019 in order to avoid possible effects due to the COVID pandemic. This led to a total of 29,231 reviews. To avoid translation issues, we kept only the reviews in English, which account for 17,528 (60% of all the reviews).

We then analyzed these 17,528 reviews using the Sentiment Analysis tool in Power BI. This tool provides for each individual review a score between 0 and 1. 0 means that the text provided is extremely negative, while 1 means that the text provided is extremely positive. Following, we calculated the correlation between the scores provided by the clients and the scores provided by the Power BI tools. The correlation coefficient was 0.62.

Given this correlation, we analyzed the data in further detail, and found that the distribution of the scores provided by the tool was unexpected: 3,585 reviews got a score between 0 and 0.25; only 13 had a score between 0.25 and 0.75, in most cases 0.5. And 13,930 had a score above 0.75. However, in both the groups in which most of the reviews appeared (this is, the ranges 0-0.25 and 0.75-1.00), the scores were distributed across the interval. For example, in the 0-0.25 group, the 3,585 reviews were distributed across 2,684 different score values with a median of 0.0013. We also calculated how the reviews were distributed in both groups (Table 1).

Table 1. Stars awarded in TripAdvisor vs sentiment score of the review

Score	TripAdvisor review					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
0.00 - 0.25	14,1%	16,2%	30,2%	25,9%	13,7%	100%
0.75 - 1.00	0,4%	0,7%	5,3%	26,5%	67,1%	100%

In Table 1, it can be seen that 13.7% of the reviews that were given 5 stars were awarded a low score by the tool. Also, there are some reviews that got a high score even if the user gave a star rating of 1 or 2. We analyzed these cases and found two types of situations. The first case is one in which it is clear that the users simply made a mistake when awarding the stars. The second case that we found is one in which the user states that the experience was globally very positive, awards the hotel a 5-star review, but then the text includes mostly negative things. For example, a short introduction praising the virtues of the hotel followed by a long detail of everything that went wrong.

Power BI also extracts key phrases of the review, each of them composed of 1 to 5 words. Some examples of key phrases are the following: “perfect weather”, “balcony, view”, “relaxing resort”, “privacy”, “pool”, “refurbished room”, and “breakfast”. We used the key phrases in each of the two blocks of comments to construct two word clouds.

FINDINGS

predominant in the positive dataset (e.g. choice, visit, shop, view, sea), while others are much more frequent in the negative dataset (e.g. euro, towel, bathroom, shower, money, door).

CONCLUSIONS

With a large database of more than 30,000 reviews that includes all the reviews that every hotel in the island of Gran Canaria, Spain, received during the year 2019, we were able to extract the main words that were mentioned in reviews with a negative score and reviews with a positive score. The comparison between both sets of words allowed to draw some conclusions. While certain hotel services equally drive satisfaction and dissatisfaction, others seem to be especially relevant for driving satisfaction or for driving dissatisfaction. Among the first group, those that equally drive satisfaction and dissatisfaction, we can mention the staff, the room, the food options and the infrastructure of the hotel, mainly the pool area. Instead, concepts that refer to good views and possible visits are mentioned more predominantly by satisfied guests, while the bathroom and prices are mentioned much more frequently by dissatisfied guests. The implications of the findings allow us to understand the factors that cause both customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the hotel industry.

As a first exploratory research in this area, this work is not exempt of some limitations, most of which pave the road for future research opportunities. Our research did not take into account the length of the reviews. Therefore, some longer reviews contribute with more terms to the final cloud than other shorter reviews. In our research, we did not segment by type of hotel. We believe that the type of hotel can mediate the specific elements that drive (dis) satisfaction of guests. The tool we used only provides a common score for each individual review. However, most reviews with 1, 2 and 3 stars include positive and negative elements. Therefore, it could be the case that some issues that were mentioned positively contributed to the negative word cloud presented in Figure 1. Last, we believe that the tool is not appropriately capturing all the nuances that are available in the reviews, since more than 99.9% of the scores of the reviews were in the 0-0.25 or in the 0.75-1 range. This is, there were almost no scores in the 0.25-0.75 range.

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