



Service Quality Perceptions, Online Visibility, and Business Performance in Rural Lodging Establishments

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ABSTRACT

Most customers share their feedback and look for useful information on online mediums in the tourism industry. As a result there is a need to increase understanding of what business implications come from customer's conversations about business online as well as a businesses online presence. To achieve the objective of this paper, the authors of this study collected feedbacks and traffic data (ad investment data) from one well-known rural tourism info-mediator website concentrating on 408 rural hostel in France. In addition, an additional survey was carried out for the purpose of acquiring information about the achievements of these hotels in terms of goodwill and profit.

The results of our study demonstrate that visitors' positive impressions of the total quality of service will be conditional on his/her evaluations of accommodation facilities and environment together. Consequently, positive impressions about the overall service quality leads to good presence on infomediary website and have a significant impact on the business performance of these outlets. This research has important implications not only for tourism scholars but also for hotel owners looking to track the variables that affect tourists' assessment of the services offered at their lodging facilities.

INTRODUCTION

Word-of-mouth communication as it relates to the tourism industry was very much alive prior to the development of the internet. Today the majority of customer feedback and searching behaviors are done digitally via sites like informational websites, social media, blogs, comment boards, etc., including Twitter. Yet the literature is limited with respect to the studies based on customers' reviews left for online travelers. The objective of this research is to fill that void in the literature, by analyzing the determinants of online ratings and their influence on overall good reviews about the establishment and finally on the business performances of rural accommodation establishments in France. Data were retrieved from a leading rural tourism information mediator (Toprural), complemented with an inquiry addressing detailed aspects on the operation mode of each hotel business.

This paper contributes to close the gap in the literature associated with online reviews of rural accommodation providers and addresses the need to understand the underline determinants behind customer evaluations and how they affect firm performance. In the light of this, the proposed model takes into consideration the attitudes of both clients and accommodation providers at the village-based rural Tourism establishment level, but which can be extended to other forms of rural Tourism or rural Tourism based on other product lines.

THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

Rural Lodging Establishments

The modern-day adventure tourism in the backward or underprivileged countries is significant for creating job opportunities, increasing income rates, and preserving the local heritage and tradition. In particular, rural lodging establishments serve an important purpose in improving the communities' overall quality of life, and at same time contribute to ongoing community redevelopment. Through these measures, they tackle unemployment by reducing the incidence of underemployment and supplement household income. There are various activities under rural tourism which include the traditional vocation such as agriculture etc., working closely with the local economic system building up the nexus between tourism activities and the local economic ecosystem. These rural lodging facilities encompass various forms, such as hotels, hostels, and houses, with two primary categories: depending upon if you want single-room accommodation and/or if you opt for a whole establishment rental or house rental.

Extrinsic Cues in Service

Services encompass mainly immaterial factors which make the quality difficult to observe prior to consumption and this generates considerable uncertainties towards consumers. This stems from an asymmetry of information between a customer when he takes the purchase decision vs. when he is faced with an experiential offer (this applies especially to most service oriented sectors such as tourism, where the offer is about experience). Consumers

are hunting for information, often rare or expensive to produce. They want to decrease the information asymmetry, equalize information advantages, diminish risk exposure, decrease searching costs, and ultimately narrow down options that match their needs.

Signaling theory provides a very useful framework for understanding scenarios with information asymmetry. They mean that consumers use the cues or signals in order to make better estimations of the quality when there is very little information about a good. Extrinsic cues in particular are very important since they comprise elements of the products but are not inherent to the product itself. Particularly in the case of experiential products (for example, tourism services), these pointers are invaluable for consumers looking for shortcuts or quick and easy decision-making tools. These signals and cues are often picked up by tourists observing locals' behavior and then use it for framing their own decision making.

Reviews online serve as an important informal means of communication between companies, products and customers, providing information at the customer level about product offerings, ownership or use. These reviews contain customer experience, Review, And reviews reflecting customer's emotion and Feeling their own opinion.

In the case of rural tourism, where customers usually require much involvement, online consumer review is one of the main sources of information. Credibility of these comments encourages the consumer confidence in the truthfulness and hence other readers rely on the attributes being present in the product as mentioned in the comment. Therefore, it is imperative for service providers to proactively read through this feedback, since what is contained inside said feedback has the potential of having a substantial effect on how they operate and what their perceived reputation in the market may be at any given time.

In online comments, service quality perceptions on the positive side.

Reviews for online products or services are some of the most important gauges of customer perception on service quality; on the whole, whether good or bad. In the area of tourism you hear most positive about some service aspects — such as comfort, hygiene, available services and general appearance of facilities. In tourism studies, two pivotal dimensions are often recognized: It's really just the venue and the immediate surroundings. ## Instruction: You are provided a sentence written by AI, rewrite so that it looks like a human wrote it It includes things such as the surrounding ecosystem — e.g. Therefore it is clear that when people in general give positive overall views about the Key West. These evaluations are an overall assessment of both the accommodation itself and the location by people who stayed at an agriturismo at least overnight in South Tyrol but perhaps also spent time at other agricultural business sites elsewhere in Europe or even outside; this could encompass their view

Effect of Good Comments about Performance Management on the Quality perception in E-Commerce Services.

In marketing, customers' perceived quality and satisfaction can do wonders for building loyalty and improving long-term profitability. For rural tourism in particular—a niche product with minimal coverage of mass-market advertising channels—these considerations hold much greater significance. ## Instruction: You are provided a sentence written by AI, rewrite so that it looks like a human wrote it Favorable comments associated with positive online reviews can increase awareness, enhance the reputation of the brand and improve the perceptions of customers. They then enable businesses to charge a premium price and raise revenue. Positive feedback is very important to rural B&B property owners — they see this as having direct correlation with achieving high sales numbers. Therefore the hypothesis is that the favorable perceived total service quality received from guest comments, will have a positive effect on the reputation and profitability of rural accommodation enterprises.

Moreover, the article sheds light in the domain of online visibility of the accommodation providers in the rural areas, this is conditioned on both customer references and the investment of the owner's money for their high-placed appearance. Online presence boosted has acted as a powerful attractor of tourist customers which brings more attention towards the organization's positive aspects resulting better organizational health and higher occupancy. It postulates that higher visibility leads to improved business reputation and revenue for rural accommodation providers.

METHODOLOGY

To find out what has led to such favorable experiences among rural tourists in France and to offer useful recommendations on how to improve quality service provision at sites providing for rural tourism, we carried out an extensive study that combined both qualitative and quantitative information. ##

In the qualitative data analysis process, utilising nvivo 10 data analysis software with content analysis methodology, we coded and characterised the online customers' comments in category form. As this analysis was qualitative in nature it gave us an understanding about the thinking and perception of satisfied rural tourists towards the rural tourism service. It, therefore, offers significant suggestions to village tourism stakeholders on how they can upgrade the nature and quality of their services.

In terms of quantitative measures, we used an online survey for the collection of perceptual data from these premises' operators allowing us to gather their views on the performance of their business. Data collected from this questionnaire were later analyzed with use of SPSS 21 software for qualitative data analysis.

Lastly, to comprehend each accommodation in a rural setting, we aggregated data concerning visibility of the site on an intermediary portal (data source Toprural), the frequency associated with the keys categories of comment (in the qualitative analysis) and the performances of the questionnaire online. The merged dataset was then processed through PLS-SEM for SmartPLS 2.0.M3 (Ringle et al., 2005), resulting in an analysis model of the relationships between PDI and the other predictors.

Data collection

The study employed a multi-method design consisting of semi -structured expert interviews and online observation (Toprural Comments Analysis), followed by conducting online surveys among owners/managers of rural establishments to investigate their economic performance.

These expert interviews were conducted to gather detailed information about rural tourism industry, the changing role of internet in this particular context as well as to identify possible research methods for the study of rural tourism.

We used Toprural, the leading community of independently owned rural accommodation properties throughout Southern Europe, to gather data about rural hotels and guesthouses in France. Particularly, France served as the primary focus since France has been among countries with the highest international tourism arrivals.

After gathering and analyzing the data, we found that the bulk of the posted remarks portrayed favorable perceptions of the rural entities at hand.

Table I. Sample Characteristics.

	Rental Type	
	Entire House	Rooms (House, Hostel and Hotel)
Number of establishments	143	265
Customer comments per establishment	1.81	11.93
Capacity (beds per establishment)	10.76	10.34
Advertising Expenditures		
Prestige	8	16
Gold	40	80
Silver	69	111

Specifically this research focuses on rural tourism, and more specifically, an investigation into how perceptions on service quality affect the performance of small, privately owned rural accommodation units. Since it's hard to measure objective performance parameters here — a 7 point Likert survey was used to gauge agreement-level outcomes.

The initial dataset was a large 10,047 comments for about 2,275 rural accommodation establishments. Thereafter, the data was cleaned removing the missing values and reducing it to a set with 1,618 establishments or roughly 71.12% of the initial sample. It will be important to note here that the vast majority of sentiment comment data was positive within this refined dataset.

A dedicated survey site was built in order to capture feedback and opinions from residents of rural establishments. The participants in the study were invited via e-mail, including owners who had been sent an accompanying online survey in order to provide their views.

Also, The case includes Four different degrees of advancements — selective, top notch, gold and silver. But since only one per cent of the enterprises in the baseline were at this premium level, they discarded them in their analysis.

MEASURES

The analysis of 50 customer comments from the Internet was carried out in an action research which included four coders implementing the technique adopted by Miles and Huberman. The analysis procedure consisted of an iterative scan through the comments to allocate codes which identified dominant recurrent themes. During this step, discrepancies between the coding assessments of the coders were examined. The major focus of the coding assessment lay with what's stated in the comments and not the actual content of the codebase.

The approach introduced here was foundational for subsequent explorations, such as the interplay between the different types of perceived business performance, with the owner's perspective from rural establishments. Results from the study showed that all examined items proved discriminants validity and were successful for exploratory Factor Analysis. These questions cohesively formed two distinct constructs: The first is reputation-based, whereas the second is profit-oriented.

Table 2. Category Description.

Categories	Category Weight (%)	Description
Lodging perceptions		
Multimedia	144 (35.29%)	If Internet and information was available for clients at the establishment, and if photos, movies, images, email, and videos were available on the Internet
Cleanliness	117 (28.68%)	If the facilities are clean
Temperature	104 (25.49%)	If the house has appropriate temperature
Information	90 (22.06%)	If the information, suggestions, and indications are helpful, present, and sufficient, and complaints are resolved by the staff.
Decoration	74 (18.14%)	If the establishment has good decoration
Equipment	60 (14.71%)	If the establishment is well equipped
Space	51 (12.5%)	If the establishment has adequate space
Surroundings perceptions		
Activities	393 (96.32%)	If there are activities in the area
Environment	304 (74.51%)	The nature, the environment in which the property is located
Seasonality	179 (43.87%)	If the season is suitable to visit the property, climate
Access	90 (22.06%)	If the roads are good, easy access
Distance	20 (04.90%)	If the accommodation is at an adequate distance
Global service quality perceptions		
Host	309 (75.74%)	Feeling welcomed, cared for by the owners and other staff
Accommodation	308 (75.49%)	Feeling satisfied with the rural lodging
Rest	272 (66.67%)	Feeling tranquility, possibility to rest, sleep quality
Comfort	160 (39.22%)	Feeling comfortable in the establishment

Conducted in the study is the analysis on multi-dimensional aspect of rural tourism establishment. For this analysis we looked into elements such as the dimensions and rental models of these properties together with evaluations of the entrepreneurial success of their operators, their presence in the infomediary website, and information from Toprural database. Besides, the analysis also took into account positive comments about these locations on Toprural.

RESULTS

The study finds around 16 main themes in which tourists voice their appreciative opinions about their stay at rural accommodation facilities on reviews online. These themes can be further categorized into three underlying variables: accommodation image, environment image, and global service quality image. For hotel notions — in hotel perceptions we have components such as information, comfort, sanitation, design — and there’s multimedia in the mix! , and at the same time hotel notions — in hotel perceptions we have components such as information, comfort, sanitation, Together these elements create visitors’ total service quality experience in the hotel establishment.

Moreover, the analysis reveals an even more encompassing entity referred to as global service quality perception, comprising of all opinions formed after taking into account the entire spectrum of evaluations on the premises. Importantly, both accommodation and environment perceptions have a similar and important positive effect on these perceptions of overall service quality globally and in fact constitute more than two thirds of the variation observed in global service quality perceptions (68.5%).

In terms of business performance factors, the study identifies two pivotal dimensions: (2018) which show strong composite reliability on business reputation and profitability. Service quality perceptions expressed on a global level by tourists have been positively shown to have an effect on the business performance and this has translated into higher levels of reputation/profitability measures. Moreover, there is a positive relationship between a higher position in site ranking of an infomediary and boosted business performance.

These test scores confirm the good reliability of the measures linked to the reflective constructs. This assertion points to the relevance of including them in the path model as used this study.

Table 3. Variable Definitions.

Variable		Measure
Online customer comments (content categories)		For each establishment, number of online customer reviews in each of the 16 categories (Table 2) rated 4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert scale. Ratings represent individual scores assigned by customers, taken from Toprural
Business performance	Business reputation	Owner’s perception, 5-point Likert scale (1 = very bad, 5 = excellent): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction with the establishment • Establishment’s public image
	Business profitability	Owner’s perception, 5-point Likert scale (1 = very bad, 5 = excellent): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment’s profitability • Establishment’s reservation growth 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am satisfied with the income obtained by the business.
Visibility on infomediary website		Expenditures by establishment owner for a promotion on Toprural: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prestige (most expensive) • Gold • Silver (least expensive)
Control variables	Capacity	Number of beds
	Type of rental	Dichotomous variable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 for room rental type (houses, hotels, and hostels) • 0 for entire house rental type

Table 4. Reflective Construct Assessment.

Latent Variable	Indicators	Outer Loadings	t Value	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability	Indicator Reliability	Cronbach’s Alpha	Discriminant Validity
Global Service Quality Perceptions	Host	0.900232	21.145	0.799239	0.940895	0.81041765	0.916256	Yes
	Satisfaction	0.893538	40.256			0.79841016		
	Comfort	0.883587	21.663			0.78072599		
	Rest	0.891533	45.470			0.79483109		
Business Profitability	Profitability	0.955070	25.860	0.804021	0.924709	0.9121587	0.880204	Yes
	Reservation growth	0.882503	15.254			0.77881155		
	Satisfied with business income	0.847992	12.179			0.71909043		
Business Reputation	Customer satisfaction	0.921959	28.343	0.849797	0.918787	0.8500084	0.824218	Yes
	Public image	0.922489	39.887			0.85098596		

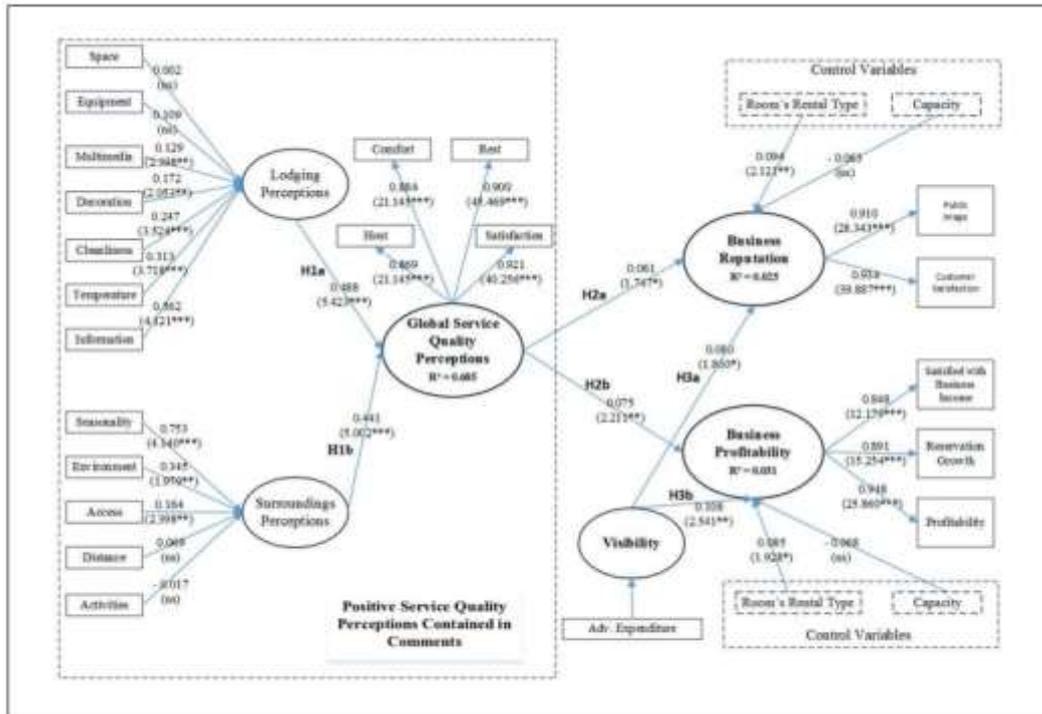


Figure 1. Model with standardized path estimates.
 Note: Significance of path estimates is shown in parenthesis.
 *p > .1. **p > .05. ***p > .01. ns = non-significant.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this research was to analyze online reviews and determine its implications for business performance in terms of numbers of review counts across different content categories. We've aggregated data from several different areas — including feedback from our customers, the entrepreneurial community, and other companies. This is our dataset comprised of online reviews from customers, the amount of capital that entrepreneurs put into their respective ventures, and how they view their performance.

The conceptual model developed here serves to unravel the complex linkages between business performance and key service elements reported positively in online comments, in addition to having an impact on Internet search exposure. One key result is that positive perceived overall service quality in Lodgings arises from different assessments regarding accommodation and its surroundings. It provides a pathway for rural businessman to realize what force is behind positive online comments and the 12 main factors influencing these comments. Tourists form holistic judgments of service quality based on two primary categories: those relating to the accommodation itself and those relating to its surroundings.

To garner review and rating activity businesses should first focus on direct routes by asking for reviews and star-ratings within categories or secondly look at the subcategories around the accommodation category itself. And this information enables them to develop more meaningful, critical, and higher-value offerings. Rural accommodation providers should take into consideration both aspects they can control concerning their own lodging as well as external uncontrollable factors.

In our research we take a demand side point of view and highlight the elements which result in better business outcome. The chapter outlines how an owner might improve the overall business performance — reputation in addition to revenue and cost savings — by taking smarter decisions about service delivery in the field. Monitoring all posts related to your property is time consuming but can prove fruitful — if your landlords have successful managed responses translate into more good reviews in future, influencing prospective traveler expectations and plans.

On the issue of online presence, we advise rural tourism establishments to invest in increasing their visibility through marketing spend related to the internet—to match customer knowledge and improve the overall business performance. There seems to be an assumption that customers perceive such expenditure as goodwill and willingness to invest in products/services which they expect will meet their needs (after all if they don't there would not much to recoup).

One thing to keep in mind is that this study is useful, but not perfect. We can only make limited conclusion with respect to generalizations because the study was focused on Toprural's rural tourism Web site, which is the dominant infomediary for rural tourism in Europe, and only covered rural tourist establishments in France. Future researchers should broaden their perspective in investigating various platforms, discovering key "moments" along the holidayer's journey, analysing customer sentiment using adjectives, first person accounts and syntax, and looking at visual content within reviews, commentary and images.

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