

Research Article

Understanding the Positive Sentiment of Customers Through Online Review (A Case of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel)

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Abstract

This article evaluates the positive experiences communicated by customers regarding the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel. The objective is to identify the principal themes expressed in online reviews and to discern key concepts that contribute to guest satisfaction. The study examines 4,714 online reviews of the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel collected from January 2019 to August 2024, primarily sourced from platforms such as Google, TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Agoda, Ctrip, and hotel.com. Analysis of these 4,714 reviews revealed a total of 9,581 distinct positive mentions. These mentions were categorized into 27 themes, each accompanied by the frequency of associated compliments. The findings highlight six key factors that significantly enhance guest satisfaction: patrons frequently commend the hotel's diverse and exceptional culinary offerings, noting that the outstanding standards and inviting ambiance to create a lasting impression. The provision of clean, spacious rooms with stunning views ensures a high level of comfort, while the strategic location of the hotel, near both the airport and city center, adds to the overall convenience. Furthermore, the commitment of the staff to delivering exemplary experiences is often noted, with a particular emphasis on the warmth and professionalism exhibited by the team, which contributes to guests feeling valued. These findings advocate for a renewed focus on these elements to not only enrich the guest experience but also to fortify the hotel's competitive standing. In addition, the results offer a framework to acknowledge staff through positive feedback, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement in service quality.

Keywords

Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, Online Reviews, Positive Online Review, Guest Satisfaction & Customer Experience

1. Introduction

The advent and rapid proliferation of social media platforms have profoundly altered the landscape of the tourism industry, especially in communication practices between businesses and consumers. This transformation is particularly evident in how consumers make decisions about their travel purchases, manage the online reputations of hotels, and engage with hotel staff and other guests [1]. Daily, countless travel reviews are disseminated across platforms like

TripAdvisor, creating an expansive and dynamic global discourse that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries [22].

Online customer reviews have been widely considered one of the most influential types of consumer-generated content for understanding consumer behavior and consequently firm performance in hospitality and tourism [4, 20, 33, 35].

Despite prevailing skepticism regarding the reliability of

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recommendations generated by businesses themselves [6], the increasing inclination towards online consumer reviews might be attributed to a prevailing belief that peer reviews—often considered a modern form of Word of Mouth—are more trustworthy than conventional marketing content [2] note that consumers frequently leverage various digital platforms—including email, chat rooms, online forums, and social networks—to share and disseminate their reviews of products and services.

Online reviews have emerged as a crucial component of the decision-making framework in the current digital landscape, particularly within the hotel industry. Here, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) wields considerable influence over customer behavior and shapes perceptions of service quality [31].

Extensive research has recognized the multifarious benefits associated with receiving, analyzing, and managing customer feedback effectively [27]. However, a significant portion of contemporary service research tends to concentrate on negative feedback. For many years, the primary objective has been to identify and rectify issues to manage and mitigate costs linked to negative word-of-mouth, customer attrition, and lost revenue opportunities. Consequently, service researchers have predominantly directed their attention toward understanding customer complaints, dysfunctional behaviors, and overall customer dissatisfaction [6].

In the hospitality domain, positive feedback acts as a critical indicator of customer satisfaction and provides valuable insights into consumers' diverse behaviors and preferences [10]. Nonetheless, the impact of positive customer feedback (PCF) remains relatively under-examined in service literature, with its multifaceted dimensions extending beyond mere expressions of gratitude or compliments [24, 25].

Positive online customer reviews, classified under User-Generated Content (UGC), considerably sway consumer purchasing choices. Empirical evidence suggests that customers often place greater trust in individual reviews compared to those crafted by marketers, referred to as Marketer Generated Content. When consumers develop a sense of assurance in a service or product, they frequently feel compelled to share their positive experiences through reviews on social media platforms, thereby influencing prospective customers [7, 8, 11].

The power of customer compliments cannot be overstated; they serve as a potent asset for businesses, often yielding insights that may carry more significance than customer complaints when influencing both organizational practices and individual behaviors [38]. A nuanced understanding of the elements that contribute to customer satisfaction can provide companies with a vital competitive advantage. Kraft and Martin (2001) assert that customer compliments not only signify satisfaction but also highlight a broader array of motivations underlying consumer behavior, thereby calling for further scholarly inquiry in this area [18]. As a result, this study aims to investigate the compliments shared by guests at the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel (ESH) to uncover deeper in-

sights into customer satisfaction and feedback.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Customer Compliments

Consumer compliments serve as valuable feedback from customers, expressing their satisfaction and appreciation for a product or service. These positive remarks are crucial for businesses, as they not only boost brand reputation but also promote customer loyalty. Engaging with compliments demonstrates a company's commitment to enhancing the customer experience, which can significantly influence purchasing decisions.

Research indicates that how responsive a company is to both compliments and complaints on social media affects customer perceptions [13]. This aspect is supported by Robinson and Berl (1980), who suggested that compliments can guide management in marketing by highlighting effective services [34]. Furthermore, Otto et al. (2005) posited that an accumulation of compliments may inform promotional strategies [28]. Compliments often signify that customer expectations have been surpassed, enabling marketing to concentrate on the most valued elements [19].

By analyzing consumer compliments, businesses can gain insights into customer preferences and emotional responses, allowing them to refine their offerings. In today's digital world, capitalizing on positive feedback is vital for strengthening brand reputation and fostering loyalty. Companies increasingly prioritize social interactions, strategically responding to customers with more substantial followings [13]. Recognizing how to effectively respond to online compliments can greatly influence consumer attitudes and enhance marketing success [9]. Ultimately, a solid approach to engaging with positive sentiments can cultivate customer loyalty and encourage advocacy Customer Compliments.

2.2. Positive Online Review (Positive Electronic Word of Mouth)

As the internet expands, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) through social media has emerged as an essential tool for consumers seeking to discover and exchange information regarding products and services [12, 30]. These reviews are considered more effective in influencing consumer behavior than traditional marketing strategies, vendor information, or promotional messages from third-party websites [41-43].

It also plays a significant role in the hotel sector, profoundly influencing consumer perceptions and decision-making. Recognizing the elements that foster positive e-WOM can assist hotels in improving their image and drawing more customers [31, 36].

Moe and Schweidel (2012) examine the dynamics of online

product ratings and reviews, focusing particularly on the bandwagon effect [23]. Their research reveals that a favorable ratings environment motivates individuals to share their reviews, creating a feedback loop that boosts product visibility and attractiveness. This finding highlights the necessity of nurturing a positive review culture, which not only increases the volume of reviews but also impacts their character.

Furthermore, Ho-Dac et al. (2013) emphasize the significance of positive online customer reviews (OCRs) in strengthening brand equity, especially for less-established brands [14]. Their study indicates that positive reviews not only stimulate immediate sales but also support long-term brand development, highlighting the strategic relevance of overseeing online reviews. The connection between positive feedback and brand equity is notably strong in competitive markets where brand strength is essential.

The impact of favorable online reviews goes beyond just sales numbers; it is crucial in influencing consumer behavior. Schmitt (2011) offers insights into confirmation bias, indicating that positive reviews increase perceived helpfulness when consumers hold a favorable initial belief about a product [35]. This implies that positive reviews can validate existing beliefs and affect purchase intentions, consequently boosting consumer trust.

This correlates with the broader perspective that positive online reviews act as a critical resource for businesses to build consumer confidence, particularly in contexts where trust poses a significant obstacle to online shopping. Venter and Kolbe (2020) further discussed by analyzing the freemium model in mobile apps, indicating that positive reviews of free versions can lead to higher sales of premium versions.

3. Positive Service Experience Category Factors Mentioned Most Frequently

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.

The feedback gathered from social media, review platforms, and online travel agencies (OTAs) was examined using software that standardizes ratings into a Global Review Index (GRI). This examination transforms different rating styles—including stars, circles, smiley faces, and numerical scores from 1 to 5 or 1 to 10—into a consistent measure. An external professional company based in Spain (Review Pro) which is a global leader in hotel industry tools, performed the analysis. Review Pro has a client base of over 60,000 across 150 nations [21]. As stated by Hansen, Review Pro represents the innovative software solutions available for handling customer feedback on online platforms.

An analysis of 4,714 reviews revealed a total of 9,581 different positive mentions. These mentions were categorized into 27 themes, with the frequency of compliments for each theme presented in Table 1. We will focus on the top six themes that have a frequency count of 950 or more, while the theme "experience" is excluded, as it overlaps with comments found in other themes.

Out of the total 9,581 positive mentions, the most frequently mentioned themes were as follows: gastronomy (1,980 mentions), establishment (1,365 mentions), service (1,163 mentions), experience (1,120 mentions), room (1,015 mentions), staff (1,010 mentions), and location (987 mentions).

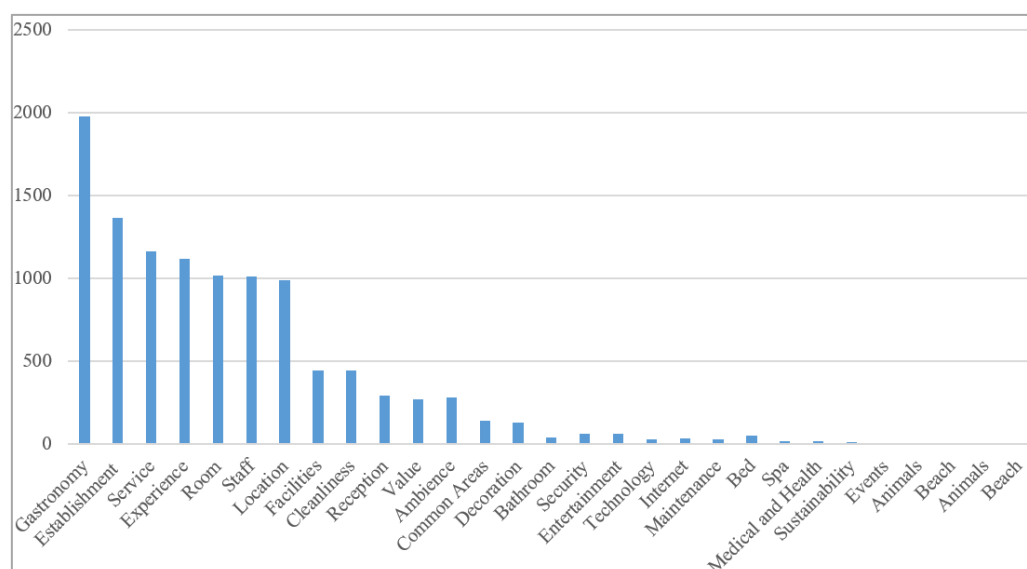


Figure 1. Frequency positive service experience themes.

Table 1. Twenty-seven service experience compliments on Ethiopian Skylight luxury hotels.

No	Themes	Frequency
1	Gastronomy	1980
2	Establishment	1365
3	Service	1163
4	Experience	1120
5	Room	1015
6	Staff	1010
7	Location	987
8	Facilities	444
9	Cleanliness	442
10	Reception	290
11	Value	272
12	Ambience	280
13	Common Areas	141
14	Decoration	132
15	Entertainment	64
16	Security	61
17	Bed	52
18	Bath	38
19	Internet	32
20	Technology	27
21	Maintenance	26
22	Spa	19
23	Medical and Health	16
24	Sustainability	9
25	Events	5
26	Animals	2
27	Beach	2

3.1. Gastronomy

Food is the most frequently highlighted customer experience concerning the Skylight Hotel. As a critical element of the hospitality industry, it significantly contributes to enhancing tourist satisfaction [17]. According to Sparks et al. (2003), food and beverages can be pivotal in influencing some tourists' choice of holiday destinations and can improve their overall experience at these locations [38, 39]. Similarly, this study's findings indicate that food plays a vital role; when it is well-planned, prepared, and served, it can elevate the overall

experience at the hotel. Specifically, the results highlight that guests particularly appreciate the variety of dining options and the quality of the food. Some of the feedback from guests includes remarks such as: "Delicious food" (F3), "Best food variety including Chinese restaurant" (F9), "Meals were delicious" (F19), and "Accessibility of finding vegetarian options" (F23).

3.2. Establishment

It is the second most frequently mentioned customer experience category next to gastronomy. Most of the comments related to the hotel in general. Some of the statements posted by customers include: "Skylight Hotel is a high-quality standard place" (E2), "Nice and huge hotel" (E11), "Amazing hotel and ambience" (E72), "Amazing establishment" (E81), "Good Building" (E948), "Buildings have its own unique" (982).

3.3. Rooms

Rooms, where accommodation plays a crucial role in hospitality, significantly contribute to the overall experience at hotels [19]. While hotels offer additional services and amenities for convenience, guests primarily pay for the essential service, which is the lodging or guest rooms [17]. The guest room is the fundamental service provided by hotel establishments. Prior studies have recognized the quality of the room as a key factor influencing guest satisfaction [10, 32, 33, 40]. Reviewers frequently highlighted factors such as the room's view, space and size, cleanliness, as well as the comfort of the bed and shower. Notably, while guests noted satisfaction with various aspects of their rooms, the most prominent praise centered on the view from their accommodations. Specifically, guests referred to a "Nice view of the city from the balcony," "Great rooms with panoramic views from my room were stunning," "The balcony view was beautiful," and "The room had a lovely balcony facing the airport, and the view from my room was delightful." Following this, aspects like space, comfort, excellent beds, and showers were also mentioned. For instance, one reviewer stated: "The room was spacious, cozy, and clean" (R547).

3.4. Location

Location was also at the top frequently mentioned dimension. Location is a vital ingredient in general tourism products and hospitality services [17]. Several studies have identified location as a top issue influencing hotel satisfaction [3, 17, 20, 33, 40]. Location can be a powerful factor that pulls tourists to a destination and/or establishment. When location is considered, transportation often comes to mind. A hotel should not only be located conveniently (according to the needs of its target market) but also should be easily accessible [19]. Lack of transportation support makes accessibility to other desti-

nations difficult and costly [29], hence creating dissatisfaction. The main influence which determines guest satisfaction with the location is very close to the airport. Almost more than 70% of the positive comments are about the proximity to the airport and access to the central business district.

3.5. Service

Service quality is ranked as the third most frequently mentioned factor, suggesting that hotel guests are more inclined to share positive online reviews when they experience high-quality service. The main goals of hotels are to create and deliver offerings that meet their guests' needs and expectations, thereby ensuring their financial sustainability. To attract and maintain a loyal and profitable customer base, many hotels focus on providing impeccable high-quality service to their guests [19]. As service providers, hotels are expected not only to deliver satisfactory service but to provide an exceptional service to guarantee guest satisfaction and encourage repeat business [29]. Nonetheless, it is the hotels that make additional efforts in serving their guests that are preferred for revisits and praised for their service (Khoo-Lattimore and Ekiz, 2014) [17]. This aligns with the findings of this research. The most frequently concept of "services" mentioned in the skylight hotel customer concept is staff interaction, facilities, amenities, and conveniences provided by hotels.

3.6. Staff

The hospitality industry is known as being a "people business with its own sets of challenges as well as opportunities in creating satisfaction and revisiting intention [16]. The importance of staff delivering hospitality services makes the industry different than any other. Extensive empirical evidence also underscores the influential role of hotel employees in achieving guest satisfaction and guest loyalty [5, 37, 41]. The role of the hotel staff is influential in driving guest satisfaction because the interaction between hotel employees and guests is particularly high in the hospitality industry [15]. In a recent study, Nieto-Garcia et al. (2018) examined the dimensions of hotel customer ratings that enhance the hotel's financial performance and found that staff is one of the key dimensions that play a central role in revenue maximization [26]. Our findings suggest that the theme labeled as staff helpfulness, friendliness, and staff professionalism was the top-mentioned theme within the dimension of service quality. Some of the mentions are "helpful staff" (S5), "Staff was helpful" (S17), "Staff are very friendly" (S18) and "Professional staff" (S153).

4. Conclusion

Most existing research emphasizes the strategic importance of managing online feedback and fostering a culture of positive reviews. As the digital landscape evolves, businesses

must prioritize understanding and leveraging favorable online reviews to remain competitive. This study focuses on this notion by examining positive online reviews from customers on six review sites, covering the period from January 2019 to August 2024, specifically for the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel.

As discussed earlier, this study lists hotel elements that have garnered online compliments for the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel. The study identified 27 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.

The very top themes highlighted in the reviews include:

1) Gastronomy (1980 mentions):

Guests praised the variety, taste, and availability of food options.

Notable mentions include "delicious food," vegetarian options, and specific cuisine offerings like Chinese restaurants.

2) Establishment (1365 mentions):

Comments emphasized the hotel's quality, scale, and aesthetic appeal.

Examples include descriptions like "high-quality standard," "nice and huge hotel," and "amazing ambiance."

3) Room (1015 mentions):

Core aspects of the guest room, like views, space, cleanliness, and comfort, were highlighted.

Guests appreciated panoramic city views, spacious layouts, and comfortable beds.

4) Location (987 mentions):

The hotel's proximity to the airport and central business district were major highlights.

Convenient accessibility was a significant draw for many guests.

5) Service (1163 mentions):

High-quality service delivery, including facilities and amenities, was a strong point.

Going the "extra mile" in service led to repeat customers and commendations.

6) Staff (1010 mentions):

Guests appreciated helpful, friendly, and professional staff, underscoring the importance of human interaction in hospitality.

This study helps Ethiopian Skylight Hotel to capitalize on its strengths to maintain a competitive edge. As substantiated in many literatures, feedback plays a crucial role in nurturing positive service interactions and improving the overall well-being of service providers. Additionally, understanding what guests value during their hotel stays benefits hoteliers in accurately predicting specific areas for enhancement [15]. Moreover, Robinson and Berl (1980) propose that compliments should be utilized as benchmarks for rewarding employees [29]. Positive recognition (compliments) can be leveraged to motivate and reward customer-facing staff and managers who receive such compliments.

Abbreviations

EAL	Ethiopian Airlines
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
eWOM	Electronic Word-of-mouth
GRI	Global Review Index
HEI	Hotel Experience Index
OTA	Online Travel Agencies
OCRs	Online Customer Reviews
PCF	Positive Customer Feedback
SLH	Skylight Hotel
UGC	User-Generated Content

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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