

Assessing Service Quality and Guest Satisfaction in Hotels of Darjeeling District: A Content Analysis of Online Reviews

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ABSTRACT

Rapid tourism growth in Darjeeling has intensified competition among hotels, making service quality a crucial determinant of guest satisfaction and destination competitiveness. In tourism-dependent regions like Darjeeling, hotel accommodations constitute an important component of the overall tourists' experience of the destination. However, despite the increasing availability of online guest reviews, they are often treated merely as a numerical rating and remain underutilized as a source of qualitative insight. Therefore, this study examines guests' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, identifies key factors influencing their experiences, analyses how guests' narratives align with SERVQUAL dimensions. A qualitative content analysis approach was adopted using 2,007 online reviews from Booking.com and Agoda. The findings show that guest satisfaction is primarily influenced by location and accessibility, staff behaviour, and room quality and cleanliness, whereas dissatisfaction mainly arises from poor room conditions, service failures, and unresponsive staff behaviour. Among SERVQUAL dimensions tangibles emerged as the most dominant dimension in both positive and negative reviews, indicating that guests largely evaluate hotel quality based on physical facilities and visible service elements. Positive experiences were further associated with assurance and responsiveness, while dissatisfaction was largely linked to reliability failures, particularly when promised services were not delivered consistently. Further, sentiment analysis reveals that the overall image of hotel stays in Darjeeling remains positive, shaped by favourable staff interactions, scenic views, and location advantages. Thus, the study highlights that online textual reviews can be used as a useful managerial tool for identifying service quality gaps

and improving guest satisfaction and competitiveness in this crowded tourist destination.

Keywords: *service quality, guest satisfaction, SERVQUAL, online hotel review*

1. INTRODUCTION

As India continues to become a top travel destination, with Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) reaching 20.57 million in 2024, fuelling rapid expansion in hotel industry. This trend is particularly evident in the hospitality and tourism industry in the hilly region of North Bengal, with more than 10 lakhs tourist's arrival annually and hotel occupancy rates surpassing 95% during the peak season. Such a large arrival of tourists increases competition among hotels, compelling them to offer good-quality services to attract and retain tourists. Therefore, the quality of services provided by hotels play a significant role in maintaining competitiveness as well as enhancing guest's satisfaction. The quality of services provided by hotels becomes an important factor for influencing tourists' satisfaction, repeat visitation and perception about the destination. When the expectations are not met, dissatisfaction arises, making it necessary for hotel to examine their quality of service especially from the guests'

This study focuses on hotels in Darjeeling's hospitality and tourism industry to understand how guests describe their satisfaction and dissatisfaction, which becomes important not only for sustainability of the hotels but also for maintaining the competitiveness of the destination. By analyzing online hotel guest reviews as secondary data through content analysis and mapping these experiences against the SERVQUAL framework, the study helps to explain the reasons behind guest satisfaction/ dissatisfaction. In doing so, the study presents how online reviews can be used as a useful source of information for understanding hotel service quality in hill-based destinations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Service quality and guest satisfaction has been examined within hospitality research for a long period of time. Service quality is the difference between what a customer expects and what he actually experiences, which then influences satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the customer (Grönroos, 1984). This idea was further developed into SERVQUAL framework by Parasuraman et al. (1988) into five dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles which are used to

measure service quality and has become one of the most widely used frameworks for evaluating quality of services across various service industries.

With the growth of online hotel booking platforms, research has increasingly used online guest reviews as a source of customer feedback. Prior studies show that online reviews influence hotel choice and reflect guest's perceptions of service quality (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Online reviews tend to express guests' experience that provides a clearer and detailed insights into guests' evaluations of service quality (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015).

Recent study shows that qualitative content analysis of online hotel reviews can be used to identify service quality factors and assess their alignment with service quality framework. Wąsowicz-Zaborek (2023) showed that textual hotel reviews provide detailed information about guests' service experiences and can be used to examine SERVQUAL dimensions. Padma & Ahn (2020) in their study revealed that different aspects of services provided by guests like attributes relating to hotel, room, staff, food and services frequently emerge as dominant themes in guest's online narratives in hotel settings.

Despite these contributions, studies applying content analysis of online reviews in hill destination especially in the region under North Bengal remains scarce. Addressing this gap, the present study employs SERVQUAL guided framework, to identify the drivers of guest satisfaction and dissatisfaction and to assess the overall image of the destination stay.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- to explore guests' satisfaction and dissatisfaction about a hotel
- to identify the factors contributing to hotel guest's satisfaction and dissatisfaction
- to understand how guests' narratives, align with SERVQUAL service quality dimensions
- to examine the overall image of the destination stay as reflected in online reviews

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a content analysis approach to examine guests' satisfaction and dissatisfaction about a hotel based on online reviews. The study focuses on how guests' experience about hotel services help to understand the image of a hotel based

on textual narratives provided shared through online reviews. This research uses SERVQUAL framework to evaluate the service quality dimensions expressed through online guests' reviews.

The dataset used for the purpose of this study involves guest's online reviews about various hotels extracted from two major hotel booking websites Booking.com and Agoda. A total of 2,007 hotels' online reviews posted during the year 2024-2025 were extracted for 180 hotels located in the hilly regions of Darjeeling district. Only reviews that are in English were included to ensure consistency in interpretations.

To differentiate between guests' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with hotel services, the reviews were classified based on the numerical rating provided by the guests. Reviews with lower ratings (1-5) were classified as negative reviews, reflecting guests' dissatisfaction, whereas reviews with higher ratings (6-10) were classified as positive reviews, reflecting guests' satisfaction. However, it is recognized that the customers' review may include both positive and negative aspects about their experiences in hotels. To address this, individual statements were analyzed independently and coded according to its content using NVivo software.

This study also examines hotel service quality by mapping guests' experience to the SERVQUAL dimensions. The SERVQUAL framework and questionnaire developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) evaluate service quality across 5 dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

Tangibles refers to the visible and physical aspect of a service and the appearance of service personnel. It is measured using guest reviews referencing to the physical and visible aspect of the hotel, including room condition, cleanliness, maintenance of facilities, and overall physical environment. All statements describing the appearance and condition of tangible service elements were coded under this category.

Reliability relates to the ability to deliver promised services accurately and consistently. It was assessed through guest's reviews indicating whether hotel services were delivered as promised and performed consistently. References to service breakdown and failure of basic facilities were used to measure this dimension.

Responsiveness reflects staffs' willingness to help guests and provide prompt service. It was measured by analyzing guest reviews related to staff

promptness and willingness to assist. Statements referring to response time, handling of requests and resolution of service issues were coded under this dimension.

Assurance explains the staff knowledge, competence and courteous behaviour. It was measured using guests' perception of staff professionalism, competence and courteous behavior. Reviews reflecting trust, confidence in staff and perceived service competence were classified under this category.

Empathy denotes the provision of caring for the guests and providing individualized attention. It was measured through guest's reviews which described personal attention, care and understanding shown by hotels staff. Reference indicating individual concern, supportive behavior and attentiveness to guest needs were coded under this category.

Finally, thematic coding was adopted for data interpretation. All reviews considered for analysis were then imported into NVivo qualitative data analysis software, where coding and categorization were done in accordance with the predefined SERVQUAL dimensions.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Online hotel guest reviews reveal distinct patterns in how guest express satisfaction and dissatisfaction with hotel services in the Darjeeling district. An examination of guests' reviews highlight recurring themes the influence the guest's satisfaction/dissatisfaction related to hotels that shape the overall perceptions about the service quality and of the destination stay.

Guests Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with Hotel Services

An analysis of online hotel guest reviews reveals a pattern in how guest articulate satisfaction and dissatisfaction with hotels services. To capture the major themes in guests' reviews, word frequency patterns were examined separately for positive and negative reviews and supported through visual representations in the form of word clouds. While frequency-based analysis of online hotel reviews has been widely used to examine satisfaction and dissatisfaction in hospitality research (Berezina et al., 2016) the use of word clouds as a visual tool to illustrate major service quality themes has also been demonstrated in recent hotel review studies (Wąsowicz-Zaborek, 2023). In qualitative research, combining word frequency counts with visual representations strengthens exploratory analysis by indicating not only what themes emerge but also how prominently they appear in participants' narratives.

The analysis of negative review shows the most frequently occurring words includes staff (97 occurrences; 0.95%), rooms (85; 0.83%), service (75; 0.73%), water (73; 0.71%), location (72; 0.70%) and breakfast (68; 0.66%). While the most frequently occurring words include staff, rooms, service, water, location and breakfast, other facility related terms such as cleaning, bathroom and heater also reoccurs across negative reviews, as reflected in the word cloud. These patterns indicate that dissatisfaction is primarily associated with basic service failures and physical facilities. The major dissatisfaction- related words are summarised in Table 1, while their relative prominence is visually illustrated in FIGURE 1.

TABLE 1: Frequently Occurring Words in Negative Hotel Guest Reviews

Rank	Word	Frequency (n)	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
1	Staff	97	0.95	staff, staffs
2	Rooms	85	0.83	rooms
3	Service	75	0.73	service, serviceable, services
4	Water	73	0.71	water
5	Location	72	0.70	located, location
6	Breakfast	68	0.66	breakfast

Source: Content analysis of negative online hotel guest reviews by the Authors

FIGURE 1: Word Cloud Illustrating Major Themes in Negative Hotel Review



Source: Content analysis of negative online hotel guest reviews by the Authors

An analysis of positive online reviews indicated that guests' satisfaction is primarily shaped by their experiences with hotel services. The most frequently occurring words include locations (582 occurrences; 2.62%), staffs (578; 2.60%), cleaning (267; 1.20%), rooms (231; 1.04%), and helps (210; 0.94%). The prominence of these indicated that guest associate positive experiences with supportive staff, clean and comfortable rooms and convenient location.

Frequent references to staff suggest that professional behaviour, willingness to help and day to day interactions of staff with employees play a significant role in shaping positive impressions. Similarly repeated mentions of cleaning and room points to the importance of hygiene and comfort in guests' evaluations. The strong emphasis on location reflect guest's appreciation of accessibility as part of their experiences. The major satisfaction-related terms are summarised in Table 2 while their relative prominence is visually illustrated in FIGURE 2.

TABLE 2: Frequently Occurring Words in Positive Hotel Guests Reviews

Rank	Word	Frequency (n)	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
1	Location	582	2.62	locate, located, location, locations
2	Staff	578	2.6	staff, staffs
3	Cleaning	267	1.2	clean, cleaned, cleaning
4	Rooms	231	1.04	room, rooms
5	Helpful	210	0.94	helped, helpful, helpfulness, helping, helps
6	Service	180	0.81	service, services

Source: Content analysis of positive online hotel guest reviews by the Authors

FIGURE 2: Word Cloud Illustrating Major Themes in Positive Hotel Reviews.



Source: Content analysis of positive online hotel guest reviews by the Authors

Overall, taken together, the analysis reveals clear and contrasting pattern in how guests articulate satisfaction and dissatisfaction with hotels services. Dissatisfaction is clearly expressed through references to shortcomings in core services and basic physical facilities like rooms, unavailability of water etc, while satisfaction is shaped by positive staff interactions, cleanliness, room comfort and favourable location. This difference indicates the guest often refer to the same core

service elements when describing satisfaction and dissatisfaction but frame them differently depending on their experiences. While shortcomings are highlighted in negative experiences and satisfactory performance is highlighted in positive experiences.

Factors Contributing to Hotel Guests' Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

The identification of factors contributing to hotel guests' satisfaction and dissatisfaction was based on frequency of recurring themes in hotel guests' online reviews. These factors highlight hotel services and facilities that guests most frequently associate with positive and negative reviews. Similar dimensions have been widely reported in hospitality literature, where staff behaviour, room quality and cleanliness, food and beverage services, hotel-related facilities and location-related attributes consistently emerge as significant factors influencing guests' perceptions about hotel service quality (Khoo-Lattimore & Ekiz, 2014; Padma & Ahn, 2020). Based on these established themes and frequently occurring words and phrases in guest reviews were contextually grouped into broader thematic factors for qualitative coding.

Factors contributing to guest satisfaction (positive reviews)

The qualitative analysis of positive reviews indicates that Location and Accessibility, Staff Behaviour and Room Quality and Cleanliness are the most influential contributors to guest satisfaction.

The qualitative analysis of the positive reviews reveals that Location and Accessibility, Staff Behaviour and Room and Cleanliness are the most influential contributors to guest satisfaction. Among these Location and Accessibility recorded the highest number of references (582), indicating its strong role in shaping favourable guest perceptions. Secondly, Staff Behaviour (578 references) emerged as a critical experience factor reflecting the importance of human interaction in shaping guest satisfaction. Room Quality and Cleanliness (267 references) also plays a significant role in guest satisfaction. Clean, comfortable and well-maintained rooms appear to function as a basic expectation that supports positive evaluation of hotel. Additional factors contributing to satisfaction include Food and Beverage (156 references), particularly breakfast quality, as well as Scenic Views (81 references) and Hotel Facilities (38 references). Although these factors receive comparatively fewer mentions they contribute to enhancing guests' overall satisfaction.

Overall, the findings suggest that guest satisfaction is shaped by both functional aspects of the hotel and the quality of service interaction, with staff behaviour and location playing important roles in creating favourable hotel experiences. The distribution of satisfaction-related factors is presented in TABLE 3.

Table3: Factors Influencing Positive Hotel Guest Reviews

Parent Code (Satisfaction)	References	% Share of Total References
Location & Accessibility	582	34.20%
Staff Behaviour	578	33.96%
Room Quality and Cleanliness	267	15.69%
Food & Beverage	156	9.17%
Views & Scenic Experience	81	4.76%
Hotel Facilities & Amenities	38	2.23%
Total	1702	100.00%

Source: Content analysis of online hotel guest reviews by the Authors

Factors contributing to guest dissatisfaction (negative reviews)

The analysis of the negative reviews shows that Room quality and Cleanliness are the biggest driver contributing to guest dissatisfaction (249 references; 28.07%). Guests most frequently expressed problems relating to unclean rooms, poor maintenance, and overall room conditions. This was followed by service failure (200 references; 22.55%), where issues associated with unavailability of water, heater or malfunctioning of basic facilities were expressed. Staff Behaviour also emerged as one of a major source of dissatisfaction (186 references; 20.97%) with negative reviews reflecting issues such as lack of responsiveness, unprofessional conduct and inadequate handling of guest complaints. Hotel Facilities and Amenities (91 references; 10.26%) and Food and Beverage Services (77 references; 8.68%), appeared less frequently but still had an influence in the negative perception of hotel guests about the hotel services. Location and Accessibility appeared the least in negative reviews (84 references; 9.47%), suggesting that dissatisfaction is driven more by shortcomings in internal service delivery. Overall, these patterns indicate that negative hotel experiences are primarily shaped by failures in basic room standards and service provision, as summarised in TABLE 4.

TABLE 4: Factors Influencing Negative Hotel Guest Reviews

Parent Code (Dissatisfaction)	References	% Share of Total References
Room Quality & Cleanliness	249	28.07%
Service Failure	200	22.55%
Staff Behaviour	186	20.97%
Hotel Facilities & Amenities	91	10.26%
Location & Accessibility	84	9.47%
Food & Beverage Services	77	8.68%
Total	887	100.00%

Source: Content analysis of online hotel guest reviews by the Authors

Therefore, this analysis identifies a clear distinction between drivers of guest satisfaction and dissatisfaction. While location and Accessibility and Staff Behaviour are the primary catalysts for guest satisfaction. Guest dissatisfaction is fundamentally rooted in internal operational shortcomings, with Room Quality and Cleanliness and Service failures, but is intensified when Staff lacks the responsiveness needed to resolve grievances, turning a service lapse into a permanent negative perception. By distinguishing these separate drivers, the study clarifies that while a hotels' physical attributes attract guests, it is the quality of staff intervention during service failure that ultimately determines whether a guest leaves satisfied or unsatisfied.

Alignment of Guests' Narratives with SERVQUAL Service Quality Dimensions

While the above analysis identifies the key service influencing hotel guests' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, a further examination was undertaken to understand how these experiences align with established service quality dimensions. For hotels, service quality reflect how consistently and effectively services are delivered. Mapping guests' reviews to SERVQUAL dimensions allows hotel service experiences to be interpreted in terms of distinct service quality attributes, providing a diagnostic understanding of the area causing dissatisfaction.

The SERVQUAL framework developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) has 5 dimension, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, using

these dimensions, guests' online reviews were analysed to examine how different aspects of hotel service quality are reflected in both positive and negative experiences. The definition of these dimensions used to guide the analysis are summarised in TABLE 5.

TABLE 5: SERVQUAL Dimensions and Definition Used in the Study

SERVQUAL Dimension	Concise Definition	Criteria Used for Coding Guest Reviews
Tangibles	Physical facilities, equipment, and the appearance of service personnel	Room Condition, cleanliness, hotel amenities, visual appearance of staff
Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately	Service Consistency, fulfilment of promises, availability of basic facilities (e.g.water, heating)
Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service	Prompt service, response to requests, handing of complaints, staff willingness to help
Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence	Staff Professionalism, confidence, courteous behaviour
Empathy	Caring and individualised attention provided to customers	Personal attention, supportive behaviour, understanding and addressing guests needs.

Source: Parasuraman et al. (1988); Authors' coding framework

In positive review, tangibles emerge as the most prominent dimension, accounting for 45.54% of coding references, indicating that satisfaction is strongly associated with clean rooms, well-maintained facilities and visible service elements. Assurance follows at 24.35% reflecting guests' confidence in staff professionalism and competence, while responsiveness accounts for 16.63%, highlighting the importance of prompt service and staff willingness to assist. Empathy, although less frequently mentioned at 7.34 %, reflects appreciation for personalised attention whereas reliability appears less prominent in positive reviews, suggesting reliability function largely as a basic expectation rather than a distinctive source of satisfaction.

In negative reviews, the emphasis shifts while alignment with SERVQUAL dimension remains evident. Tangibles account for the largest share of references (54.77%), indicating that even dissatisfaction is most commonly associated with physical and functional service shortcomings such as room condition and facility-related issues. Reliability represents the next most frequently references dimension (29.05%), reflecting concerns related to service inconsistency and failure to deliver promised services. References to assurance (8.36%) and responsiveness (4.37%) are present but occur less frequently. Empathy is reflected only marginally (3.45%), suggesting that dissatisfaction is less commonly expressed in terms of emotional or relational aspects compared to functional and service-related concerns. The comparative analysis of positive and negative reviews shows a clear alignment between guests' narratives and the SERVQUAL dimensions, as shown in TABLE 6.

TABLE 6. Distribution of SERVQUAL Service Quality Dimensions in Positive and Negative Guest Reviews

SERVQUAL Dimension	Positive Reviews: Coding References (n)	Positive Reviews (%) (n = 1,076)	Negative Reviews: Coding References (n)	Negative Reviews (%) (n = 754)
Tangibles	490	45.54	413	54.77
Assurance	262	24.35	63	8.36
Responsiveness	179	16.63	33	4.37
Reliability	66	6.14	219	29.05
Empathy	79	7.34	26	3.45
Total	1,076	100	754	100.00

Source: Content analysis of online hotel guest reviews by the Authors

The mapping of guests experiences onto SERVQUAL framework shows that while both satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from the same five dimensions, there is a distinct shift in how these features are prioritized depending on the guests' experience. Tangibles serve as the primary driver of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, confirming that the physical environment remains the most visible benchmark for hotel quality. However, an important distinction emerges, as assurance and responsiveness act as a significant dimension for positive experiences of the guest. However, these same dimensions are mentioned significantly less in

negative reviews, suggesting that dissatisfaction is more often linked to failure in delivering basic services as promised.

Overall image of the destination stays as reflected in online reviews.

To capture the overall image of the destination, stay as reflected in guests' experiences, sentiment analysis of online hotel reviews was undertaken. Sentiment analysis has been widely used in hospitality research to understand guests' overall perceptions and emotional evaluations of hotel and destination experiences based on hotel reviews (Ameur et al., 2024; Geetha et al., 2017; Manasa & Prasad, 2024).

To examine the overall image of the destination, stay, a sentiment analysis of online customer reviews was conducted using NVivo. NVivo's sentiment analysis classifies reviews based on the direction and intensity of language expressed by guests. Sentiments are categorised into very negative, moderately negative, very positive and moderately positive sentiments, where moderately and very negative/positive sentiments are distinguished based on how strongly guests express their opinions with stronger emotional language which indicates higher intensity sentiments. A total of 1082 sentiment-related coding references were identified, providing a comprehensive view of guest perception. Overall, the findings of sentiment analysis reveals that the destination maintains a largely a positive image among the hotel guests.

However, to understand which specific attributes defines positive image, matrix coding in NVivo was performed to cross tabulate themes with sentiment categories. The analysis identified two significant pillars of the destination's hotel image. Staff Behaviour emerged as the strongest characteristics of the positive image with, 404total positive references, including 213 classified as "very positive" highlighting the central role of human interaction in shaping favorable guest experiences. Location also emerged as a key positive attribute, scenic elements such as "mountain view" further supported the positive image, as these attributes were consistently associated with positive sentiment and showed very few "very negative" mentions.

Similarly, matrix coding was utilized to examine the specific attributes defining negative sentiments that tends to decrease the overall destination stay's image. The matrix analysis showed similar conclusion to positive sentiment analysis where Staff and Service Quality was primarily associated with both satisfaction and dissatisfaction which recorded an aggregate of 404 positive reference and 62 negative references, including 42 very negative mentions. Next is location and

Accessibility recorded a total of 261 positive references and 49 negative references in total followed by dissatisfaction about room quality and cleanliness with an aggregate of 30 negative references and 133 total positive references.

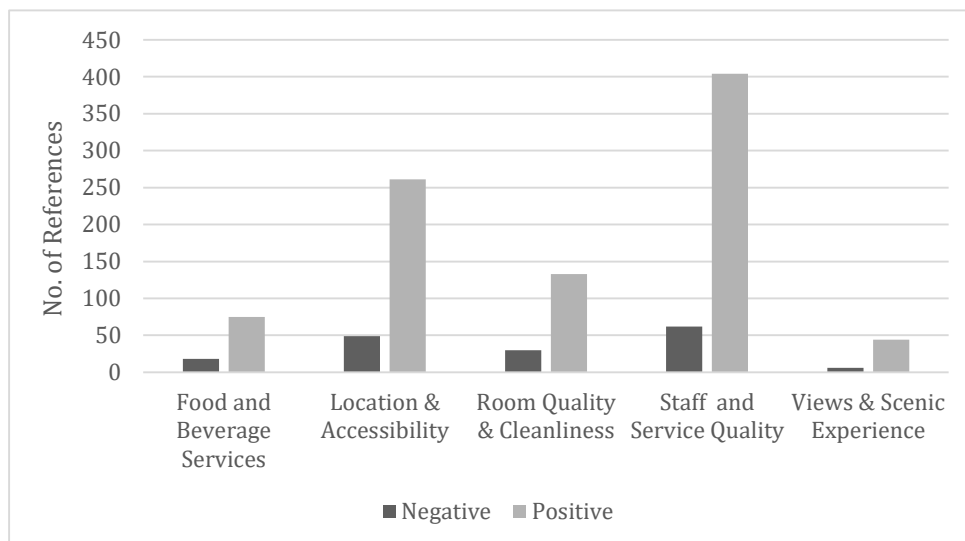
TABLE 7: Sentiment Analysis of Hotel Reviews

	Very negative	Moderately negative	Negative (Total)	Very positive	Moderately positive	Positive (Total)
Food and Beverage Services	9	9	18	20	55	75
Location & Accessibility	21	28	49	89	172	261
Room Quality & Cleanliness	22	8	30	78	55	133
Staff and Service Quality	42	20	62	213	191	404
Views & Scenic Experience	4	2	6	16	28	44

Source: Sentiment analysis of online hotel reviews by the Authors

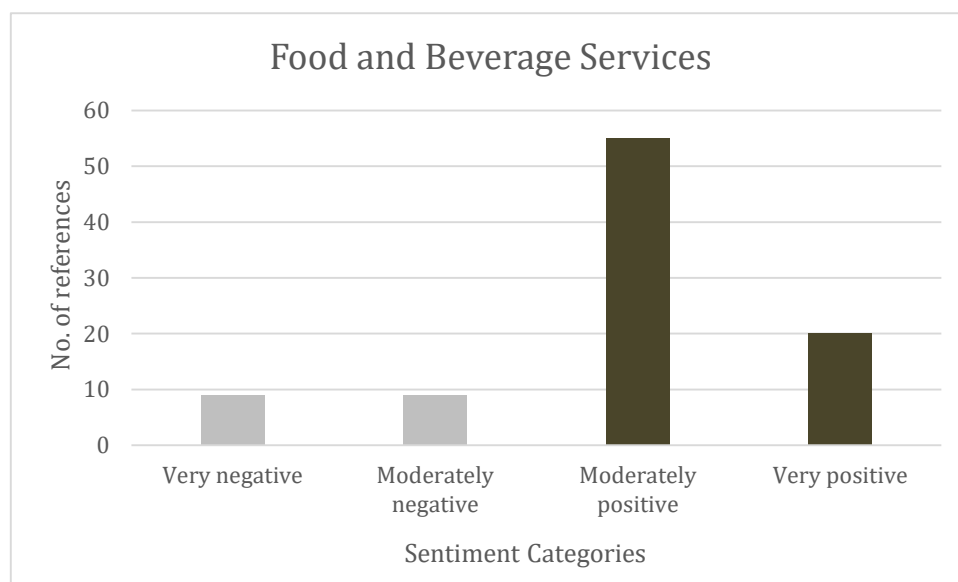
FIGURE 3 presents the aggregate sentiment distribution across hotel reviews. The figure clearly shows a predominance of positive sentiments in overall guest evaluations. This aggregate view reinforces favourable image of hotel stay ,while indicating the presence of specific areas of dissatisfaction explored in the attribute-level analysis.

FIGURE 3: Aggregate Sentiment Distribution across Hotel Service Attributes



Source: Sentiment analysis of online hotel reviews by the Authors

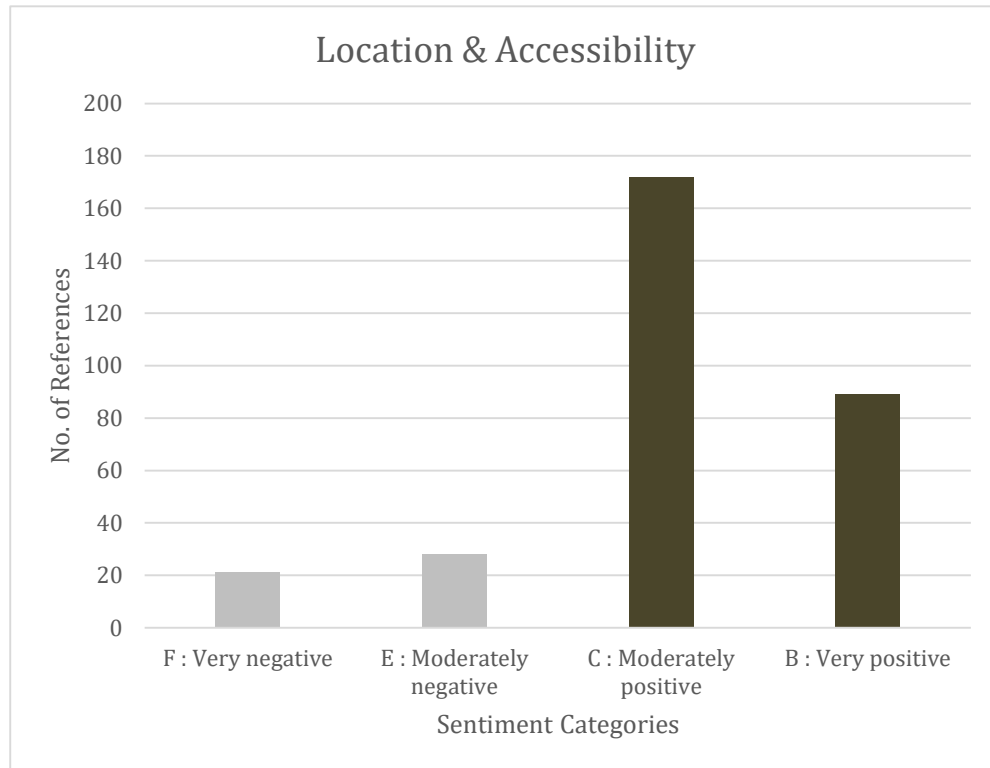
FIGURE 4: Sentiment Distribution for Food and Beverage Services



Source: Sentiment analysis of online hotel reviews by the Authors

As shown in FIGURE 5, location and accessibility attract predominantly moderately positive sentiment (172 references), with negative evaluations occurring less frequently (18 references), indicating the importance of location in shaping favourable perception of the destination stay.

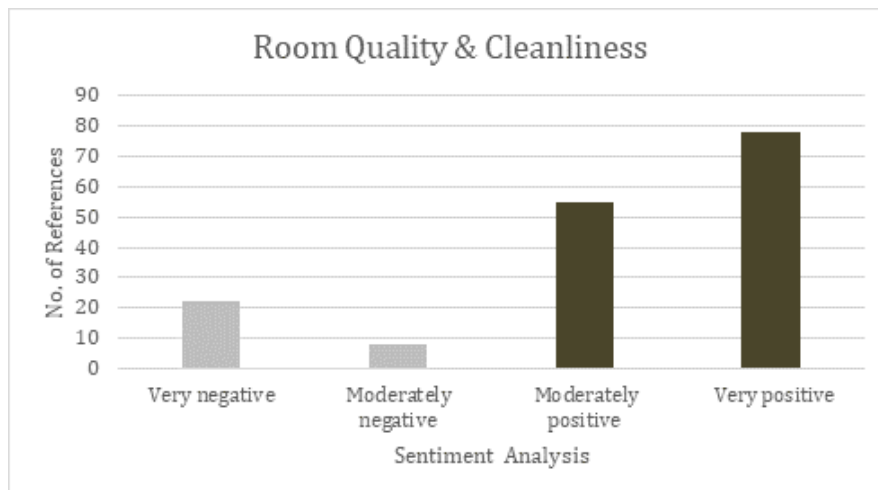
FIGURE 5: Sentiment Distribution for Location and Accessibility



Source: Sentiment analysis of online hotel reviews by the Authors

As shown in FIGURE 6, room quality and cleanliness are generally evaluated positively (133 references), however, the presence of comparatively higher very negative sentiment (30 references) indicates that deficiencies in basic room conditions are a key source of dissatisfaction affecting the overall image of destination stay.

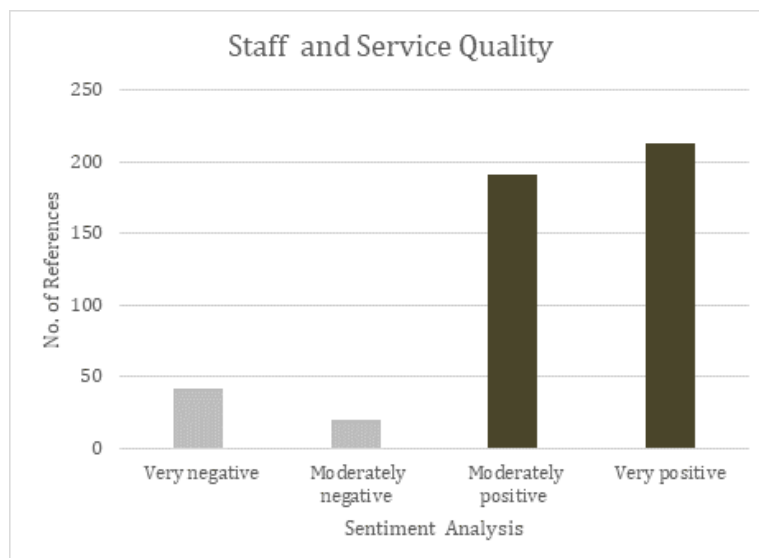
FIGURE 6: Sentiment Distribution for Room Quality and Cleanliness



Source: Sentiment analysis of online hotel reviews by the Authors

As show in FIGURE 7, staff and service quality emerge as the strongest contributor to a positive destination stay image, with very positive sentiment (404 references) overwhelmingly outweighing negative evaluations (62 references), indicating the central role of human interaction in shaping guest experiences.

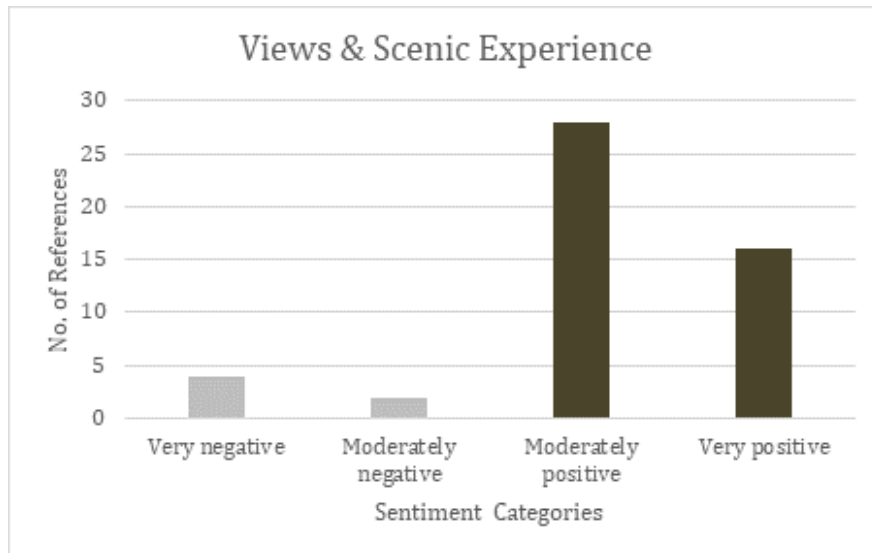
FIGURE 7: Sentiment Distribution for Staff and Service Quality



Source: Sentiment analysis of online hotel reviews by the Authors

As shown in FIGURE 8, views and scenic experiences are predominantly associated with positive sentiment (44 references) with minimal negative evaluations(6 references), indicating the scenic beauty increases the overall destination stay image.

FIGURE 8: Sentiment Distribution for Views and Scenic Experience



Source: Sentiment analysis of online hotel reviews by the Authors

In conclusion, the overall image of a hotel stay is shaped by combination of core service elements. A negative image is most likely to emerge when hotels fails to deliver basic promised services, particularly inrelation to staff and service quality and room related facilities. At the same time, positive image is also driven primarily by staff and service quality. Friendly behaviour, prompt assistance and consistent service delivery plays an important role in shaping favourable guest perceptions. Location, accessibility and room quality further adds to positive guest experiences of the hotel stay.

6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Guest evaluate hotel stays through a limited set of recurring service elements and it is the way these attributed perform shape whether experiences are described in positive or negative ways. Positive reviews are largely associated with location, staff behaviour, room related attributes etc, reflecting the combined influence of convenience, human interaction and effective delivery of basic service expectation

in shaping guest satisfaction. Dissatisfaction is more often reflected in reviews where basic services fall short of expectations, especially in relation to room conditions, cleanliness and service reliability and is more intensified when staff responses fail to address these shortcomings. The same service elements like staff and room related attributes appear across both positive and negative reviews, however how they are experienced and differentiates satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Guests' narratives reflect a strong alignment with the SERVQUAL dimensions. Tangible dominate both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, indicating that physical condition form the most immediate benchmark of hotel quality. Positive experiences are further shaped by assurance and responsiveness, reflecting the importance of staff competence and prompt service, whereas, dissatisfaction is largely driven by reliability failures, particularly when promised services are not delivered consistently.

The overall image of the destination stays to be largely positive, shaped mainly by favourable interaction of staff and service quality and by location related advantages. Scenic attributes further strengthen this image through consistently positive sentiment. Negative perceptions are most strongly associated with staff and service quality, followed by location accessibility and room quality and cleanliness, indicating that negative perception forms when service expectations are not met.

To further interpret this distinction between drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the findings can be interpreted through Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory. The findings suggest that factors such as room quality, cleanliness and basic service reliability function as hygiene factors accounting for over 50% references (see Table 4), while contributing comparatively less to satisfaction 15.69% (see Table 3). This indicates that the absence of these factors leads to dissatisfaction, where their presence primarily fulfils basic service expectations rather than generating satisfaction. In contrast, staff behaviour, locational advantage and experiential attributes such as scenic views acts as motivators, together accounting for over 70% the satisfaction related references (see Table 3) contributing directly to guest satisfaction when delivered effectively. However, the theory is not quantitatively tested in this study but provides a useful lens for interpreting how different service attributes perform distinct roles in shaping guests' overall image of the stay.

7. CONCLUSION

Guests' evaluations of hotels stay depends upon how closely services are delivered as expected and as promised. The same features may result in satisfaction and dissatisfaction depending on how service expectations are met and how effectively service failures are managed. The findings from this study can prove to be helpful from a policy and managerial perspective for hotels operating in hill destinations such as Darjeeling. When basic services are provided consistently and staff are able to manage service failures effectively, dissatisfaction can be reduced and guest satisfaction can be increased. For the long-term sustainability of hotel, managers/owners should need to consistently monitor areas that cause guest dissatisfaction such as room quality, cleanliness, service failures and address these issues in timely manner, while also ensuring that factors contributing to positive guest experience such as staff behavior is trained and maintained properly.

While the study identifies factors contributing to guests' satisfaction and dissatisfaction about hotels in Darjeeling it is subjected to certain limitations. Since the study is based on guests' online reviews from two hotel booking platforms, so it reflects the experiences of guests who booked through these platforms. In addition, due to absence of consistent star rating of hotels for classifications of hotels in the region, the findings will reflect overall patterns of guests' satisfaction and dissatisfaction across hotels, rather than category differences.

Despite these limitations, the study reveals that online reviews can be treated not only as a numerical rating but also can be used to examines the guests' experience of their stay which further can be mapped into the appropriate SERVQUAL dimensions. In doing so, the study demonstrates that both positive and negative online hotel reviews can be analyzed to identify the service quality gaps. if any, present in hotels of this highly crowded tourist destination.

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