The study of factors affecting customer's satisfaction with the three star hotels in Dubai

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Abstract—Previous studies has supported the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Accordingly, understanding the factors affecting customer satisfaction is very important for those who are involved in hotel industry. Despite the abundant studies conducted on tourist satisfaction there is very little known about the customers satisfaction of Middle East hotels. Filling a part of this gap, the current study attempts to examine factors affecting travelers' satisfaction of three star hotels in Dubai. Unfortunately the website doesn't support online booking from any of hotels in Iran, so the comments and reviews on these hotels are not available. On the other hand Dubai has the greatest number of registered hotels in Agoda website, hence this city was chosen as case study. Accordingly comments of travelers on each three star hotel was collected from the Online booking website of Agoda (www.Agoda.com), on October 2015. The study relied on text mining and content analysis of over 2500 online traveller reviews covering 3-star hotels in Dubai.). The website categorizes the hotels based on the stars and rankings (figure 2) and website only publishes reviews of a hotel from travelers who have booked and paid for a reservation and most probably has stayed in the hotel. The website also provides databases of customer evaluations of their experiences of hotels. This study applied content analysis of the reviews. The collected data was exported into the Nvivo 7 qualitative data analysis software. The comments on each hotel were categorized in terms of positive and negative feedback. Content analysis of collected data revealed that the main factors affecting the tourists' satisfaction were hotel location, food management , cleanliness, facilities, design and staff behaviors.
Keywords—*satisfaction, three star hotels, Middle East, online survey, service quality.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Reviews on hotels are a great source of information on both the positive and negative aspects of a hotel. Travellers might check other customers' comments on the website before making reservations in a particular hotel and they might even take into account the other travellers' satisfaction with the hotels, before making an online booking . They might simply trust on the others' experiences of a particular hotel before making their decision This highlights the important role of hotel reviews' on the success of hotel industry. The other important aspect of online reviews, is the possibility to be aware of various people from different country's comments and point of views. How solo travelers evaluate a hotel in comparison with couples and a family with children. All these valuables sources of information can be used with all of those who are involved in hotel industry.

The current study attempts to canonize the factors that affect the customers' satisfaction with the three star hotels in Dubai. As this city is one of top tourist attractions and annually evidences a large number of travelers, their experiences with this city hotels can provide us a great source of information about the customers' satisfaction influencing factors. The current study mainly relies on the customers' comments on three star hotels.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Satisfaction with a product can be taken as the met expectations of individuals. If there be a balance between the service quality and the customers' expectations they are more likely to be satisfied. Customers' expectations is affected by their past experiences and received online information. If the customers are satisfied with the hotel services they are more likely to return to the same hotel . Service quality has been proved to be correlated with overall guest satisfaction (Stringam, Gerdes, & Vanleeuwen, 2010; Poon & Low, 2005).

The higher star-rating of a hotel, the greater customers might be satisfied (Bulchand- Gidumal 2013). Studies also has showed that men and women might have different judgments of various aspects of the same provided services (Suki, 2014). Consumers' perception and expectations of service quality are also bound by cultural background which makes it difficult to set a universally accepted standard and definition. It has been also found that travellers of different geographical regions also might differ in their perception of service quality (Poon & Low , 2005).

Facilities (Li, Ye, & Law, 2013) room quietness (Heung, 2000) , cleanliness and maintenance (Li, Ye, &

Law 2013), safety and external leisure environments (Lin et al. 2011) were also proven to affect customers' satisfaction. In another study Callan and Bowman (2000) found that 'value for money', 'cleanliness', 'comfort of bedroom', and 'politeness of staff' as the most important factors that contributed to the efficiency of a hotel.

Service staff plays a major role towards the rating of a hotel. Helpfulness of the information desk (Heung 2000), accurate and fast professional service contributes (Lin et al. 2011) reception services (Li, Ye, & Law 2013) have been described as positive characteristics of staffs that affect customers' satisfaction.

Online reviews play a big role in hotel selection (Stringam et al. 2010) . Rhee et al. (2013) who analysed 405 reviews from the TripAdvisor website noted that 'value for money' and 'rooms' are considered as the most important attributes that contribute to a high overall rating for hotels. A review of related literature suggests that 'value for money', 'cleanliness', 'comfort of beds', 'politeness of staff', and 'efficiency of service' and 'location' affect the hotel selection among various travellers (Callan and Bowman 2000).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study relied on the comments of travelers on three star hotels of Dubai. Unfortunately the website doesn't support online booking from any of hotels in Iran, so the comments and reviews on these hotels are not available. On the other hand Dubai has the greatest number of registered hotels in Agoda website, hence this city was chosen as case study. The study relied on text mining and content analysis of over 2500 online traveller reviews covering 3-star hotels in Dubai. The online reviews utilized in this study were extracted from the Agoda.com website (figure 1). The website categorizes the hotels based on the stars and rankings. The website provides thec ustomers with information about each hotel, such as facilities, interior design images and location (figure 2). Agoda only publishes reviews of a hotel from travelers who have booked and paid for a reservation and most probably has stayed in the hotel. The website also provides databases of customer evaluations of their experiences of hotels. This study applied content analysis of the reviews. The collected data was exported into the Nvivo 7 qualitative data analysis software. The comments on each hotel were categorized in terms of positive and negative feedback.
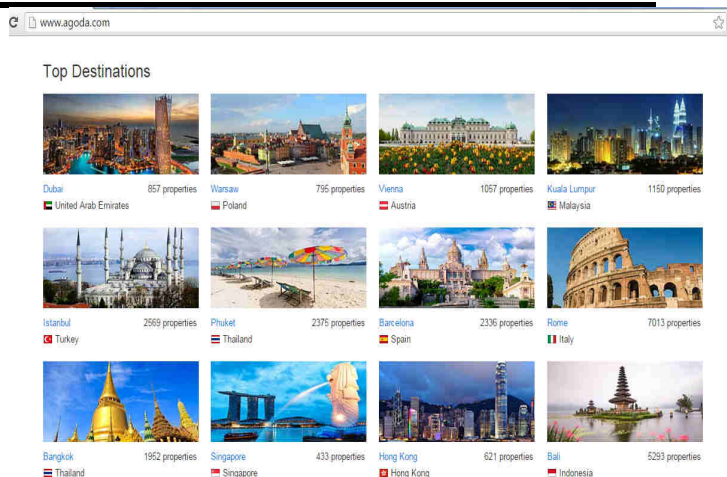

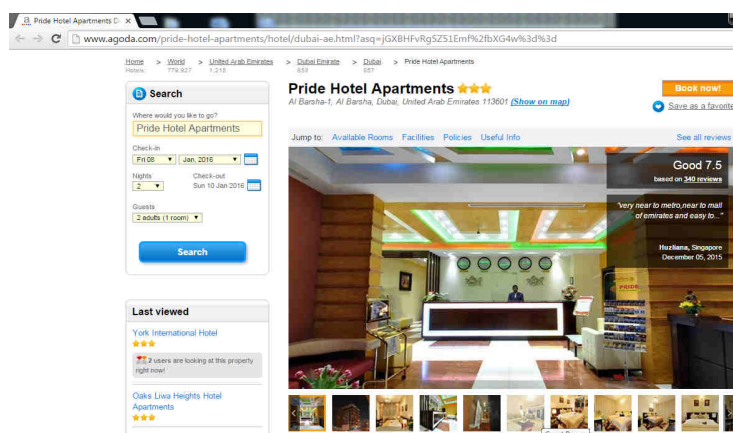*Fig. 1: Agoda, an online hotel reservation website*

Fig. 2: Agoda website categorizes hotels based on their stars and ranking

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Met and unmet expectations

As it is known if there is a perceived mismatch between customer expectations and reality, they might be dissatisfied. The result of this study revealed discrepancies between reality and customers expectations. The difference between the images of room compared to the actual rooms was unacceptable for customers. On the other hand when the provided services exceeded their expectations they were more likely to be satisfied. This included free drinking wate bottles , coffee, milk, tea, Wifi, gym and sauna. The customers were also very pleased when they room were upgraded for free to a better room out of their expectations as it can be seen in the comments bellow:

It was the best! Was upgraded to their executive suite (biggest room) for free!!! For no reason… it was fantastic!!!

Excellent. This was my second stay here and the staff upgraded me for free to the Superior Room. It was almost

the same size as the standard but with a different configuration and some extra features.

4.2 Employees' behavior

Hotel reviews sheds light on the behaviours that were perceived pleasing or unpleasing by hotel customers. The good and bad experiences that made the travelers write about. It was mentioned in many cases the front office male was rude and unsympathetic. Or in the opposite the staff were polite and helpful. It rises a question that how did customers came into conclusion about the character of staffs? This judgment is the result of how many days of face to face interactions? It is not difficult to guess it is highly unlikely that in general the customers spend more than few days to a week in a hotel. Hence these kind of description of staffs' behavior reveals an interesting finding: customers tend to generalize an act or behaviour of an employee as an indicator of their personality.

In describing behaviours of hotel employees, reviewers labeled them as "rude" or "polite" "unsympathetic" , "unwelcoming or "helpful" "responsive" and "friendly". It seems the travelers easily recalled the Staff and receptionists' behavior during their arrivals as a great number of comments were concentrated on this part of guests' experience with the hotel. It is interesting to know, the receptionists' behavior upon guests' arrival can influence their totall perception of the staffs' hospitality. Specially the guests appreciated it very much when they were greeted nicely upon arraival, and experienced a fast check in. some of the most important comments by the travelers are mentioned bellow:

Hotel staff are friendly and hospitable
staffs were incredible!
I would like to give 5 stars for the staffs, to the concierge who took care of our luggage until we were able to check in and after check out he let us leave our bags in the hotel
Receptionist knows what she's doing.
The staff were all pleasant and helpful
[The] Staff [were] friendly and attentive, quick check in/check out
The staff are courteous and efficient. They were kind enough to give me an upgrade and extended check-out time.
credit goes to the housekeeping whom is so considerate and given best services.
The staff was a very professional and courteous staff, all the way from the housekeeping, reception, concierge, up to the manager.

4.3 Location

The location of the hotels was identified as one of the most influential factors that affect the reviewers' satisfaction. In describing the positive attributes of a hotel location the travellers mostly described the hotel closeness to public transportation services, the airport,

city centre, mosques, shops, restaurants and tourist attractions as important. It was also important that the hotel location was easy to find. These are reflected in the comments bellow:

My stay was great. It is ideally located to metro bus and malls. Short distance by taxi to major attractions.
Hotel is near in Iranian hospital so easy to find
The hotel is well situated with many shops behind and the vibrant electronics market area nearby. No expensive shopping Mall around: you get real prices here.
centrally located, easy to get transport.
near masjid, easy transport
The beach is only a short walk away and the big Dubai mall are close by.
excellent hotel, in a good area for cheap shopping and good restaurants, close to Dubai mall and other shopping areas

4.4 Food and beverage management

Breakfast was mentioned the most in the reviews as hotel stays often include complimentary breakfast as part of the package. Beside the good quality of food the customers expected in room services.
good breakfast
Good experience in general. The only downside for me was that they don't serve food at night, except for cold sandwiches, pastries and Pizzas.

4.5 Cleanliness

Cleanliness was repeatedly mentioned as in the reviewers' comments. Cleanness of rooms, lobby, café and restaurant were very appreciated by the customers.
The moment i walked through the door i was happy, it was nicely decorated, very clean and the staff made me feel like a VIP.
The hotel was lovely and clean, very high standard for the budget.

4.6 Facilities

The facility that is deemed as important and contributed to customer satisfaction was the availability of free wifi service; the unavailability of free wifi has been reviewed as a big source of disappointment.
Wifi ia available in rooms now
Free internet is hard to get in Dubai this place has i everything was good I recommend this hotel it is my 4th time in that hotel free wifi

4.7 Design and interior

Modern and well decorated, were the most used words to describe the satisfaction with hotel design and interior. Hotels that provided customers with rooms with a balcony and good view were also very satisfactory.
The room was spacious, well laid out and clean.
The decor was bright and modern with all modern conveniences available

I'm not sure about whether balconies are available or not, but my upgraded Superior Room did not have one nicely decorated

the hotel is nice decorations and the room too nice, the space in the room is not that much but it's ok.

One thing I might say about this hotel though is, I don't think they have rooms with balconies, and they are an anti-smoking eco-hotel. Smokers might have a problem with that

Like a boutique hotel with modern facilities.

The suit was spacious, clean and well equipped.

Modern, Efficient, Comfortable

V.   CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to examine the factors affecting customers' satisfaction with three star hotels of Dubai. Content analysis of collected data revealed that the main factors affecting the tourists' satisfaction were hotel location, food management , cleanliness, facilities, design and staff behaviors. The study also expanied in detail the attributres of each category. It suggests architects, hotel managers and all those who are involved in the hotel industry must take into account these factors for insuring customers' satisfaction. No doubt hotel staff behaviours have been very important for the customers as well as the enviroment of hotel. More specificly as the most audiences of the current paper are architects, it must taken into account the location of hotel is very important for travellers. When selecting s site for design of a hotel clossness to hotel attrcation touris areas, public transportation and restaurants and shopping centers is very important. Design of façade and form of hotel must meet the expectation of visibilty. Most of customers showed their fuflieed expectation of a hotel design by describing it with "modern" and well decorated. Further studies might take this into account and conduct a qualitative research on provided pictures in the website and those the reviwers has decribed as modern. In addition further studies might concentrate on decoration and style of different hotels based on their ranking and stars.

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