Influence of Volume of Online Customers' Reviews on Hotel Reservations in Tanzania

Georgina, Gustav[*], Dr Silverius C. Komba & Dr Crispin Mbogo

Faculty of Business and Economics, St. Augustine University of Tanzania

[*]Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the Influence of volume of Online customers´ Reviews on Hotel Reservations in Tanzania. The study specifically assessed the contribution of the number of reviews, comprehensiveness, and hotel rating and their contribution to hotel reservations at Mediterraneo Hotel in Dar es Salaam. This study employed descriptive case study design while primary and published secondary data from the internet were used for data collection. The findings showed that high ratings and the number of hotel reviews on travel applications influenced customers to choose the hotel. The findings revealed that, hotel customers make reservations after checking reviews and hotel ratings on social media pages or travel applications, and complete, detailed, and timely Messages motivated customers to choose the Hotel. The study concluded that, the volume of customer reviews (number of reviews, comprehensiveness, and rating) is significant on Hotel reservations and increase revenue. This study recommends that, emerging of information sharing platforms and network communication should be used effectively by the hotel sector and Mediterraneo in particular, to disseminate corporate information, collect and organize consumer information from travel applications, websites, and social media platforms at low cost, and help them to manage customer relationships and provide competitive services.

Keywords: Volume, Online Customers' Reviews, Hotel Reservations

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of Internet technology has forced Hoteliers to invest significant amounts of money and effort to develop and maintain their direct booking websites (Asilah et all, 2016). Hotel website provides huge opportunities for Hoteliers to generate more revenue by increasing the number of reservations through their own direct booking websites (Law, 2005). Hence, customers tend to view online reviews for making hotel reservations.

Online reviews have become a critical factor in the decision-making process for hotel reservations, as they provide consumers with valuable information about the quality of the Hotel, the facilities, and the overall guest experience (Asilah et all, 2016). Positive reviews can help to build trust with consumers and increase the likelihood of a booking, while negative reviews can have a significant impact on a hotel's reputation and business Seneca and Nantel (2004).

Moreover, the underlying belief is that consumers tend to rely on information about hotel products and services provided by fellow Customers Vermeulen and Seegers (2009). Seneca and Nantel (2004), indicated the power and persuasiveness of online product reviews while Litvin et all (2008) and Kardon (2007) have shown that, consumers tend to rely more on peer reviews than information provided by business entities because peer consumers are more independent and trust worth. The study also showed how reviews popularity causes the problem of information overload hence making it tougher for Hoteliers to utilize online reviews.

In addition, online evaluations have also developed into a two-way conduit for information exchange between travellers and lodging establishments. Reviews are submitted by visitors, and hotels can reply to them openly. By displaying a dedication to providing excellent customer service and a readiness to address problems, this encounter can have an impact on hotel performance. Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) claim that prompt and individualised replies to reviews can improve a hotel's standing with customers and raise occupancy rates by raising client satisfaction. The reputation and brand image of the hotel is also shaped by its online critiques. Good evaluations help build a positive perception of the company, which draws in more clients and raises occupancy rates.

In South Africa a study about electronic Hotel customer satisfaction: e-WOM comments of Hotels in Pilgrims Rest was conducted at the University of Mpumalanga and it showed that through recommendations or warnings obtained from friends or family members, Word-of mouth provides the opportunity for potential Customers to learn about the positive and negative aspects of services offered by hotels before making a reservation Tian (2013).

According to Cheng & Zhou (2010) and Tian (2013), e-WOM has a significant effect on travellers' choice of accommodation when planning a trip. The study showed how Hotels were to measure Hotel customer satisfaction using electronic word-of-mouth in Pilgrims Rest, Mpumalanga as   Hotel guests are likely to trigger positive e-WOM when service is performed dependably and accurately (reliability) as this attribute highly impacts customer satisfaction in hotels, consequently, this will allow Hotels to manage customer experience properly that ultimately results in customer satisfaction, loyalty and positive-word-of-mouth.

In Tanzania Hotel guests just like other customers tend to share their experiences with those they interact with. Online reviews negative or positive act as a recommendation that may help potential Customers to know what to expect from the Hotels Tian (2013). Nowadays communication is more simplified therefore, such information is shared more rapidly due to the advancement of technology in this digital world where one can simply share their satisfaction or dissatisfaction instantly. Researchers have shown that consumers would associate brands with favourable Word-of-Mouth with excellent and reliable service or good product quality.

In case of Tanzanian Hotel business there is no dedicated regulatory body that looks after the Hotel owners' interests. Therefore, it is not easy to act upon misleading comments or reviews on issues posted by consumers despite the characteristics of online reviews that act as determinants of the validity for the reviews, be it negative or positive. (Valence of the reviews, timeliness and comprehensiveness). The only regulatory bodies that are available are for the interests of government, the Customers and employees, Example National Environment Management Council (NEMC), the Occupational Safety and Health Authority (OSHA), Tanzania Forest Service Agency (TFS), the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC), Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA). However, in the Tanzanian Hotel business, there are no Policies or regulations that govern the online reviews posted about various issues both resolved and unresolved. The only regulatory bodies that are available are for the interests of the government, the Customers and employees, Example National Environment Management Council (NEMC), the Occupational Safety and Health Authority (OSHA), the Tanzania Forest Service Agency (TFS), Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC), Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA).

The only organizations that at least are in the interests of the Hotels are the Tourism Confederation Tanzania (TCT) and the Hotel Association of Tanzania (HAT). However, these two do not have a mandate to control or hold accountable people in case of misleading reviews. It is up to the customer's decision to share or not to share regardless of outcomes to the Hotel as long as the customer was unsatisfied. The contribution of the volume of online customer's reviews to hotel reservations in Tanzanian Hotels is very important in today's digital world as such it may affect the firm negatively if the Hotel will not treat them with high importance. Therefore, this study is going to show the influence of the online volume of customer reviews on hotel reservations.

The researcher's passion and interest in the marketing field and an extensive career in the service industry particularly the hospitality industry (Hotel and aviation) has been a great motivation for conducting this study. Professionally, the researcher has worked in the most customer centric roles in the hospitality industry and believes this study is relevant to the researcher's career aspirations and growth. Other factors like the scope, data availability and costs have also contributed to the choice of this particular study.

Moreover, online volume reviews in hotel reservations have shown significant changes in how consumers evaluate and choose Hotels for their stay. In the past, consumers relied on brochures, travel agents, and word-of-mouth recommendations to make Hotel reservations. However, with the proliferation of online reviews platforms such as Booking.com, Expedia.com, Priceline, KAYAK.com and Hotels.com Consumers now have access to a wealth of information from other travellers when making Hotel reservation decisions (Hu & Liu, 2018).

Experience has revealed that a large number of Hotel Customers tend to share and express their bad and good experiences online. It is also the fact that new Customers rely on online volume reviews to make decisions on which Hotel to use. These Customers are free to take pictures of the facility and share them however they want, sometimes Customers share incidents online before notifying the Hotel Management (Wang & Liang, 2019).

Unfortunately, the perishability nature of services doesn't allow Hotel to erase the bad experiences from the customers' memory as the service is not something you can return like other goods in case of satisfaction and, it is also not easy to stop them spreading the bad word on the internet even if the issue has been resolved and compensated for. The reality is online reviews are highly and quickly spread regardless of the circumstances that are behind the perceived service even when the reviews may be out of date, or have some incomplete information (Hu & Liu, 2018). Viewers are likely to associate that particular Hotel with poor services for as long as the review is on the internet. The presence of booking and travelling applications like Booking.com, Expedia.com, Priceline, KAYAK.com, Hotels.com and Vio.com have made such experiences readily available to be read by the public to the extent that other visitors rely on them to make reservation decisions.

Several studies have been done to examine the influence of online customer reviews on hotel reservations. Some of the existing works including a work of Sparks & Browning (2011), Zan Mo, Yan-Fei Li, Peng Fan (2015), Xinyuan (Roy) Zhao, Liang Wang, Xiao Guo (2015), Vermeulen and Seegers (2017), Xiang, Gabbard (2023) and Gretzel (2010) examined the impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions, The Significance of Online Reviews for Hotel Entrepreneurial Success by (Kamble et all, 2020). The impact of internet review trustworthiness on hotel performance and bookings was investigated by Filieri (2015), Effects of Word-of-Mouth on Brand Trust in Tourism Industry by Monica and Feng (2017), Online Reviews on Hotel Booking Probability: The Moderating Effect of Hotel Class" by Li, Ye, and Law (2013) and "The Influence of Online Reviews on Consumers' Attributions of Service Quality and Control for Service Standards in Hotels" by Sparks and Browning (2011). Therefore, the study intended to investigate on how the volume of viewers' information shared by the visitors who have already been to Mediterraneo Hotel influence other Customers' intentions to make reservations. Therefore, this paper intends to examine the contribution of volume of Customers' reviews to Hotel reservations, specifically, to assess the contribution of the number of reviews, comprehensiveness, and Hotel rating on Hotel reservations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Key Terms

Online Reviews

Online reviews are evaluations or feedback provided by Customers about products, services or experiences they have encountered (Sparks & Browning, 2011).

In the hospitality industry context, online reviews typically refer to feedback and opinions from guests who have stayed at the hotel, resort, or any lodging establishment. Online reviews can be found on various platforms like hotel websites, search engines and travel applications like Booking.com, Expedia.com, Priceline, KAYAK.com, Hotels.com and Vio.com. They can include a wide range of information, such as the quality of the accommodation, cleanliness of the facilities, level of customer service, and the overall guest experience. Online reviews can be influential in the decision-making process of other consumers, as they provide valuable insights into the quality of a product or service. Positive reviews can help to build trust and increase the likelihood of booking, while negative reviews can have a significant impact on hotel business, reputation and revenue.

Hotel

A hotel is a building where people stay, usually for a short time paying for their rooms and meals (Hu & Liu, 2018). Hotels can range in size and complexity, from small family-owned bed and breakfasts to large luxury resorts with hundreds of rooms and multiple restaurants and amenities. Hotels typically offer a range of room types to accommodate different needs and budgets, including standard rooms, suites, and speciality rooms such as themed suites or rooms with a view. In addition to lodging, Hotels may offer a range of services and amenities, such as restaurants, bars, fitness centres, spas, and meeting rooms for business travellers.

Hotel Reservation

Hotel reservations refer to the process of booking a room or suite at a hotel for a specific period. This process typically involves contacting the Hotel directly, using a travel agent, or booking online through a hotel's website or third-party booking platform. Hotel reservations can be made for a variety of purposes, including business travel, leisure travel, or special events such as weddings or conferences. The process of making hotel reservation typically involves selecting a room type, specifying the dates of the stay, and providing payment information. Once the reservation is confirmed, the Hotel is responsible for ensuring that the room or suite is available and ready for the guest's arrival.

Volume of Online Reviews

Online reviews are widely available due to the ease of use and accessibility of various platforms on the internet. With all of this information at their disposal, consumers are never fully comfortable making an online purchase, especially a reservation. They want accurate and trustworthy information to make sure they are making the right choice, so they frequently rely on products with a higher number of online reviews (Rrustemi and Jashari, 2018). Similarly, volume is a significant factor in eWOM attributes, according to Zhao, Wang, Guo & Law (2015).

The number of comments left by reviewers on a specific good or service, in this case, an online hotel review is included in the volume of reviews. There is a relationship between the quantity of reviews, customer behaviour, and product knowledge before purchase. A large number of online reviews reduce the risks, which influences customers' intent to book. However, if customers reduced the number of hotels they evaluated, the effect of the volume of online reviews would be lessened. This implies that the quantity of online reviews only concentrates on the initial phases of the decision-making process for the clients. Here, the emphasis shifts from the quantity to the quality of online reviews (Gavilan, Avello, and Martinez-Navarro, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Social Influence Theory

Social influence theory proposed by Kelman (1958) and modified in 1974 is stated that, an individual attitudes, beliefs and subsequent actions or behaviours are influenced by referent others through three processes: Compliance, identification and internalization.

Compliance is assumed to occur when individuals accept influence and adopt the induced behaviour to gain rewards or approval and avoid punishment or disapproval. Hence, the satisfaction derived from compliance is due to the social effect of accepting influence.

Identification is said to happen when individuals adopt the induced behaviour in order to create or maintain a desired and beneficial relationship to another person or a group. Hence, the satisfaction occurs due to the act of conforming.

Internalization is assumed to occur when individuals accept influence after perceiving the content of the induced behaviour is rewarding in which the content indicates the opinions and actions of others. It is also stated that individuals adopt the induced behaviour realizing that is corresponding with the value system. In this case, therefore, the satisfaction occurs due to the content of the new behaviour.

However, the theory may not account for cultural differences in social influence processes. Some cultures may emphasize conformity and obedience more than others, which influences the degree to which these aspects of social influence are manifested (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

Another critique is that social influence theory tends to downplay the role of individual differences. Not all individuals respond to social influence in the same way. Personal traits such as self-esteem, assertiveness, and the need for social approval can impact the extent to which an individual is susceptible to social influence (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2014).

One of the key strengths of Kelman's theory is its emphasis on the different types of social influence, and the different processes through which they occur. This framework allows researchers and practitioners to better understand how individuals are influenced by the people around them, and to develop interventions or strategies that target specific types of social influence. Additionally, Kelman's theory has been applied to a wide range of contexts, including political and social issues such as prejudice and conflict resolution.

In realizing the theory only one aspect of social influence i.e. compliance may not predict the true relationship between the system users' beliefs and behaviour (Wang et all, 2013). Malhotra & Galletta (2005) argue that, the effect of compliance based social influence may reduce over time, whereas the effects of identification and internalization would persist over longer periods.

The choice of the social influence theory to be used in this proposed study is because the proposition of these theories relate to the objectives of the study as they have important implications on the hospitality industry, as Hotels and resorts can leverage social influence to promote their properties and services. For example, Hotels can use social influence by highlighting positive reviews and testimonials from satisfied Customers. They can also use persuasion by using emotional appeals in their marketing messages. However, it is important for hotels to be transparent and authentic in their use of social influence, as consumers may be wary of promotional tactics that are perceived as manipulative or deceptive.

This theory is accordance by Gabbard (2023) study the impact of online reviews on hotel performance using the social influence theory, revealed that online reviews serve as a potent mechanism through which potential guests gather information, make booking decisions, and form perceptions about hotels.

Therefore, this study is guided by the social influence theory because social influence theory involves the individual attitudes, beliefs and subsequent actions or behaviours on the hotel reservations as well as the actions of others when making decisions. So, the customer can make a hotel reservation from his/her intentions or others comments through online reviews or other sources of information.

Theoretical Literature Review

The higher the volume of reviews, both positive and negative reviews, in the context of online communication, this will attract the attention of information seekers which can then increase product awareness (Etzion & Neveen, 2007).

Consumer purchase intentions increase if the quality of reviews is maintained. The more quantity of positive reviews, the more likely it is to influence consumers to book Hotels (Park et all, 2007).

Online completeness is one of the most effective elements of online posting in terms of the extent to which people are willing to accept and adopt online reviews, as well as the factors that drive adoption (Cheung et all, 2008).

A study by Li, Ye, and Law (2013) says that online reviews have a significant impact on hotel booking probability. The effect is stronger for lower-class Hotels, and that consumers are more likely to book hotel if they see positive reviews from other travellers.

A study by Xiang and Gretzel (2010) emphasized that online reviews have a significant impact on hotel booking intentions. Trust is a key factor in this process, and that consumers are more likely to book hotel if they see positive reviews from other travellers.

Empirical Literature Review

Sparks & Browning (2011) examined the impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust using an experimental design to investigate four independent variables: the target of the review (core or interpersonal); overall valence of a set of reviews (positive or negative); framing of reviews (what comes first: negative or positive information); and whether or not a consumer generated numerical rating is provided together with the written text. Consumers seem to be more influenced by early negative information, especially when the overall set of reviews is negative. However, positively framed information together with numerical rating details increases both booking intentions and consumer trust. The results suggest that consumers tend to rely on easy-to-process information when evaluating a Hotel based on reviews.

Zan Mo, Yan-Fei Li, and Peng Fan (2015), studied the Effect of Online Reviews on Consumer Purchase Behaviour. More than 400 Taobao shops' online reviews are gathered to comprehend the impact of online reviews on consumer purchasing behaviour. This paper examines the impact of online reviews of experience items on customer purchasing behaviour and uses the S-O-R model (Stimulus-Organism-Response Model) to examine consumer learning from a fresh angle. The statistical results indicate that the description rating, photo reviews, appended reviews, cumulative reviews, and favourable reviews have an impact on consumer purchase behaviour. The data analysis and assumptions were performed using the SPSS 19.0 program. The data show that the logistics rating, service rating, negative ratings, and moderate reviews are not important.

The Significance of Online Reviews for Hotel Entrepreneurial Success (Kamble et all, 2020). Online reviews are now a major source of information for travellers, influencing consumers' behaviour and purchasing decisions. This study examines the effects of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and their significance for entrepreneurial success. It analyses features from the content of online reviews to understand their effects on customers' online booking intentions in hotels. The results of content analysis of pertinent literature show a positive causal relationship between online review volume, valence, and quality and online booking intention. While favourable internet reviews can have a positive influence, negative online reviews have a considerable negative impact on the intention to book online. Negative evaluations typically have a greater impact on consumers than favourable ones. Among the most widely utilised internet platforms are social media and online travel agencies. Online reviews have a huge impact on how well hotels operate. Hotel owners need to be aware of the effects of online reviews and take appropriate action to handle them.

Gabbard (2023) study the Impact of Online Reviews on Hotel Performance using a desktop research methodology. The study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics and the social influence theory, the information asymmetry theory and the expectancy were used. The findings revealed that online reviews serve as a potent mechanism through which potential guests gather information, make booking decisions, and form perceptions about hotels. These findings underscore the need for hotels to adopt a

proactive approach to online reputation management, engage with guest feedback, and leverage online reviews as a strategic tool for improving their performance in an increasingly competitive hospitality industry. As travelers continue to rely on online reviews to guide their choices, the role of online feedback in shaping the success and sustainability of hotels is likely to remain a critical area of study and strategic focus in the years to come. The study recommended for active reputation management, credible review sources, leverage positive reviews, sentiment analysis tools, tailored management responses, long term reputation building amongst others. These recommendations aim to help Hotels harness the positive influence of online reviews on their performance while actively managing and mitigating the potential negative impacts of unfavorable feedback.

The impact of internet review trustworthiness on hotel performance and bookings was investigated by Filieri (2015). Surveys were sent to hotel customers as part of this study to find out how credible they thought the reviews were. These impressions were then compared to real booking patterns and hotel performance indicators. According to the survey, customers give reviews from reliable sources more weight when making reservations, which enhances hotel operations. Hotels should promote and highlight reviews from reputable and verified sources in their marketing campaigns.

Monica and Feng (2017) in a study about the Effects of Word-of-Mouth on Brand Trust in the Tourism Industry, argue that a lot of visitors choose to receive information through Word-of-Mouth when planning a tour. Word-of-mouth experiences and shared information could induce a visitor's travel demands. It therefore becomes a primary issue for the marketing in tourism industry to understand the function of Word-of-Mouth on a visitor's trust and employment of a tourism business brand. Taking Easy Travel as the research subject, the questionnaire survey is preceded by e-mails. With convenience sampling, a total of 1000 copies of questionnaires are distributed to the web members of Easy Travel, and 382 valid copies are retrieved, with a retrieval rate of 38%. The research results show significantly positive correlations between Word-of-Mouth and Brand Reliability in Brand Trust and Word-of-Mouth and Brand Intention in Brand Trust demographic variables reveal remarkable effects on the correlations between Word-of-Mouth and Brand Trust.

Xinyuan (Roy) Zhao, Liang Wang, Xiao Guo 2015 studied the influence of online reviews to online Hotel booking intentions and developed a research model and empirically examined the model by collecting data from business travellers in the mainland China. Factor analysis was adopted to identify features of online reviews content and source attribute. Regression analysis was used to examine impacts of these attributes upon travellers' online booking intention. The study found Six features of online reviews content and one source attribute were identified, namely, usefulness, reviewer expertise, timeliness, volume, valence (negative and positive) and comprehensiveness. Regression analysis results testified positive causal relationships between usefulness, reviewer expertise, timeliness, volume and comprehensiveness and respondents' online booking intentions. A significantly negative relation between negative online reviews and online booking intentions was identified, whereas impacts from positive online reviews upon booking intentions were not statistically significant.

A study by Sparks and Browning (2011) found that online reviews have a significant impact on consumers' attributions of service quality and control for service standards in hotels. The study found that consumers are more likely to attribute service quality to the Hotel if they see positive reviews from other travellers.

"The Impact of Online Reviews on Hotel Booking Intentions and Perception of Trust" by Xiang and Gretzel (2010) found that online reviews have a significant impact on hotel booking intentions and that trust is a key factor in this process.

"The Influence of Online Reviews on Consumers' Attributions of Service Quality and Control for Service Standards in Hotels" by Sparks and Browning (2011) found that online reviews have a significant impact on consumers' attributions of service quality and control for service standards in hotels.

"The Impact of Online Reviews on Hotel Booking Probability: The Moderating Effect of Hotel Class" by Li, Ye, and Law (2013) found that online reviews have a significant impact on hotel booking probability and that the effect is stronger for lower-class Hotels.

"The Impact of Online Reviews on Hotel Bookings: A Meta-Analysis" by Vermeulen and Seegers (2017), conducted a meta-analysis of 28 studies and found that online reviews have a significant impact on hotel bookings, with an average effect size of 0.54. A meta-analysis by Vermeulen and Seegers (2017) of 28 studies found that online reviews have a significant impact on hotel bookings, with an average effect size of 0.54. The meta-analysis also found that the effect is stronger for independent Hotels than for chain Hotels. Hotels should pay attention to their online reputation and respond to reviews professionally and thoughtfully to build trust with consumers.

Research Gap

From the above-reviewed literature, it can be noted that online volume reviews contribute to hotel reservations positively or negatively making it a great concern for the hotel sector. However, the reviewed studies were not conducted in Tanzania, particularly in the area where this study was conducted.

Despite the growing importance of online volume reviews in hotel reservations in the world and studies that have been conducted in different countries, there is a need for more studies within the Tanzanian context that this researcher has based on. Therefore, this study addressed this knowledge gap by focusing on the influence of the volume of online customer reviews on hotel reservations in Tanzania.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study has helped the researcher to show the relationship between independent variable, which is volume of online customer's reviews and the dependent variable, which is Hotel Reservations. In this study volume of online reviews were measured by Number of reviews, Comprehensiveness and Hotel rating and how they contribute to hotel reservation.

Independent Variables:

Volume of online customer review

This variable refers to the overall quality of online reviews for hotels, including the number of reviews and the rating caused by the number of reviews. This measures the total amount of interactive messages (Liu, 2006). There can be several comments about a specific Hotel amenity or service category. For this study, the volume of customer reviews includes a number of reviews, comprehensiveness and hotel rating.

Dependent Variables:

Hotel Reservations.

This variable refers to the likelihood of a consumer choosing of hotel, or booking a hotel based on the quality, timeliness and valence of online reviews from previous customer's feedback.

The variables were analysed by looking at the characteristics of online reviews about hotel reservations where the framework involved independent variables and dependent. The independent variables (customer online reviews) are considered comprehensiveness, timeliness, valence, usefulness, review expertise and volume of the reviews and the dependent variable is the Hotel reservations. In a similar study the influence of online reviews on online booking intentions (Xinyuan (Roy) Zhao et all, (2014) used the characteristics of online reviews to show the relationship between online reviews and booking intentions. The characteristics they used are timeliness of the review, valence of the reviews, comprehensiveness of the reviews, usefulness of the reviews, reviews expertise and volume of the review.
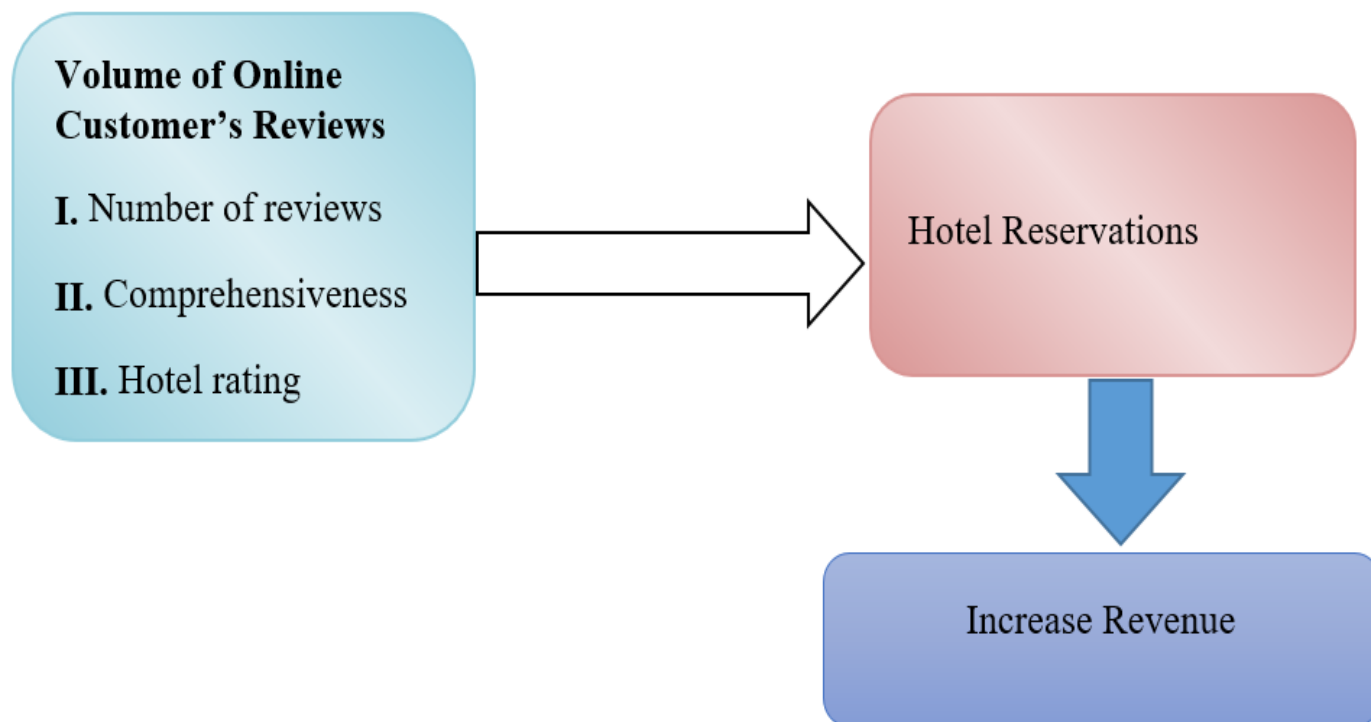
Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

SOURCE: Author Construction, Information from literatures

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from 100 respondents in Mediterraneo Hotel, Dar es Salaam city. The study used both primary and secondary data collection methods. The collection of primary data involved gathering first-hand information and the use of secondary data sources such as documents and published or internet sources. The questionnaire method was used to generate detailed information from previous hotel customers by sending emails, while the interview was used for hotel staff and existing hotel customers. Further, this study employed a random sampling technique in which every individual had an equal chance of being selected.

The analysis of data obtained through questionnaires was cleared, coded, and analysed with the assistance of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The use of SPSS depends on the nature of the information collected. Structured questions generate mostly quantifiable information, hence making the use of SPSS more appropriate, and the output is presented in the form of frequencies, percentages, and tables. While thematic analysis is useful where the nature of data is mainly narratives concerning the question of how and why? (Kothari, 2004).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Number of reviews

The study analysed the feedback from the respondents if the number of reviews influenced them to choose Hotel. Table 1 shows that 34 (89.5%) of previous Hotel Customers and 31 (81.6%) of existing Customers said they consider the number of reviews in deciding to select a Hotel. On the other hand, 15 (75%) Mediterraneo Hotel said that Customers tend to find out the Hotel with high number of reviews.

Table 1: Number of reviews

Category	Previous Customers		Existing Customers		Hotel Staffs	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	34	89.5	31	81.6	15	75.0
No	4	10.5	7	18.4	5	25.0
Total	38	100.0	38	100.0	20	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

Rating influence on Hotel Choice

For the case of rating of hotel. The study analysed the feedback from the respondents if high rating of hotel influenced their choice of hotel. Table 2 shows that 36 (94.7%) for both previous hotel customers and existing hotel customers said yes that they consider the high rating in selecting hotel. On the other hand, 15 (75%) Mediterraneo hotel said that Customers tend to find out the Hotel with high rating of reviews.

Table 2: Rating influence on Hotel Choice

Category	Previous Customers		Existing Customers		Hotel Staffs	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	36	94.7	36	94.7	16	80.0
No	2	5.3	2	5.3	4	20.0
Total	38	100.0	38	100.0	20	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

Complete, detailed, and timely Messages

The study analysed the feedback from the respondents if they considered complete, detailed, and timely messages motivating Customers to make reservations. Table 3 shows that 37 (97.4%) of previous Hotel Customers and 35 (92.1%) of existing Customers said they considered complete, detailed, and motivated information in choosing Hotel. On the other hand, 19 (95%) Mediterraneo Hotel Staff said that complete, detailed, and timely reviews were the most important factors for Customers' reservation decisions.

Table 3: Complete, detailed and timely Messages

Category	Previous Customers		Existing Customers		Hotel Staffs	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	37	97.4	35	92.1	19	95.0
No	1	2.6	3	7.9	1	5.0
Total	38	100.0	38	100.0	20	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

Discussions

The findings revealed that the number of reviews influences Customers to choose a hotel as represented by 89.5% of previous Customers, 81.6%of existing Customers, and 75% of Mediterraneo Hotel Staff. During the interview, one of the respondents said:

"*Hotel with high engagement from previous client's interest to choose that Hotel*". Also, another one said

"*Always I check on top advisors on booking.com feedback from other Customers*".

The findings supported by a study of Etzion & Neveen (2007) said the higher the volume of reviews, both positive and negative reviews, in the context of online communication, attract the attention of information seekers which can then increase product awareness. Also, supported by Park et all (2007), said the more quantity of positive reviews, the more likely it is to influence consumers to book Hotels.

Also, for the rating side, the findings revealed that the high rating influences Customers to choose hotels as represented by 94.7% of both previous and Customers, while 80% of Mediterraneo Hotel Staff. During the interview, one of the respondents from the Mediterraneo Hotel Staff said:

"*High rating results in a good image, hence Customers opt to use the service*". Also, one respondent from the customer side said:

"*Highly check on the star rating and always prefer three (3) stars and above*".

These findings are comparable to the study of Sparks & Browning (2011) examined the impact of online reviews on Hotel booking intentions and perception of trust using an experimental design to investigate four independent variables: the target of the review (core or interpersonal); overall valence of a set of reviews (positive or negative); framing of reviews (what comes first: negative or positive information); and whether or not a consumer generated numerical rating is provided together with the written text influences customer to choose Hotel.

Furthermore, the study findings indicated that most of the respondents from previous Customers, existing Customers, and Mediterraneo Hotel Staff argued about how complete, detailed, and timely messages influenced Customers, choice of the Hotel by 97.4%, 92.1%, and 95% respectively. During the interview, one respondent from the customer side said:

"*This is very important because if a certain complaint has been there for a long time with no reply from the Hotel, I don't book*".

Also, one of the respondents from the Mediterraneo Hotel Staff said:

"*Detailed review tends to get higher engagement from other Customers*"

This result is comparable to that of Xinyuan (Roy) Zhao, Liang Wang, and Xiao Guo 2015 who studied The Influence of Online Reviews on Online Hotel Booking Intentions and developed a research model and empirically examined the model by collecting data from business travellers in mainland China. They used Regression analysis and found Six features of online review content namely, usefulness, reviewer expertise, timeliness, volume, valence (negative and positive), and comprehensiveness. Regression analysis results testified positive causal relationships between usefulness, reviewer expertise, timeliness, volume and comprehensiveness, and respondents' online booking intentions.

In addition, (Cheung et all, 2008) explained, that online review completeness is one of the most effective elements of online posting in terms of the extent to which people are willing to accept and adopt online reviews, as well as the factors that drive adoption.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The above-mentioned major finding and discussion led this study to conclude that:

Moreover, the volume of customer reviews (number of reviews, comprehensiveness, and rating) is significant on Hotel reservations. Also, High ratings and the number of reviews of the hotel on travel

applications influenced customers to choose the hotel. The study revealed that Hotel customers make reservations after checking social media pages or travel applications also complete, detailed, and timely Messages motivated customers to choose the Hotel.

Recommendations

The study has made the following recommendations to improve Hotel reservations;

By reading the experiences of other consumers and understanding the quality of service and the Hotel's reputation, it can be seen that the volume of online reviews fosters the trust and loyalty of consumers. At the same time, online reviews also provide a lot of information to the Hotel hence becoming an important feedback mechanism for consumers. These emerging information sharing platforms and network communication should be used effectively by hotels and Mediterraneo, in particular, to disseminate corporate information, collect and organize consumer information from travel applications, websites, and social media platforms at low cost, and help them to manage customer relationships and provide competitive services.

Due to the rapid growth of smartphone users in recent years, the Mediterraneo Hotel owners may also opt to capitalise more on digital marketing to advertise their hotel services through travel applications, websites, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter because online advertising can capture the attention of many internet users instantly and they can directly be linked to their web portals for reservations without the need to make calls like the traditional way.

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