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Research Article

An Analysis of User-Generated Content of Hotel Customer Experience: Case of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel

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Abstract

This article examines user-generated content regarding Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, which stands out as the top-rated hotel in Ethiopia according to TripAdvisor's ranking system. The analysis draws upon reviews from Google and TripAdvisor, supplemented by contributions from other platforms like Booking.com, Agoda, and Expedia, totaling 4,714 comments from January 2021 to August 2024. Over eleven thousand mentions were identified, and more than 85% of these reflect a positive sentiment, signaling a high level of customer satisfaction. The average rating for overall satisfaction sits at an impressive 4.5 out of 5, with over 78% and 10% of reviewers deeming the hotel as excellent and very good respectively. Key factors driving this satisfaction include gastronomy, service quality, room standards, staff performance, location, cleanliness, facilities, reception experience, value for money, and overall ambiance. The findings suggest that while effective delivery of these service elements enhances customer satisfaction, failures in execution can lead to dissatisfaction.

Keywords

User-generated Content, Customer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction, Online Review

1. Introduction

The tourism sector is crucial for the economic development of many countries [53]. According to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism in Ethiopia thrived, contributing nearly USD 4.8 billion to the GDP, with international tourist arrivals exceeding 1.4 million. This marked a decade of substantial growth [13]. Projections suggest that by 2030, tourism could contribute over USD 5 billion annually to the GDP, with international arrivals potentially surpassing 2 million [7]. Thus, tourism is a vital part of the Ethiopian economy and a key element of its developmental strategy. The hotel industry plays a particularly important role, providing essential services that facilitate the expansion of tourist activities [53].

Word of mouth has shifted significantly from personal recommendations to online platforms, where potential customers seek input from their peers [22, 63]. User-generated content— created by consumers—has become a credible and trustworthy source of information, influencing decision-making processes [58]. Feedback, comments, reviews, and ratings shared on social media and review sites like TripAdvisor and Expedia notably impact the choices of prospective visitors [56, 63].

Research indicates that potential customers often trust online reviews more than recommendations from official hotel websites [55]. Consequently, many researchers have focused on understanding consumer behavior on review

platforms and devising strategies for organizations to manage their online reputation [45].

In recent years, academic research on the customer experience within the hospitality industry has expanded significantly, as managers prioritize creating unique experiences for their guests. However, available studies remain scarce and fragmented [61]. Additionally, existing literature does not sufficiently address the use of data mining techniques and big data—current trends in online platforms that have the potential to enrich tourism research. Employing more advanced methodologies, such as retrieving data from multiple platforms, can foster interdisciplinary research and enhance understanding of the importance of social media in the hotel sector [34].

This study will focus on Ethiopian Skylight hotels, which are largely under-researched regarding user-generated content and customer experience in Ethiopian context despite their economic, cultural, and geographical significance to Ethiopian Airlines (EAL) and Ethiopian tourism and economy. The study aims to analyze user-generated content related to the Skylight Hotel (SLH), identifying both satisfying and dissatisfying factors affecting customer experience by retrieving data from various platforms such as Google Reviews, Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Ctrip.

2. Literature Review

2.1. User-Generated Content and the Hotel Industry

User-generated content is created by regular people who voluntarily provide data, information, or media that is then presented to others amusingly or helpfully, typically on the internet. Examples of this type of content include videos, wikis, and restaurant reviews. Because it is inexpensive to acquire, the usage of this type of entertainment has increased dramatically in recent years [29].

User-generated content (UGC) offers a means of capturing users' emotional experiences in realtime [42]. It contains a wealth of content as it allows tourists the freedom to express their emotions, which may not be easily captured using structured techniques that focus on specific scales [10].

User-generated content (UGC) significantly influences tourist opinions and business decisions. It provides a better understanding of the tourist experience and uncovers behavioral patterns [15]. UGC plays a crucial role in creating destination images, affecting destination loyalty [64]. Its credibility is higher than official information, as it is perceived as a genuine experience [22].

Comments are highly valuable in the decision-making process of other travelers [52].

In the hotel sector, online reviews are critical because this activity depends on the feelings and experiences that the customer has had at the establishment [53]. Online reviews gain particular importance in the hotel industry as consumers are often faced with situations where they must book a hotel that they do not know. For this reason, and especially in cases involving intangible assets, consumers have greater difficulty in identifying the extent to which a specific hotel is indeed an excellent choice.

Due to the perceived receiver-source resemblance and website reliability, customers are more likely to accept online reviews that are exempt and published by other customers who have stayed at the hotel [39]. Additionally, consumers are persuaded by favorable online reviews posted on independent review sites [36] and source similarity [50].

The most crucial element influencing hotel reservations, aside from friend recommendations, is online review [18]. Positive online reviews significantly increase the intention of hotel booking [60, 68], whereas negative online hotel opinions tend to reduce the number of bookings made through the Internet [68]. As some studies indicate that as part of the research process, consumers tend to choose hotels that have positive online reviews [57].

2.2. Online Review Sites

TripAdvisor stands out among websites dedicated solely to user evaluations of hospitality services, including dining, lodging, and transportation. It is the world's largest travel community, attracting over 35 million monthly visitors [12] and featuring more than 45 million reviews and opinions on over 1.3 million hotels, restaurants, and attractions [59].

Additionally, reviews can also be found on virtual travel agency websites such as Expedia.com, Booking.com, and Venere.com. These virtual agencies have a significant reach as well. Venere lists 60,000 lodging options and reports over two million customers [62]. Booking.com offers more than 135,000 hotels and is consulted by over thirty million unique guests each month [12]. Expedia claims to provide access to over 130,000 hotels [21].

Hotel customer reviews are also available on Google Travel (www.google.com/travel), which is the largest search engine in the world. Google hotel reviews provide detailed information about the hotel brand used by the customer, the reviewer's ID, the review date, comments, ratings, and the type of trip taken [33].

2.3. Hotel Customer Experience and Online Review

Guest experience refers to the cognitive and affective responses that arise from interactions between the guest and a product or service [23]. It is co-produced by service providers and consumers [10]. Xiang, Schwartz, Gerdes Jr., and Uysal recognized 80 words associated with guest experience, including room, quality, and service. Knutson, Beck, Kim, and Cha additional delineated the dimensions of guest experience by creating a four-factor model of the Hotel Experience Index

(HEI) [29]. The 18-item index consists of four dimensions, namely environment, accessibility, driving benefit, and incentive [29]. Guest experience is used to measure hotel guest satisfaction [55]. Satisfaction with and repurchase of a hotel product may be driven by a set of attributes, such as staff service quality, room quality, amenities, value, and security [12].

With the rise of online platforms for sharing experiences, online reviews have become a valuable resource for hotel managers to gauge customer evaluations of their service and products [40]. Research on textual reviews in the hospitality industry has primarily focused on identifying hotel attributes and sentiments expressed in the reviews [18] and examining the relationships between specific attributes mentioned in the reviews and the overall review ratings [44]. Comparisons of hotel attributes and guest experiences have been conducted among different hotel guest segments and types [25]. For example, Hong et al. found that guests placed more emphasis on natural and safe experiences associated with bed & breakfast (B&B) accommodations after the COVID-19 pandemic. They also provided practical suggestions for the industry to survive the disaster, such as avoiding the use of central air-conditioning and adopting semi-self-service technologies. This current study contributes to the existing literature by identifying changes in hotel guest experiences and their determinants before and during a pandemic situation.

3. Methodology

The online hotel reviews analyzed in this study were sourced from Google.com, the largest search engine in the world, as well as from TripAdvisor, a leading user-generated review website widely used by travelers globally [47, 3]. Additionally, data was gathered from platforms such as Agoda, Booking.com, Ctrip, and Trip.com. Utilizing data from these renowned platforms enhances the ability to conclude with practical relevance [7].

The feedback collected from social media, review websites, and online travel agencies (OTAs) was analyzed using software that standardizes ratings into a Global Review Index (GRI). This analysis converts various rating formats—including stars, circles, smiling faces, and numerical grades from 1 to 5 or 1 to 10—into a uniform measure. Review Pro, an external professional company based in Spain and a global leader in hotel industry applications, conducted the analysis. Review Pro serves over 60,000 clients across 150 countries [41]. According to Hansen, Review Pro exemplifies the innovative software tools available for managing customer feedback on online platforms.

After screening the data, a total of 4,714 reviews posted by guests of the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel from January 2021 to August 2024 were collected. Upon reviewing each comment, 11279 mentions were identified. These mentions were categorized into two subgroups: positive mentions (9,581) and negative mentions (1,698).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Profile of Reviewers

Out of the 4,714 Guests who Stayed at the Luxury Skylight Hotel, not all provided complete demographic details. However, an analysis of the posted reviews offers some insight into the types of guests who visited. The demographic analysis showed that among those who reported their experiences, 36% were from Africa, 31% were from Europe, and 14% were from North America.

Table 1. Reviewer Profile.

Continent of Origin	Frequency	%
Africa	284	36
Asia	55	7
North America	110	14
South America	21	3
Europe	248	31
Australia	11	1
Middle East	65	8
Total	794	100
Travel party (Customer Type)		
Business		
Solo	255	37
Family	212	31
Couple	117	17
Group	92	13
Other	1	0
Total	695	100%

Travelers are often categorized into one of five profiles: business, couple, family, friend, and [19, 47]. It was observed that most guests in all hotels belong to the business category. The second and third largest groups of guests are solo travelers and people traveling with their families, respectively. According to the table, 36 percent of the reviewers were from Africa, 31 percent were from Europe, 14 percent were from North America, and 8 percent were from the Middle East.

4.2. Source and Channel

A total of 4714 reviews were gathered from six online review sites posted between January 2019 and August 2024. The primary sources of these reviews were Google, which

contributed 3069 reviews (65%), and TripAdvisor, which contributed 848 reviews (18%). The remaining sources, including Booking.com, Agoda, Expedia, and Facebook, collectively contributed 797 reviews, making up 17% of the total.

Table 2. Source and Channel.

Online Review Channel	Reviews	%
Google	3069	65%
Tripe Advisor	848	18%
Booking.com	575	12%
Expedia	115	2%
Agoda	51	1%
Trip.com	18	0%
Facebook	18	0%
Ctrip	13	0%
Holiday check	6	0%
Goibibe	1	0%
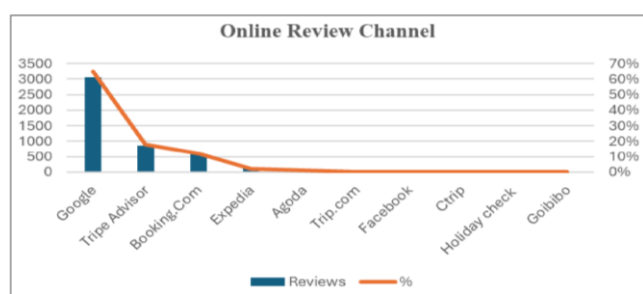
Figure 1. Review channel.

4.3. Reviewers Overall Satisfaction

Reviewers who leave a review on TripAdvisor, Trip.com, and Google use a five-point Likert scale to rate their overall satisfaction, ranging from 1 (terrible) to 5 (excellent). On the other hand, Expedia, Agoda, and Booking.com use a scale from 1 to 10 to rate the overall experience.

The average overall satisfaction was quite high at 4.5. table 3 for both tripe advisory and Google rating.

Table 3. Reviewer's overall satisfaction (Numerical Rating).

Tripe Advisory Rating		
Average Score	No Reviews	Ranking
4.5/5	799	1 of 164
Google Rating		
4.5/5	3654	-

4.4. Thematic Analysis

Review Pro software was utilized to analyze data to provide word counts for the data analysis. This process identified 27 hotel service factors that were most frequently mentioned in both negative and positive comments. The frequency of mentions in satisfying and dissatisfying contexts is detailed in Table 4, covering the following factors: Gastronomy, hotel in general, Service, Experience, Room, Staff, Location, Facilities, Cleanliness, Reception, Value, Ambiance, Common Areas, Decoration, Security, Entertainment, Bathroom, Bed, Internet, Maintenance, and Technology.

In total, there were 11279 mentions. The most frequently cited attributes were Staff, with 948 mentions; Gastronomy, with 2116 mentions; Service, with 1189 mentions; Overall Experience, with 1,094 mentions, Room, with 1,055 mentions, and location with 983 mentions. To analyze the satisfaction structure among these service factors, the relative frequency of each attribute was calculated (see Figure 2).

Analysis of relative frequencies shows that no identified attributes were seen as exclusively satisfying or dissatisfying. However, over 20 factors were mentioned more often in satisfying contexts, while two were noted more frequently in dissatisfying contexts.

Satisfying: Gastronomy, hotel in general, overall experience, room, staff, location, facilities, cleanliness, ambiance, communal areas, decoration, security, entertainment, and bed etc…

Dissatisfying: Maintenance and Technology

Satisfaction with hotel services depends on factor performance. The most frequently discussed attributes of hotel experience include food and drinks, establishment, service, experience, room, staff, and location. These factors are likely to generate both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. On the other hand, factors such as maintenance, technology, spa, medical & health, sustainability, events, beaches, and animals receive less attention and consideration, whether positive or negative.

Table 4. Summary of Result for themes (factors).

Factors	Satisfying	%	Dissatisfying	%	Total
Gastronomy	1837	87%	279	13%	2116
Hotel in General	1191	87%	174	13%	1365

| Factors	Satisfying	%	Dissatisfying	%	Total
Service	1013	85%	176	15%	1189
Experience	939	86%	155	14%	1094
Room	899	85%	156	15%	1055
Location	896	91%	87	9%	983
Staff	829	87%	119	13%	948
Facilities	375	86%	62	14%	437
Cleanliness	390	90%	44	10%	434
Reception	216	68%	103	32%	319
Value	193	63%	115	37%	308
Ambience	260	88%	34	12%	294
Common Areas	131	91%	13	9%	144
Decoration	129	98%	3	2%	132
Security	49	55%	40	45%	89
Entertainment	56	80%	14	20%	70
Bathroom	30	46%	35	54%	65
Bed	50	88%	7	12%	57
Internet	26	53%	23	47%	49
Maintenance	18	40%	27	60%	45
Technology	13	36%	23	64%	36
Spa	17	94%	1	6%	18
Medical and Health	10	59%	7	41%	17
Sustainability	6	86%	1	14%	7
Events	5	100%	0	0%	5
Beach	2	100%	0	0%	2
Animals	1	100%	0	0%	1
Total	9581	85%	1698	15%	11279

The data was further analyzed using wordclouds.com to search for connections between the revealed factors. The results are presented as word trees, and cloud tags. Tag clouds provide a quick overview of the most salient terms in a large text corpus, and visual mapping enables users to see trends [63].

The data was further analyzed using wordclouds.com to identify the most frequent words. The results are presented through word trees, and tag clouds. Tag clouds provide a quick overview of the most prominent terms in a large text corpus, while visual mapping allows users to identify trends [63].

However, the content analysis and word count of the data revealed that factors such as staff, gastronomy, and location appeared frequently in both negative and positive comments. The frequency of these constructs was high among the comments. Therefore, the study's findings suggested a third category, indicating that the three-factor theory proposed by Matzler and Sauerwein could more effectively identify the structure of satisfaction in the hotel context [43].
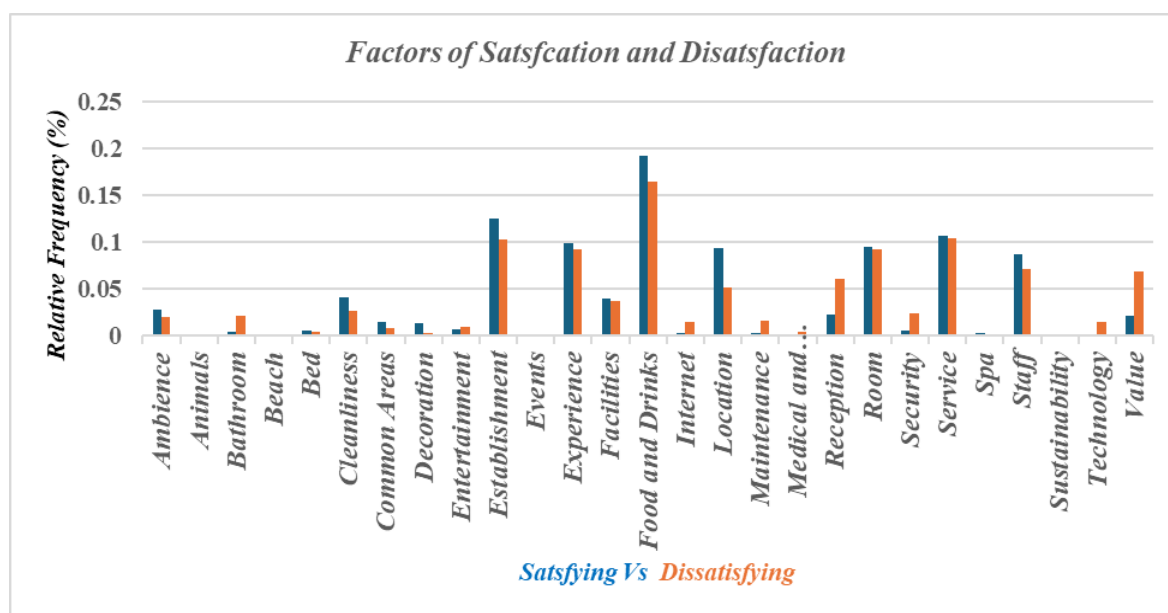
Figure 2. Factor of Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction.

The most frequently occurring words in positive and negative comments are shown in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. These words pertain to various categories such as service, food, room, staff, and overall experience. In the figures, the size of the font represents the frequency of appearance of the word. It is worth noting that the same words have appeared in the negative comments as well.

Figure 3. Most occurring words in Positive Comments (Word Cloud of Reviews).

Figure 4. Most occurring words in negative comments (word cloud of reviews).

Hence, it is suitable to establish a three-factor model for satisfaction. Factors that generate satisfaction when met, but also cause dissatisfaction when unmet, are known as performance factors [43]. These performance factors should be considered as linked to satisfaction, as they represent articulated customer needs and wants. Therefore, these factors are given special attention, increasing competition among service providers [43]. Word trees reveal a branching view of how reviewers used the keywords and phrases. By using two major themes staff and service. We have performed a word tree to reveal the comments given by the customer as shown.

Figure 5. Word Tree for Staff.

Figure 6. Word Tree for Service.

5. Discussion and Managerial Implication

Understanding customer interests through reviews is essential for businesses [1, 2]. Numerous studies have explored this topic [37, 54, 69]. For success in a competitive market, hoteliers must analyses guest feedback. By identifying frequently mentioned aspects, they can create targeted strategies. Monitoring this feedback helps hotel managers uncover the causes of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction [8]. This study will guide hoteliers in focusing resources on key areas highlighted by guest reviews.

Most hotel review websites categorize reviews into two parts: quantitative (ratings summary) and qualitative (unstructured text) [70]. However, many studies only focus on quantitative features, like ratings or the total number of reviews [20]. This method may obscure or misrepresent the true value of reviews, particularly when researchers use indexes that combine ratings from multiple sources [11] without considering how the rating system is developed. As a result, only a few studies have looked at the qualitative aspect of online reviews. This research seeks to bridge this gap in literature by considering both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of online reviews.

Furthermore, this study's value lies in its use of both structured and unstructured data from various online sources of user-generated content. This approach helps to understand customer perceptions and feelings about the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel in a way that traditional survey studies cannot achieve. Therefore, employing a more comprehensive use of data, along with potential continuous monitoring of reality, while avoiding some of the drawbacks of traditional survey-based self-reported questionnaires, significantly contributes to the literature in several ways.

This study aims to fill a gap in service research by focusing on negative guest experiences in the hospitality industry. It seeks to understand guests' needs and wants by identifying specific items that guests value and see as exceptional service, an area that has been neglected in the literature. Therefore, the study explored the consequences of negative experiences in hotels and the variables that may cause them. So, it is valuable to examine how to improve both customer experience and its impact, as well as how to avoid generating negative experiences, as noted regarding brand hate [67].

Hotel businesses should actively monitor their customer's comments on social networking sites, as neglecting online comments can harm their brand image and market position [8]. A study has shown that combining reviews from more than five online sources, despite their different textual component schemes and rating scales, is possible. The study also found that 85% of the reviews posted on all online platforms conveyed a positive sentiment and thus, it will have a positive impact on the brand image.

The study identified 28 key themes, with the most common among customers of the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel Gastronomy, overall experience, Service, Room quality, Location, Staff, Facilities, Cleanliness, Reception, Value, Ambiance, Common Areas, and Decoration.

Key factors highlighted in the reviews include Gastronomy experience (availability of a variety of dining options, diverse culinary traditions and test of foods), Hotel in general (building, property, website, and policy), Service quality, Room (View from the room, space, and size, cleanliness, comfortable bed, and shower), Location (Close to the airport and nearby shopping mall), Staff (staff's helpfulness, friendliness, and professionalism): These elements are crucial in shaping customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction at the luxury Ethiopian Skylight Hotel. Therefore, it can be concluded that the same service components that enhance customer satisfaction could lead to dissatisfaction if they are lacking or mishandled.

Therefore, it can be stated that service components or themes that satisfy customers can also lead to dissatisfaction if they are not delivered effectively or if there are issues with their provision. Hotel businesses should actively monitor their presence on social networking sites and evaluate how their brand image is impacted. Ignoring online guest comments can significantly impair a hotel's reputation and affect its market position [8]. A study has demonstrated that combining reviews from more than five online sources is possible, despite their varying formats and rating scales. The findings revealed that 85% of reviews on all platforms conveyed a positive sentiment, positively influencing the brand image.

Considering that the study data were collected from genuine guest experiences shared on popular online platforms worldwide, this research offers valuable insights for hotel management. The findings serve as a basis for developing strategies aimed at enhancing service quality within the hotel industry.

6. Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this research pertain specifically to the Ethiopian Sky Light Hotel in Addis Ababa and may not apply to all hotels. It is suggested that future studies should consider a wider range of geographic areas. Although the study recognized certain factors that could affect guest satisfaction and dissatisfaction, it is not clear to what degree these factors impact guest decision-making and hotel development strategies. Therefore, future research should explore the correlation between guest satisfaction and their real behaviors in luxury hotels.

Abbreviations

B & B   Bed and Breakfast

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
EAL	Ethiopian Airlines
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
GDP	Growth of Domestic Products
GRI	Global Review Index
HEI	Hotel Experience Index
SLH	Skylight Hotel
UGC	User-Generated Continent
USD	United States Dollar

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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