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A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF ONLINE REVIEWS AND RATINGS ON HOTEL BOOKING DECISIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VR GRAND, BHADRACHALAM

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Study Location: Bhadrachalam

Hotel: VR Grand

ABSTRACT :

The growth of digital platforms has changed how customers search for, compare and select hotels. This study examines the role of online reviews and ratings in hotel booking decisions, with special reference to VR Grand, Bhadrachalam. Primary data were collected through a structured Google Forms questionnaire, and 78 responses were analysed. The study considers online booking experience, review-checking habits, the usefulness and credibility of reviews, awareness of VR Grand online information and factors affecting booking decisions. Frequency tables, percentages and graphs are used to present the results. Spearman rank correlation was used to test three selected relationships. The results show that 78.2% of respondents had booked a hotel online before, while 61.5% had seen online reviews or ratings for VR Grand. Price, online ratings and written customer reviews were the leading stated factors in a VR Grand booking decision. However, none of the three correlation tests was statistically significant at the 5% level. The findings describe the surveyed respondents and suggest practical steps for online reputation management.

Keywords: *Online reviews, online ratings, hotel booking decisions, review credibility, review usefulness, VR Grand, Bhadrachalam.*

1. INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

The hospitality industry is an important part of tourism and the service sector. Before booking a hotel, customers often need to judge room quality, cleanliness, staff behaviour, facilities and price without experiencing the service directly. This creates uncertainty during the selection process.

Online ratings provide a quick numerical summary of customer opinions, while written reviews explain personal experiences in greater detail. Customers may use these details to compare hotels, form expectations and decide whether a property appears suitable. For a local hotel such as VR Grand, maintaining accurate online information and responding professionally to customer feedback can support trust and communication.

This study examines how respondents use online reviews and ratings and how they report their influence on a possible booking decision involving VR Grand, Bhadrachalam.

2. RESEARCH GAP

Earlier studies have examined review helpfulness, electronic word-of-mouth, review credibility, website trust, perceived price and hotel brand image. However, the studies covered in the supplied literature review do not directly focus on VR Grand, Bhadrachalam. There is limited local evidence about how respondents view online reviews and ratings when considering this specific hotel.

The present study addresses this gap by describing the responses of 78 participants and examining ratings and written reviews together. Since the responses were collected online without a probability sampling frame, the findings are descriptive and should not be generalised to all hotel customers.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Author / Year	Focus of the study	Main point relevant to this research
Ghosh (2017)	Helpfulness and advocacy of online reviews	Review helpfulness and attitudes toward reviews were associated with hotel booking intention.

Zhao, Li, Zhang & Li (2018)	Online reviews and booking decisions	Review scores, quantity and written content can provide useful information for hotel selection.
Chakraborty (2019)	Credibility of online hotel reviews	The perceived credibility of reviews is relevant to booking intention.
Augustine & Adnan (2020)	Price, website trust and online reviews	Hotel booking intention can be considered alongside price and trust in the booking website.
Pal & Pandey (2023)	Reviews, trust and brand image	Positive reviews, hotel trust and brand image were examined as factors associated with booking intention.

Literature synthesis: The reviewed studies highlight review helpfulness, credibility, price and trust as useful themes for understanding hotel decisions. The present study applies these themes to the local setting of VR Grand, Bhadrachalam.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine customers' awareness and use of online reviews and ratings while selecting hotels.
- To identify the importance customers attach to rating scores and written review content.
- To examine perceptions of the credibility and usefulness of online hotel reviews.
- To study the relationship between online reviews and ratings and hotel booking decisions.
- To identify review-related factors that influence customer confidence and booking intention.
- To provide suggestions to VR Grand, Bhadrachalam, for improving online reputation and customer communication.

5. HYPOTHESES

- H0₁: Online reviews and ratings have no significant relationship with customers' hotel booking decisions.
- H1₁: Online reviews and ratings have a significant relationship with customers' hotel booking decisions.
- H0₂: Perceived credibility of online hotel reviews has no significant relationship with hotel booking intention.
- H1₂: Perceived credibility of online hotel reviews has a significant relationship with hotel booking intention.
- H0₃: Perceived usefulness of online review content has no significant relationship with hotel booking intention.
- H1₃: Perceived usefulness of online review content has a significant relationship with hotel booking intention.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research design

The study uses a descriptive and analytical research design. Descriptive analysis summarises respondents' characteristics and perceptions. Analytical testing examines associations between selected review-related dimensions and the stated influence of reviews and ratings on a possible VR Grand booking.

6.2 Population and sample

The study concerns people who have experience or an intention to book hotels and who may use online information during hotel selection. The supplied response sheet contains 78 responses. As a formal random sampling frame was not recorded, the sample is treated as a voluntary/convenience online response sample.

6.3 Data collection and questionnaire

Primary data were collected through a structured Google Forms questionnaire. The questions covered online hotel booking experience, review-checking habits, time spent reading reviews, booking information preferences, perceptions of ratings and reviews, awareness of VR Grand online reviews and factors affecting a possible booking.

6.4 Data analysis

Frequencies and percentages were used for the selected survey questions, with tables and graphs to make the results easier to understand. Spearman rank correlation was used for three selected relationships because the measures were ordinal. Statistical decisions were made at the 5% significance level. Correlation indicates association, not causation.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The following results are based on the 78 responses in the supplied response sheet. Each table is followed by a short interpretation. Percentages may differ slightly from 100% because of rounding.

7.1 Online hotel booking experience

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	61	78.2%
No	17	21.8%

Interpretation: Most respondents (78.2%) had booked a hotel online before, so online booking was familiar to a majority of this sample.

Previous Online Hotel Booking Experience

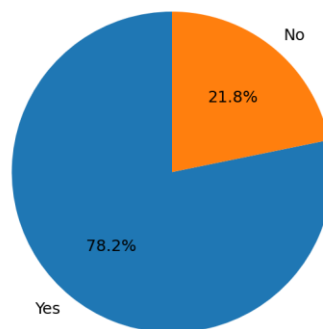


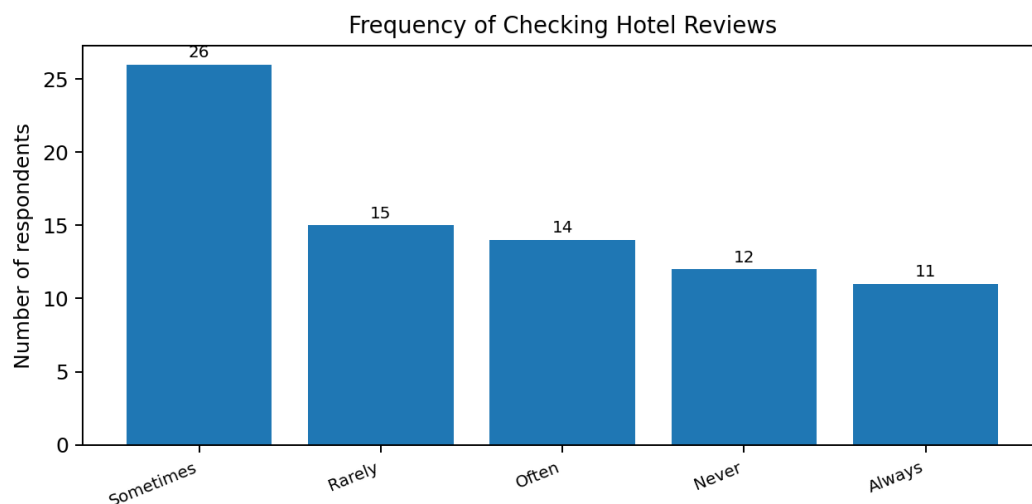
Figure 1. Previous online hotel booking experience.

7.2 Frequency of checking hotel reviews

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	26	33.3%
Rarely	15	19.2%
Often	14	17.9%
Never	12	15.4%
Always	11	14.1%

Interpretation: The largest group checked reviews sometimes. Review-checking habits varied, showing that not every respondent relies on reviews to the same extent.

Figure 2. Frequency of checking hotel reviews.



7.3 Time spent reading hotel reviews

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 minutes	26	33.3%
5–10 minutes	21	26.9%
More than 20 minutes	17	21.8%
11–20 minutes	14	17.9%

Interpretation: One-third spent less than five minutes reading reviews, while 60.2% spent ten minutes or less. Clear and easy-to-read information may therefore be useful.

7.4 Most important information in online hotel booking

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Price	17	21.8%
Customer reviews	16	20.5%
Star rating	16	20.5%
Hotel location	14	17.9%
Photos	9	11.5%
Facilities/Amenities	6	7.7%

Interpretation: Price was the most selected category, followed closely by customer reviews and star ratings. Booking decisions appear to involve both value and reputation information.

7.5 Effect of higher hotel ratings on booking confidence

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	22	28.2%
Disagree	15	19.2%
Neutral	15	19.2%
Strongly Agree	13	16.7%
Strongly Disagree	13	16.7%

Interpretation: Responses were mixed. More respondents agreed than disagreed, but neutral and negative responses remained substantial.

7.6 Trust in online booking-platform ratings

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	22	28.2%
Neutral	20	25.6%
Strongly Agree	15	19.2%
Strongly Disagree	12	15.4%
Disagree	9	11.5%

Interpretation: Agreement was the most common response, but more than one-quarter were neutral. Trust in platform ratings was not uniform across the sample.

7.7 Usefulness of detailed hotel reviews

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	24	30.8%
Neutral	20	25.6%
Strongly Disagree	14	17.9%
Agree	10	12.8%
Disagree	10	12.8%

Interpretation: Strong agreement was the most frequent response. However, neutral and negative answers were also present, so the usefulness of detailed reviews was not perceived identically by everyone.

7.8 Awareness of VR Grand online reviews and ratings

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	48	61.5%
Not sure	19	24.4%
No	11	14.1%

Interpretation: A majority had seen online reviews or ratings for VR Grand. About one-quarter were unsure, suggesting an opportunity to make the hotel's online presence clearer.

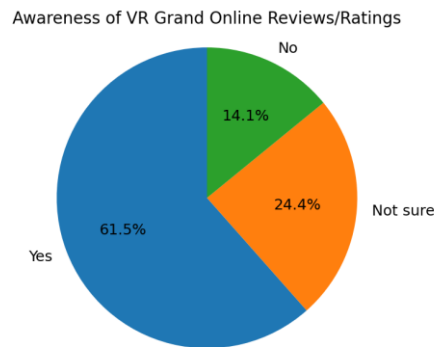


Figure 3. Awareness of VR Grand online reviews and ratings.

7.9 Influence of online reviews and ratings on VR Grand booking

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not at all	26	33.3%
Very much	16	20.5%
Moderately	15	19.2%
Extremely	11	14.1%
Slightly	10	12.8%

Interpretation: Responses were spread across the scale. The largest group selected "Not at all," while others reported moderate to very strong influence. The sample therefore does not show a single uniform pattern.

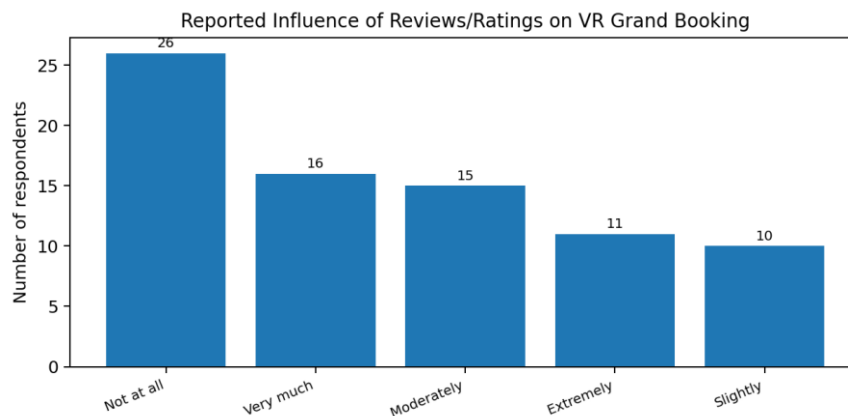


Figure 4. Reported influence of online reviews and ratings on VR Grand booking.

7.10 Main factor influencing a VR Grand booking decision

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Price	19	24.4%
Online rating	18	23.1%
Written customer reviews	15	19.2%
Location	10	12.8%
Hotel facilities	9	11.5%
Photos/videos	4	5.1%
Recommendations from friends/family	3	3.8%

Interpretation: Price was the leading factor, followed by online rating and written reviews. Together, these results suggest that value and online reputation should both be considered in customer communication.

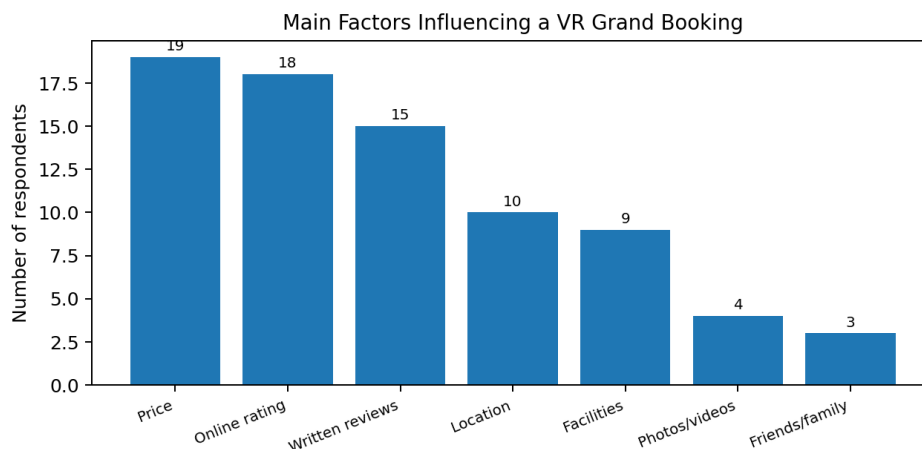


Figure 5. Main factors influencing a VR Grand booking decision.

8. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Spearman rank correlation was used to test the three proposed relationships. The p-value was compared with 0.05. When p is greater than 0.05, the result is not statistically significant at the selected level.

Hypothesis	Relationship tested	Spearman ρ	p-value	Decision
H1	Online ratings composite vs. VR Grand booking influence	0.078	0.496	Fail to reject H_{01}
H2	Review credibility composite vs. VR Grand booking influence	-0.049	0.673	Fail to reject H_{02}
H3	Review usefulness composite vs. VR Grand booking influence	0.130	0.256	Fail to reject H_{03}

8.1 Interpretation

None of the three tests reached statistical significance at the 5% level because all p-values were greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypotheses are not rejected for this sample. The results do not provide sufficient statistical evidence of a relationship in these tests; they do not prove that reviews and ratings never matter. A larger and more representative sample may help examine these relationships further.

9. MAJOR FINDINGS

- The study analysed 78 responses collected through Google Forms.
- 78.2% of respondents had previous experience booking hotels online.
- Sometimes was the most common frequency for checking hotel reviews (33.3%).
- Price, customer reviews and star ratings were the leading information categories for online hotel booking.
- Responses about the effect of higher ratings on booking confidence were mixed.
- Detailed hotel reviews received the highest frequency of strong agreement among the review-perception results, although neutral and negative views were also recorded.
- 61.5% of respondents had seen online reviews or ratings for VR Grand.
- Price was the leading stated factor in a VR Grand booking decision (24.4%), followed by online rating (23.1%) and written customer reviews (19.2%).
- Responses about the influence of reviews and ratings on a VR Grand booking were mixed; 33.3% selected "Not at all."
- None of the three Spearman correlation tests was statistically significant at the 5% level.

10. SUGGESTIONS

- Monitor customer ratings and reviews regularly on relevant online platforms.
- Respond politely and promptly to both positive and negative feedback.
- Display prices, room details, facilities, location and contact information accurately.
- Encourage genuine guests to share honest feedback without pressuring them to provide positive reviews.
- Use recurring customer comments to identify possible improvements in cleanliness, service, staff behaviour and facilities.
- Keep hotel photographs and descriptions current so that customers receive clear and realistic information.
- Communicate value clearly because price was the leading stated factor for a VR Grand booking decision.
- Track review trends over time instead of focusing only on a single overall rating.
- Build customer trust through transparent communication and consistent service quality.

11. CONCLUSION

This study examined the reported role of online reviews and ratings in hotel booking decisions, with special reference to VR Grand, Bhadrachalam. In the sample of 78 respondents, previous online booking was common, and price, online ratings and written customer reviews were among the leading factors considered when choosing a hotel. A majority had seen online reviews or ratings for VR Grand, but their reported influence on a possible booking decision varied.

The three Spearman tests were not statistically significant at the 5% level. These results should be interpreted carefully: they describe this sample and do not establish that reviews have no effect in other settings. For VR Grand, the practical priorities are to maintain accurate online information, respond professionally to feedback, communicate prices clearly and use customer comments to improve service.

12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The sample contains 78 responses and may not represent all hotel customers.
- The responses were collected online and were not selected through a documented probability sampling method.
- Some measures are based on respondents' self-reported opinions and may be affected by recall or response bias.
- The study is cross-sectional and cannot establish cause and effect.
- The correlation results apply to the variables and sample analysed; further research with a larger sample may produce different findings.

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