
ANALYSING CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS IN INDIAN LUXURY HOTELS: A NETNOGRAPHIC APPROACH USING CHATGPT

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Abstract

ChatGPT is increasingly being recognized for its ability to analyse digital consumer sentiments, offering valuable insights across various industries, including hospitality. Building on this potential, the present study explores its application in understanding consumer sentiments and perceived value in South Indian luxury hotels. Using a qualitative netnographic methodology, the research reveals the hedonistic social interactions on platforms such as TripAdvisor. Polarity analysis, emotion analysis and topic modelling are applied, with ChatGPT aiding to identify the key perceived benefits. Findings revealed that guests are generally satisfied with the perceived benefits over the sacrifices. The study offers valuable insights for hotel marketers and managers to enhance customer experience strategies by leveraging AI-driven sentiment analysis tools.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT, Tourist Hotel Experiences, Electronic Word of Mouth*

How to cite: Veerasamy, S., & Pushparaj, N. (2026). Analysing consumer perceptions in Indian luxury hotels: A netnographic approach using ChatGPT. *JOHAR – Journal of Hospitality Application & Research*, 21(1), 01-19.

Introduction

The mottoes of luxury hotels are to create the meticulous experience to their customers by exceeding their expectations (Jana et al., 2024). The modern travellers' expectations are increased in every way expecting the unique experiences by intertwining the local culture without comprising the comfort highlights importance of rich, experiential information (Nuria & Cristina, 2024), and these travellers never forget to share the experience in the social media pages. These experiences are in the form of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), plays a vital role for fellow potential traveller who likes to visit the destination. These insights, whether positive or negative, impact potential travellers' decisions. Research suggests that information sources related to a destination significantly shape cognitive perceptions (Sabari Shankar et al., 2022), and positive eWOM enhances the hotel's perceived value and attracts new guests and it creates a virtuous cycle that fuels the success of hotels. Conversely, a low perceived value leads to negative eWOM, which can quickly erode the hotel's reputation and ultimately lead to its downfall (Bhattacharjee et al., 2024). Potential tourists frequently turn to digital platforms such as TripAdvisor, where authentic and reliable content guides their decisions (Chen et al., 2023; Matiza, 2022). Hotel managers who pay close attention to consumer reviews on such platforms can mitigate risks for tourists while benefiting from increased exposure through positive reviews. Thus, understanding the dynamics of this relationship is vital for luxury hotels to remain competitive in the digital era.

By actively monitoring and analysing guest sentiments through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), hotels can unlock powerful insights that drive their success. These insights empower hoteliers to pinpoint areas for enhancement, elevate their offerings, and consistently deliver extraordinary guest experiences. While traditional analytical methods often struggle to derive value from unstructured feedback, advancements in natural language processing (NLP) offer transformative solutions. NLP techniques allow hoteliers to extract, analyse, and interpret sentiments hidden in free-text reviews, thus unlocking powerful data for strategic decision-making (Yutong Zhang et al., 2024; Shukang Yin et al., 2024; Wu, Jiayang et al., 2023). Among the many NLP tools available, ChatGPT powered by large language models (LLMs), stands out as a highly adaptable and conversational AI platform capable of understanding and generating human-like text based on diverse prompts. ChatGPT's capability to engage with natural language inputs and produce coherent, context-sensitive outputs makes it an ideal tool to explore and decode customer perceptions expressed in unstructured review data.

In the LLM research space, Multi-model LLMs which combine text processing with components like audio, imagery and videos are an emerging field. Domain-specific LLMs are tailored to excel in particular fields (code generation, biology) and optimizing their performance. Another important trend is the rise of smaller LLMs, which are optimized for environments with limited computing resources, making them deployable in mobile devices or on-premise systems. Prompt engineering helps the generative AI models better comprehend and respond to a wide range of queries. As noted by Giray (2023) and Gao (2023), the outcomes of generative AI models are deeply influenced by the structure and clarity of the input prompts. Through iterative refinement, prompt engineering helps AI adapt to diverse user needs, reduce biases, and provide more accurate and meaningful results. This presents a compelling opportunity to apply ChatGPT and advanced prompt engineering to extract insights from unstructured guest feedback at scale. The core objective of this research is to explore how ChatGPT, guided by various carefully designed prompts, can be used to identify and interpret the perceived values of Indian luxury hotel guests, especially the expressions of delight or dissatisfaction. By leveraging the strengths of prompt-based AI interaction, this study aims to go beyond basic sentiment classification and uncover deeper layers of guest expectations, satisfaction drivers, and emotional triggers.

Literature Review

Companies and destinations now compete by leveraging information as a valuable knowledge asset (Chierici et al., 2019). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have emerged as critical sources of market intelligence, enabling businesses to refine their offerings through informed product development and process optimization. Furthermore, digital platforms are increasingly utilized to create personalized, context-aware, and observable tourist experiences in real time (Del Vecchio et al., 2022; Ardito et al., 2019; Stamatelatos et al., 2021; Shandilya et al., 2024; Srivastava & Shandilya, 2024). These platforms not only facilitate customer engagement but also generate vast amounts of user-generated content reflecting tourist preferences, expectations, and experiences.

A growing body of literature confirms that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) significantly influences tourists' opinions and expectations (Casado-Molina et al., 2020; Babić Rosario et al., 2020; Gruner & Power, 2018; Zhao et al., 2018). Researchers have also explored the factors affecting the adoption and credibility of eWOM messages, including source trustworthiness, message quality, and consumer involvement (Qahri-Saremi & Reza Montazemi, 2019;

Srivastava et al., 2023). Online review searches have been shown to greatly impact consumer decisions regarding travel and accommodation services (Mariani & Borghi, 2021).

In particular, selecting a luxury hotel is considered a high-involvement decision due to the financial and experiential risks involved. As a result, potential tourists are more likely to pay close attention to eWOM messages, especially when making decisions involving high expectations (Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). When guests are satisfied, they are more inclined to share their positive experiences online, which in turn significantly influences future guests' decisions (Hydock et al., 2020). In consumer decision-making, perceived value is a critical determinant that influences how individuals assess the price, quality, and overall worth of products and services (Parasuraman, 1997). For marketers, understanding perceived value is vital for gaining a competitive advantage. However, the subjective nature of perceived value, shaped by individual, cultural, and contextual differences, makes it a complex construct to measure (Sánchez et al., 2018).

Perceived value is shaped by every customer interaction with a service provider, blending both positive and negative perceptions. Customers weigh perceived benefits against perceived sacrifices, creating a crucial trade-off between benefits and costs in the hospitality industry. Key characteristics like design, personalized services, warmth, and intimacy define hotels and their commitment to service excellence (Mariani & Matteo, 2021). However, contemporary trends, often influenced by reviews and ratings, prompt to adopt new styles and adapt to changing customer preferences, sometimes catering specifically to reclusive or exclusive clientele. More number of research works are supporting the ideas of perceived benefits and sacrifices, following paragraph elaborates it in different industrial and behavioural perspectives.

Tourist experiences are evidenced in different digital platforms, but we used TripAdvisor reviews since TripAdvisor is a platform that brings knowledgeable postings with authentic and trustworthy content (Molinillo et al., 2016; Alrawadieh & Dincer, 2019; Wang & Chen, 2021). Further, through these posts, firms can enhance psychological ownership of luxury services, manage conspicuous consumption, and touch social and hedonic luxury exclusivity (Wirtz et al., 2021).

Perceived Benefits of eWOM: Consumers who have good attitudes are more inclined to express their opinions (Hydock et al., 2020). A large number of positive evaluations lowers information uncertainty and enhances

eWOM consistency which provides a positive relationship between consumer exposure and their decision-making (Sachdeva, 2020). Positive online reviews produce positive booking intentions (Ruiz-Equihua et al., 2022) which provides a significant positive effect on purchase intention (Chao Pei-Ju et al., 2022), also, the engagement metrics across channels have a significant positive impact on restaurant performance (Jungkun Park et al., 2021). In these positive aspects of literature, we framed our first research question, what positive factors are creating intention to visit?

Perceived Sacrifices of eWOM: Researchers have contradictory negative eWOM arguments when expectations are violated through inferior services. Factors influencing the creation of negative eWOM are exertion of power, advice seeking, economic rewards, social benefits, altruism and anxiety reduction, out of which the most dominant factor identified is vengeance (Liu et al., 2022; Hornik et al., 2019). Also, negative reviews are more credible, useful, trustworthy, instructive, diagnostic, persuasive, and valuable than positive reviews (Gavilan et al., 2018; Mellinas et al., 2018). Negative effects of luxury hotels contributing to low purchase intentions (Feng, 2021; Giglio, 2020; Leban et al., 2020). Bad reviews are harsh but quickly propagate (Qiao et al., 2022) and how to control or remove these negative effects is well-researched (Park et al., 2021, Qian et al., 2021). In these negative aspects of the literature, we framed our second research question, what negative factors are reducing the intention to visit?

Luxury hotel managers can enhance customer experience using hedonic escapism, enclaved brand communities, and holistic digitization, i.e., ‘conspicuous’ customers had greater visibility, and a touch of social exclusivity as theorized as “moments of luxury” (Jonas Holmqvist, 2020 a, b). Positive eWOM occurs much more frequently in the marketplace than negative eWOM (Bridges & Vásquez, 2018; Vargo et al., 2019). Luxury hotels have an image and simultaneously managers try to match this image with the one perceived by the consumers. But this image, unless nurtured properly, can wane further (Ko et al., 2019) and the perceived luxury value goes with high intention to purchase (Dean Creevey et al., 2021; Paiva Neto et al., 2020). In these both positive and negative views, we framed our third research question, what factors are creating and/or reducing the intention to visit?

The existing body of literature on eWOM is substantial; however, a notable research void exists within the context of ChatGPT-based approaches. This research work endeavours to reduce this research gap by contributing to the existing knowledge base. Guests through eWOM can convey real-

time feedback about luxury hotels and leave without any intrusion. Applying ChatGPT in eWOM reviews and data-based replies enables the marketer to speak to the luxury consumer for real-time needs. The primary benefit of prompt engineering in ChatGPT is the ability to achieve optimized outputs and a well-crafted prompt guide for the models to create more relevant, accurate and personalized responses.

Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative netnographic approach to explore consumer sentiment and hedonistic social interactions on digital platforms, with a specific focus on reviews posted on TripAdvisor. Netnography, an ethnographic method adapted for online contexts, allows for an in-depth examination of naturally occurring consumer expressions and behaviors in digital environments. This method is particularly valuable for understanding authentic customer experiences and emotional responses, which are crucial for grasping perceived value in luxury hotel services.

A conceptual framework was developed based on relevant literature, as illustrated in Fig. 1. The primary goal of this research is to identify and analyze the factors contributing to customer-perceived value—reflected through positive eWOM as well as the sacrifices or dissatisfactions indicated by negative eWOM. To aid in this analysis, ChatGPT was utilized as a NLP tool to interpret unstructured user-generated content. This tool enables nuanced sentiment analysis and thematic extraction, providing a rich, data-driven understanding of the consumer perspective within the Indian luxury hospitality sector.

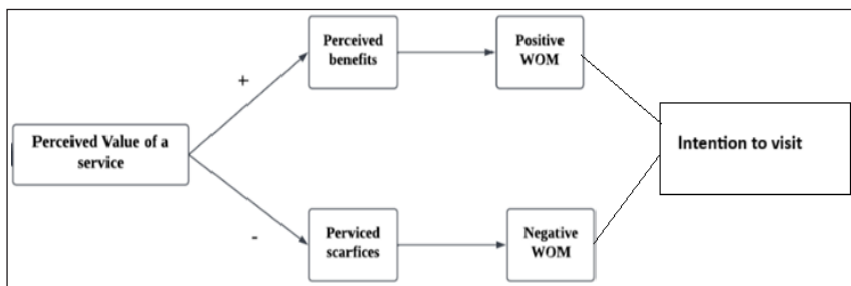


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of Proposed Model

Luxury hotel reviews from South Indian states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh are collected from TripAdvisor,

these states are significantly contributing to the Indian economy. The sample period of TripAdvisor reviews comprised between December 2023 and March 2024. Polarity Analysis, Emotional Analysis, Topic Modelling and Lexical Diversity are used in this research. Stop words are commonly occurring words and have very little value which are removed from the sample reviews.

The dataset consisting of 3,000 randomly selected reviews from each state, totalling 15,000 reviews. This robust sample offers a comprehensive understanding of customer perceptions across various cultural and geographic regions in South India. The data was analysed using Polarity Analysis, Emotional Analysis, Topic Modelling, and Lexical Diversity. Pre-processing steps included the removal of stop words to enhance the clarity and precision of the analysis. ChatGPT was used to conduct automated sentiment and emotion analysis, as well as to extract thematic insights from the review data.

Findings

The sentiment analysis of luxury hotel reviews across the five South Indian states—Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh reveals a predominantly positive perception among guests. After filtering and preprocessing, including the removal of stop words, a total of 5,673 scored documents were considered for detailed analysis.

Based on the sentiment analysis of South Indian luxury hotels, we inferred that guests are generally satisfied with the level of maintenance and service provided by the hotels. We observed that Tamil Nadu state luxury hotels have a high number of positive reviews in terms of overall quality, service, food, stay, and staff. Positive phrases such as special thanks, well maintained, and excellent service are commonly repeated phrases. The negative word “stupid” occurred in a few places, indicating that the guest found some aspects of their stay to be unintelligent and unreasonable. The presence of the negative word “pathetic” (occurred 22 times) across multiple luxury hotel reviews indicates that hotels need improvement in services. Negative diagrams such as “not recommended”, “could be better”, and “not worth” reflected the poor quality of services. Positive trigrams such as “Great Customer Service”, and “value for money”, and negative trigrams such as “Terrible customer experience”, “Poor quality product” and others are present in the South Indian hotel reviews. Fig. 2 presents the overall sentiment distribution, showing a higher proportion of positive sentiments compared to negative ones.

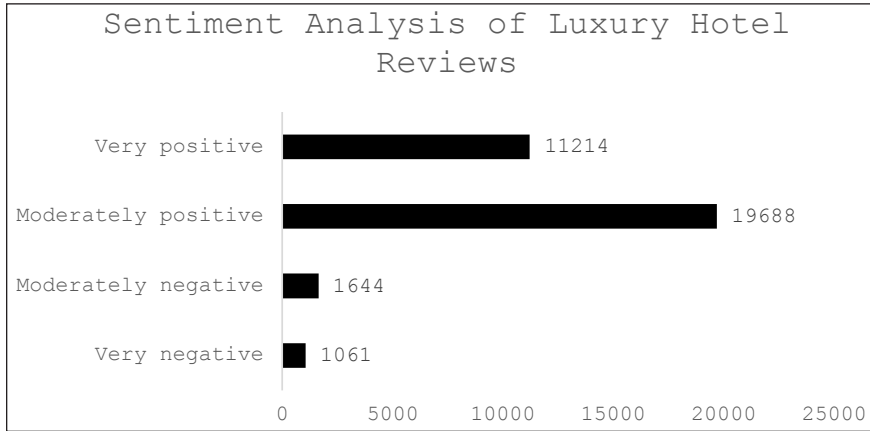


Fig. 2: Sentiments of South Indian Luxury Hotels

Table 1: Unigram and Diagram Frequencies

State Name	Term	Term Frequency	Phrase	Phrase Frequency
Andhra Pradesh	Good	6843	Front office	372
	Food	4918	Room service	344
	Hotel	4178	Front desk	334
Karnataka	Food	7931	Evolve back	934
	Good	7797	Special thanks	835
	Staff	7333	Well maintained	605
Kerala	Good	8749	Well maintained	769
	Staff	8442	Special thanks	630
	Food	8180	Swimming pool	571
Tamil Nadu	Good	15845	Special thanks	1098
	Service	11580	Room service	1055
	Food	11050	Front desk	1043
Telangana	Good	10887	Special Thanks	920
	Food	8820	Front Desk	868
	staff	8215	Taj Decann	755

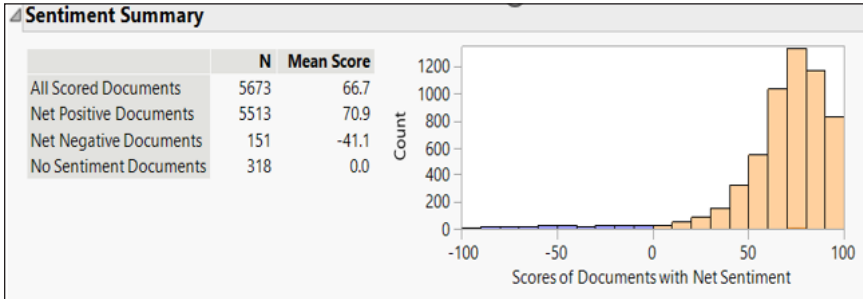


Fig. 3: Summary of Luxury Hotel Sentiments

Polarity analysis is a tool for understanding the emotional content of text data and is widely used for extracting insights, monitoring brand reputation, and guiding decision-making. The ChatGPT prompts are used for polarity analysis. The sample ChatGPT prompt “For the given dataset find polarity analysis and count the total positive, negative and neutral sentiments present” identified 14052 positive sentiments, 279 negative sentiments and 11 neutral sentiments. The Fig. 4 depicts the polarity distribution of sentiments which is rightly skewed communicates that sentiments are predominately positive.

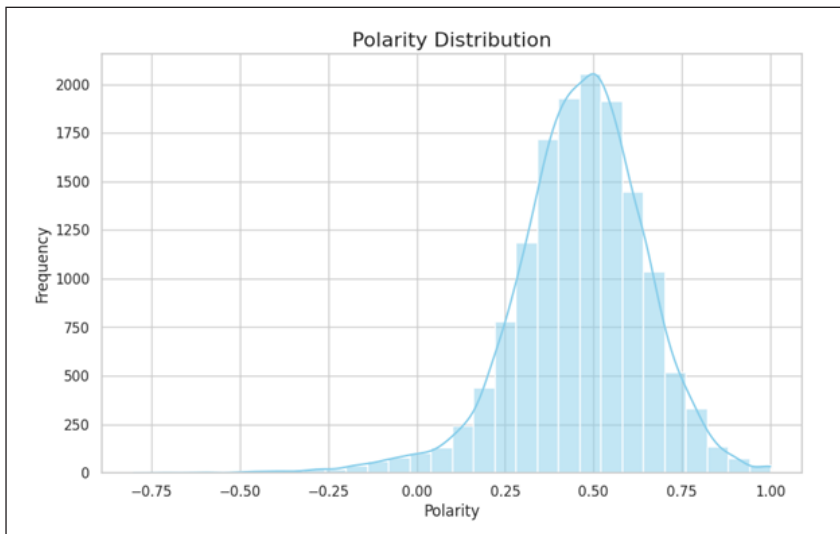


Fig. 4: Polarity Distribution of South Indian Hotel Sentiments

Emotional analysis is a process that categorizes the emotions expressed in a piece of text, it delves deeper into detecting specific emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, disgust, and more. The ChatGPT prompt used for emotion analysis is “In the given dataset, I need to count how many Joy, Sadness, Neutral, Fear, Surprise, Disgust and Anger are present. Fig. 5 shows the emotions count, where the emotion “Joy” is higher than the other emotions.

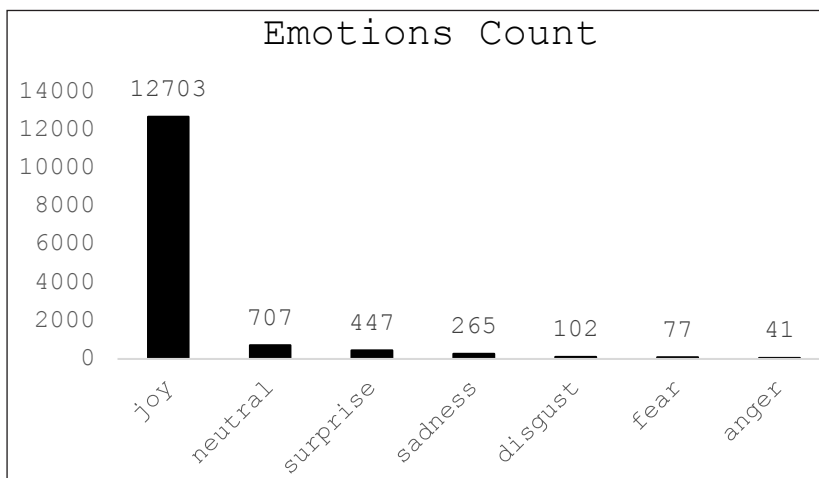


Fig. 5: Emotion Analysis of South Indian Hotels

Topic Modelling is a natural language processing technique used to discover the abstract topics present within a large collection of documents or texts. Topic modelling helps to identify and extract patterns, making it easier to understand the underlying themes and structure of the text data. The ChatGPT prompt used for topic modelling is “For the given dataset I need to do topic modelling for the entire data”. ChatGPT identified the following topics, Hospitality and Service (stay, staff, team, hotel, special, thanks, thank, care, hospitality) and suggested focusing on staff, personalized care, and gratitude. Hotel Facilities and Services (room, hotel, breakfast, rooms, good, check, staff, stay, service, buffet) and suggest emphasis on rooms, hotel facilities, breakfast, and check-in/out experiences, Food and Service Quality, Accommodation Experience, Dining and Unique Experiences and others. In summary, we infer from the analysis (polarity, emotion and topic modelling) that reviews are mostly positive, in other words, the perceived benefits of guests are higher than the perceived sacrifices in South Indian luxury hotels TripAdvisor reviews.

Discussions and Implications

Customers today are more outspoken in expressing their expectations and experiences about services through numerous digital channels since they live in an “experience economy”. Millennials love the sharing economy because of its benefits such as links to local communities, production of genuine local experiences, and value for money (Ketter, 2021). Services are ephemeral in nature and cause greater uncertainty. Travellers are increasingly demanding unique travel experiences engaging with local culture. Thus, information which is rich in experience from travellers is likely to be more pertinent and have more utility. When potential tourists face high perceived risk, they will check pertinent information on any digital platform. Experiences are full of memory residing in individual minds and design, marketing, delivery is vital for experiences. From our research findings, following are the perceived benefits and sacrifices extracted from TripAdvisor reviews. Perceived Benefits are excellent hospitality, spacious and well-equipped rooms, delicious and diverse food, convenient location, safety measures and adherence to guidelines. Perceived Sacrifices are higher pricing, limited dining options, inadequate parking facilities, noise disturbances, slow response times, lack of on-site amenities and room maintenance issues. From a sustainability perspective, ChatGPT prompt also extracts reviews such as “Plastic water bottles can be replaced with glass bottles”, “Birds chirping”, “paperless contactless payments” and others which are imperative to achieve sustainable tourism.

Theoretical and practical Implications: In the context of evolving landscape of tourism, perceived benefits and sacrifices of tourists are contingent upon the operational strategies and practices and our research outcomes are contributing to this direction. Even though high potential benefits were found from our samples, a bit of negative sentiment was also found which may lead to brand equity dilution with financial losses. Given the dearth of literature specific to the Indian scenario, this research adds value to the existing literature and provides evidence specific to South Indian luxury hotels. The eWOM insights extracted from ChatGPT are accumulated in different directions, providing fragmented evidence on marketing implications. Hotel authorities should realize that luxury brands are trans-boundaries in today’s age. Travel Agents, Hoteliers, and other service providers from the tourism sector should realize the strategic importance of online review management. In other words, Luxury hoteliers should have a proactive eWOM strategy to provide better and more effective services. If sentiments are highly negative, then quick service recovery strategies are required. Due to the current competitive global

business world, there is a need to understand who is visiting a hotel. Hoteliers must check out an iterative process of exploration, scripting, and staging and must render indelible impressions and fulfil theme-based takeaways. ChatGPT-based review analysis enables hotel managers to learn about customer preferences and attitudes. Thus, consider the fact that hotel agencies attentively consider consumer reviews and focus on memorable experiences. If they did so favourably, the luxury hotels would benefit from additional advertising.

Limitations and Future Scope: One limitation of this study is data collected over a period of fifteen months. In the context of an online community, where behaviour can be highly variable and unpredictable, this timeframe may not capture the full range of behaviours. Second, we might have a platform bias since reviews are collected only from TripAdvisor. The third limitation is the detection of irony and sarcasm review analysis which is not part of this research work. Most researchers agreed that difficult to measure the nonlinearity of customer experience using any single method. ChatGPT prompts are potential to have a substantial impact on the tourism industry by enhancing the tourist experience, boosting operational effectiveness, and creating new revenue streams. As technology advances, ChatGPT will probably be used in even more creative ways in the travel and tourism sector, facilitating easier, more accessible, and more pleasurable travel experiences for all. Even though ChatGPT uses LLM but still needs human collaboration and we need to train the models to best work with us and it needs to learn. The study also provided extensive directions for future research agendas and further investigation is required to the present study.

Conclusion

Luxury travellers are relying on conversion stances rather than conceptualisation. Travel sites and reviews try to give the right stance menu. The hallmarks of the new normal are grace, anticipatory service, exotic safe food, and a domain of exclusiveness and privilege. “Luxury is always about choice,” too many hoteliers insist. A comfortable atmosphere can create a positive interaction between customers and employees in the service encounter. Bygone days’ structures or up-to-date exteriors with proper luxurious interior décor differentiate hotels from one another in the upscale market. Therefore, it is apparent that hotel managers should focus on the best possible comforting service to their guests, and replicate it with a panoply of physical attributes and design elements. That will bring cheer and put customers on a high pedestal.

Given the results of this study, we found that TripAdvisor reviews on Indian luxury hotels provide more positive signals. These hotels also have a line of legacy. The results by Lopes et al. (2021) supported our results, where the positive valence of online consumer reviews has benefited other tourists. Gavilan et al. (2018) found that users still rely on review platforms since the benefits dominate the downside. Dynamically generated insights such as TripAdvisor reviews allow luxury hotels to adopt agile strategies resulting in 'conversion' performance.

Sentiments can better be shaped by refreshed new content and revised marketing, endorsement strategies, and branding (Sanga Song & Hye-Young, 2020) while keeping the structural and operational parameters intact. Given the dearth of extant literature, this research has indicated that qualitative content analysis adds value to the existing literature. Hotels that are quick to understand emotional responses, and stitch on to compassion toward consumers' actual benefits. The capability to adapt is a crucial property to survive deleterious phenomena such as over-tourism, eco-tourism, climate change, economic crisis, and many other macro factors. Sometimes, hoteliers put on a different coat, garbed with inappropriate facts and negative information. Consumers are misled and misguided. The result becomes an obfuscated atmosphere. Hoteliers should take guard to dispel all negative impressions, and they must inject the right data and present facts of the matter. So, are luxury hotels luxurious? From the lens of TripAdvisor and ChatGPT, yes, it is luxurious specific to South Indian luxury hotel perspectives. The findings of this research emphasize the importance of timely, accurate information and provide a proactive message for hotel authorities and policymakers to strategize and adopt ChatGPT in their business.

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