

Assessment of hotels' online complaints in domestic tourism: mixed analysis approach

Mustafa Çevrimkaya, Şenol Çavus and Ümit Şengel

Abstract

Purpose – *This study aims to test the complaints of tourists who visit five-star hotels in Antalya, Turkey, on those same hotels' websites.*

Design/methodology/approach – *In the study, the data were collected with qualitative methods but analyzed with the mixed analysis method. In this context, the authors collected 1,012 comments on the website between 2016 and 2019.*

Findings – *According to the results of the study, the most intense complaints were found to be concentrated in categories such as ambience, food and staff.*

Originality/value – *First of all, it is thought that it will make an important contribution to the literature, since different methodologies are adopted in the study. In addition, online shares, evaluations and comments produce positive or negative results for the destination or business in question. It is necessary to closely monitor such activities in electronic environments, as they may have negative consequences, thus revealing the need to take corrective or preventive measures. For this reason, the research is important in terms of not having such a large-scale study in the literature and contributing to the hospitality industry.*

Keywords *Hospitality, Antalya, Reviews, Satisfaction, Complaints, Mixed analysis method*

Paper type *Research paper*

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Introduction

Given the ubiquity of technology, people have begun to pay more attention to websites. Online sites are a given in business, health, entertainment, shopping and many other sectors. Entertainment and shopping sites have a particularly significant effect on people's preferences. Consumers look to obtain resources in different ways before choosing a product or service. Said resources may include promotional activities, personal sales, sales development and more (Arslan & Güven, 2018). On the other hand, traditional advertising activities are increasingly being put on the back burner, so to speak, replaced instead by social media. Social media sites include Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter (Bayram & Bayram, 2012). Social blogs, too, are places where shared comments on food and beverage businesses and travel, which are the building blocks of the tourism industry, are important (Bayram, Bertan, & Ertaş, 2014). Examples of these include Booking.com, TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet (Lee, Law, & Murphy, 2011a; Lee, Jeon, & Kim, 2011b). In addition, applications such as Zagat, Zomato and Yelp provide a similar function (Zhang, Ye, Law, & Li, 2010).

Customers can quickly access information, thoughts, opinions and multiple product options via social sites, while also sharing their own experiences for the benefit of other customers (Topal & Nart, 2017). Owing to this decidedly social aspect, the destination preferences of

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other tourists are significantly affected. Comment sharing sites also function as feedback platforms, making them vital sources of information for the tourism industry to consider. Online reviews for businesses can serve as feedback in terms of addressing factors such as tourist satisfaction, complaint management and service quality.

The present study is aimed at identifying complaints of local tourists staying at five-star hotels in the Belek district of Antalya Province. Analysis and solutions are offered. It is believed that the results obtained will highlight and strengthen the feedback loop of hotels in Antalya, Turkey. In addition, the study brings along a methodological innovation by using the mixed analysis technique. While the studies using mixed method are intensively carried out in the literature, there are no studies in which the data obtained with a single method are analyzed using the mixed analysis method. With the spread of the MAXQDA [1] qualitative analysis program, which provides this innovation, it is thought that the mixed analysis technique will become widespread.

As a matter of fact, qualitative research methods are generally preferred in studies on customer or tourist complaints in the literature. For analysis, one of the methods such as descriptive analysis and content analysis, which are the most preferred analysis methods of qualitative research methods, was used (Pearce & Moscardo, 1984; Kozak & Tasci, 2006; Liu & Li, 2019). Apart from the qualitative methods, it is known that the complaints of the tourists are also based on the data obtained through the surveys. In these studies, frequency analysis and effect and relationship analysis such as correlation and regression were generally used (Lee et al., 2011a, 2011b; Zhou et al., 2023).

Conceptual framework and research questions

The internet, described as a “cross-network network,” is rapidly spreading and developing around the world (Çuhadar, Köseoğlu, & Gültepe, 2018). Attendant with the advent of the internet have been changes in marketing practices. Only since the beginning of the 21st century has the internet's combination of electronic data and networks been made available on such a global scale.

With the development of communication networks, the spread of social media platforms on the internet has also led to a change in communication in the field of marketing. There has been a change in consumers' communication habits, as evidenced by the centrality of Facebook and Twitter in online social exchange. The more time consumers spend on these social networks, the more consumers have gone from being passive participants to active agents in marketing endeavors (Blennsjö & Stenberg, 2014). As a result, innovations in verbal marketing have been thriving. Verbal marketing, otherwise known as word-of-mouth (WOM) advertising, refers to an action in which a customer's specific product experience is unofficially shared, regardless of the level of customer satisfaction (Robledo, Vasquez, Duque3-Méndez, & Duque-Urbe, 2023). An ordinary promotional activity or promoter cannot be as convincing as a trusted friend or longtime consumer when it comes to extolling the benefits of goods or services. For example, imagine a potential customer is considering buying a smart phone and examines the promotions of brands such as Apple and Samsung, but is wavering between one and the other. Just then, a close friend who is a longtime iPhone user encourages that customer to buy one as well, thus compelling a decision through the persuasion of personal experience (Kotler, 2019). Although WOM was once entirely verbal, nowadays it more often takes the form of eWOM, or electronic word of mouth, using the internet as its platform. As a form of soft power, eWOM allows for Web-based interpersonal communication between consumers from around the world, providing information without commercial purpose (Kaur & Kaur, 2023). In short, eWOM is the digital equivalent of WOM, made possible by social networking, forums and other online platforms. The rapid spread of the internet has led to the further development of consumers and sellers in electronic form (Jalilvand, Esfahani, & Samiei, 2011). It also enables consumers to reliably receive product information from other consumers in an electronically innovative

environment (Jeong & Jang, 2011; Dam, 2010). Thus, eWOM is important for customers and companies alike (Sarıışık & Özbay, 2012).

Developments in the Web area have been realized through social platforms on which consumers freely share ideas and influence one another's preferences during the transfer of resources on an electronic platform (Güzel, 2014). The internet brings together many applications and social networks under one proverbial umbrella (Çuhadar et al., 2018). Communication is made possible on the internet by emails, news media, social platforms, forum sites, blogs and more in a virtual space (Akar, 2009). Consumers in the 21st century can share their experiences, ideas, feelings and thoughts about products or services by emailing or posting them to the relevant places (Dam, 2010; Jeong & Jang, 2011).

These developments in interpersonal communication have long been experienced in tourism (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Increasing competition in the tourism industry is also manifested in the internet environment, where memorability is key. Tourism products in particular are a rich source of anecdotal data and assessments, from the moment one arrives at their accommodations to the moment they return home. What makes the information shared via customer reviews is the fact that no one can predict it. Therefore, both sides of the marketing equation – product/service provider and customer alike – must wait for that information to be revealed before it can be assessed. While such information is valuable, it puts the onus on customers to seek out and determine a viable spectrum of experiences and knowledge (Aydın, 2016; Browning, So, & Sparks, 2013; Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Zhang et al., 2010). Social networks are divided into many sections and include sites such as Otelpuan. These applications allow tourists to share their experiences with other tourists in their destination (Aydın, 2016).

Adventurous and innovative tourists are prone to sharing their experiences and thoughts after exploring destinations or tourist products. Studies in the field of tourism have shown that verbal communication both positively and negatively affects tourism products (Litvin et al., 2008). Relevant shares are also known to affect tourist preferences because such comments may be taken as a worthy barometer of service quality obtained as a result of verbal transfer (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Product consumption in the hospitality industry involves a relatively high level of customer engagement. Anything in the realm of consumer experience is further affected by the interaction between service providers and consumers and is therefore unknown before purchase. The tourist can roughly imagine the performance experienced based on the WOM of an intermediary and predict its expectations before actual consumption of service. Other consumer experiences, for veterans and newcomers alike, can reduce the degree of uncertainty prior to consumption of a given service (Wu, 2013). As can be seen, people are now able to transfer their experiences in electronic form to third parties (Jeong & Jang, 2011). For this reason, other tourist eWOM related to accommodation, food and beverage and other services are of equal importance to tourists and businesses (Bayram, 2017).

Positive or negative reviews constitute a vital component of tourism's verbal marketing engine. When consumers enjoy a destination or accommodation, they are inclined to give positive advice. Evoking a destination in full detail directs consumers to choose that destination (Deveci, 2010). According to the research, 80% of tourists benefit from their tourist and destination experience more when they consult social platforms prior to purchase (Kutluk & Avcıkurt, 2014; Özaslan, 2014). These comments also provide feedback to businesses during the communication phase. However, such communication may be less inconsistent in verbal form (Wang, 2011). Tourists who do not like a destination may dissuade other consumers with negative advice (Deveci, 2010). Such comments can severely and negatively impact a hotel's business (Kitapçı, Taştan, Dörtyol, & Akdoğan, 2012). Social platforms where negative comments are more prone to appear, especially those regarding where and how problems may arise, can exert great influence on consumer decisions. According to one study, 50% of tourists say that feedback sites significantly

influenced their holiday preferences (Kutluk & Arpacı, 2016). Moreover, 72% of people who use social media platforms visit these sites before they plan their holiday (Çakır & Yalçın, 2012). Moreover, the fact that the comments made are descriptive, analytical, logical and convincing positively affects the likelihood of other consumers choosing the product in question (Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, & Buultjens, 2009).

Customers dissatisfied in the 21st century now have recourse to funnel their complaints into websites. By sharing their experiences with other dissatisfied customers, they reinforce consumer decisions to avoid a particular business or destination in the aggregate (Kutluk & Avciokurt, 2014: 615). According to research, one consumer can transfer their dissatisfaction to 10–20 people. This further demonstrates the importance of verbal communication (Kitapcı, 2008). For example, in a study published in *Business Week*, 69% of food and drink customers, 36% of computer and accessory customers, 24% of electronics customers, 22% of travel customers, 18% of car customers and 9% of financial customers were seen to benefit from negative or positive verbal communication in their purchases (Özaslan, 2014). Such complaint feedback loops can negatively impact the brand images of businesses and destinations.

Because tourism is a labor-intensive industry, it is important to understand changes in technologies and consumer behavior that affect the distribution and accessibility of travel information. Understanding the nature of the online tourism field – i.e. the composition of information related to tourism that is potentially available to travelers – is imperative for successful marketing strategies and the development of better information systems. While social media and sharing sites are becoming increasingly important in the field of tourism, research of such platforms is also important in the context of online travel information research (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). For this reason, we have examined the shares made on the sharing site Otelpuan.

Like other travel accommodation sites, Otelpuan allows verbal communication, provides free sharing and viewing, offers options for other tourists and contributes significantly to hotels in the feedback phase through its online tourist product marketing in the purchase of online tourist services.

Otelpuan.com was established on February 14, 2008, as an objective sharing platform for reviews, ratings and photos about hotels by guests who have previously stayed in those hotels. Otelpuan delineates the preferences of guests accordingly. It aims to promote neutral and unforced choices and operates under the slogan “Having written the good and the bad, I leave the choice to you.” It also acts impartially in the satisfaction surveys conducted in contact with Otelpuan guests (www.otelpuan.com). In the context of these conceptual evaluations, answers to two research questions were sought in the study.

RQ 1. What are the online complaints of tourists about hotels?

RQ 2. How does the interaction between tourists' online complaints about hotels?

The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting guest experiences in urban hotels that focus on themes such as ambience, food quality, personnel behavior, cleaning and price/performance. By examining these factors in depth, the research provides important information about the dynamics of urban tourism. In providing this information, the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods also provides a methodological contribution to urban tourism research. This approach enables guest feedback to be understood more good and fills the gap between qualitative and quantitative data analysis. In this respect, it represents an important innovation in data analysis.

Methodology

Method, sampling and data collection

The research was carried out using the qualitative research method. Document analysis was used as a data collection tool. Document analysis has been preferred for reasons such

as facilitating access to hard-to-reach data, not encountering a reaction problem because it is not obtained from the individual, enabling long-term data collection, supporting the sample size, providing originality to the study, being auditable in terms of data characteristics and having a relatively low cost. All of these reasons include advantages that will make the study stronger (Bailey, 2008).

Since the study aims to examine the perspectives of local tourists staying in five-star hotels, reviews about hotels on Otelpuan were deemed worthy as a data resource (otelpuan.com, 2019). Otelpuan contains a wealth of information, including online reviews, online scoring, management responses and hotel information, and is a go-to information source for local tourists. The highest score on Otelpuan is 10, while the lowest score is 1. In this study, reviews that received a score of five and below were included due to the present study's focus on the complaints of local tourists regarding luxury hotels.

Purposive sampling method was used in the research because it was desired to obtain in-depth information rather than the ability to represent. Easily accessible case sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used. This sampling method, on the other hand, was preferred to bring practicality to the research process. The method is generally preferred when it is not possible to use other sampling methods (Patton, 1987). During the data collection process of this study, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the method and sample selection. In this sense, no direct data was obtained from the tourists, and the online complaints of the tourists were examined. Given the sheer number of comments, comments between 2016 and 2019 regarding the Belek district of Antalya were selected as sample. The lower limit for 2016 was created when receiving very old data would carry the risk of not being up-to-date on the complaints. The most important reason for keeping the collected data limited to 2019 is the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a concern that the comments might focus on issues related to the pandemic. An average of 22 reviews was taken from 46 five-star luxury hotels for a total of 1,012 reviews. Although it does cover a short period of four years, the examination of over 1,000 complaints is an important reference for the generalizability of the results. When examining reviews in the literature and on the Otelpuan website, one sees a disproportionate amount of complaints about media, food, staff, physical facilities, price/performance, activity and discrimination. These themes were chosen for analysis in the present study.

Data analysis

Comments were collected through the hotel site via the Web Collector plugin for MAXQDA. Content analysis was used to analyze the collected data. In addition, in the context of mixed analysis method, content analysis has been tried to be supported by quantitative analysis. Content analysis compares and analyzes documents, information, interviews or audio/video (Coşkun, Altunışık, Bayraktaroğlu, & Yıldırım, 2015). Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) posited four stages of content analysis: selection of topics, coding data, arrangement of codes and themes and expressing and interpreting findings. Seven themes were created by researchers after several reviews of the data to decide how the content analysis was to be carried out and subsequently encoded into MAXQDA-20's qualitative analysis program. When examining reviews in the literature and on the Otelpuan website, one sees a disproportionate amount of complaints about media, food, staff, physical facilities, price/performance, activity and discrimination. These themes were chosen for analysis in the present study.

Validity and reliability

Contrary to quantitative research, evaluation of validity and reliability and presentation of findings are considered difficult in qualitative studies. However, it can be said that thanks to the developments in research methods and qualitative analysis programs developed with

the contributions of technology, consistent and easy methods have developed. The fact that the document analysis was carried out in this study removes the doubts about the validity. Because detailed information about the date, the region, the business and the platform from which the data is thought to be suitable for the research questions are reported in the study. As a matter of fact, this information allows us to meet the hesitations about internal and external validity that Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasized for qualitative research. If the necessary care is not shown for qualitative research, problems with the reliability of the data may arise. Solving the problems related to the reliability of the data in the studies using the traditional methods of the old period is related to the researcher and the recording of the data (Lune & Berg, 2017).

In addition to the traditional methods related to the reliability of qualitative data, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is used in quantitative research methods, has been started to be used thanks to the analysis programs developed. Table 1 includes both the general data and the Cronbach's alpha values of the data coded for the themes. Alpha value for all data used in the study is 0.808. Alpha values of the data coded into the themes used in the research ranged from 0.758 to 0.810. Based on quantitative data, it can be said that the research data fulfilled the reliability condition since a reference value above 0.700 was accepted (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Findings

Qualitative approach

The distribution of all 1,012 encoded comments on the chosen themes is shown in Figure 1. Among these themes, ambience is placed first, followed by food. Some complaints in line with these findings are listed below;

..... They wake you up in the morning to clean the room. It's a complicated *ambience*. As soon as you want tea and coffee, there is a very, very bad service.

..... In the evening the lighting of the hotel is very bad. There is a dim *ambience*, and my 3-year-old daughter was always nervous.

..... To summarize, the hotel is very old, the rooms are old and unappealing, the *food* is bad, the noise is too much.

..... The hotel rooms are old, the *food* is not much variety, there is no service from the waiters. They only do the *food* and table cleaning, you even take your own drink

Many remarkable words have been used in the context of these seven themes in the encoded comments. To determine the frequency of these words, a word cloud was created. The most commonly used word in the word cloud (see Figure 2 and Table 2) is the

Table 1 Reliability analysis values	
<i>Themes</i>	<i>Alpha value</i>
Physical facilities	0.800
Staff	0.765
Ambience	0.775
Price/performance	0.810
Discrimination	0.809
Activity	0.806
Food	0.758
Note: Overall Cronbach's alpha: 0.808 valid cases: 46 missing cases: 0 (0.0%)	
Source: Created by authors	

Figure 1 Code frequencies

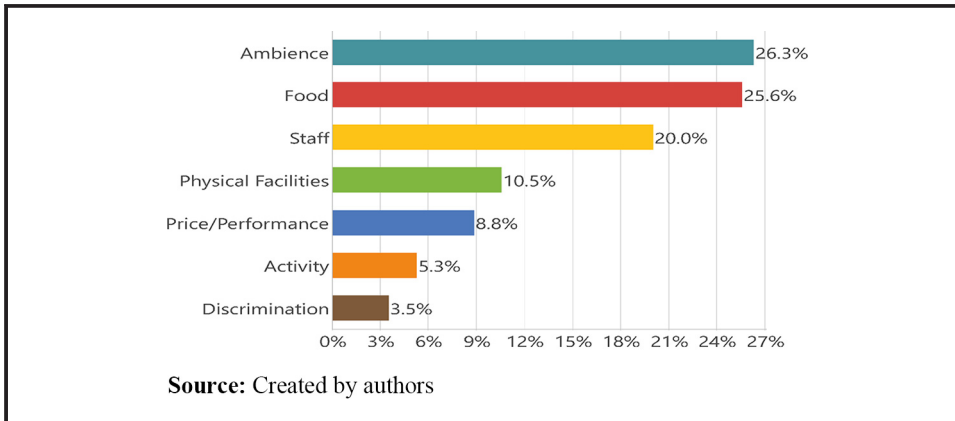


Figure 2 Word cloud



word “eat” (high prevalence of the word “food” was supplemented by frequency analysis). The low taste quality of the dishes and the blandness and low variety of dishes were criticized by many guests and were the primary subjects of their complaints. Complaints about unclean environments in which food was served were not clean, unhygienic staff behaviors and insufficiently warmed buffets were most common. The word cloud supports the analytical thrust of the present study. Beyond the word “food,” the words “bad” and “cleanliness” were shown to be the most repeated words.

Despite being marketed as luxury resorts, the hotels reviewed here received their fair share of complaints. A common subject of disappointment was the rooms. While rooms in luxury hotels are decidedly larger than rooms in hotels of other classes, customers complained of situations in which the versatility and cleanliness of their rooms fell well below expectation.

Table 2 Word frequency values in comments

<i>Word</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Documents %</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Documents %</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Documents %</i>
Food	839	89.94	Family	122	40.78	Towel	70	22.91
Room	775	89.39	Beverages	121	44.13	Fun	65	28.49
Bad	526	83.24	Price	115	33.52	Dessert	65	21.79
Cleaning	377	69.83	Evening	107	32.96	Morning	64	25.14
Staff	361	75.98	Old	106	36.87	Again	63	24.58
Pool	333	68.72	Animation	99	37.43	Mediocre	61	25.14
Service	284	70.95	Horrible	99	32.40	Baby	59	16.76
Quality	251	67.60	Waiter	99	36.31	Minibar	57	25.14
Uninterested	236	61.45	Guest	95	31.84	Time	56	22.91
Child	230	53.07	Reception	95	30.17	Attendant	54	20.67
Day	224	51.96	Location	92	34.64	Authorized	52	16.76
Sea	181	50.84	Foreigner	89	32.96	Weak	52	23.46
Holiday	180	50.84	Facility	88	34.64	Friend	50	21.23
Watch	178	44.69	Hygiene	87	32.40	Honeymoon	50	10.06
Money	166	54.19	Night	85	30.17	Belek	47	17.88
Restaurant	164	45.25	Accommodation	83	30.73	Activity	46	20.67
Employee	159	49.16	Dirty	80	28.49	Response	44	16.76
Insufficient	146	46.37	Choice	76	32.96	Point	36	14.53
Serve	137	44.69	Sustenance	72	30.17	Reservation	36	14.53
Bar	133	43.58	Customer	71	26.82	Alcohol	31	11.73

Source: Created by authors

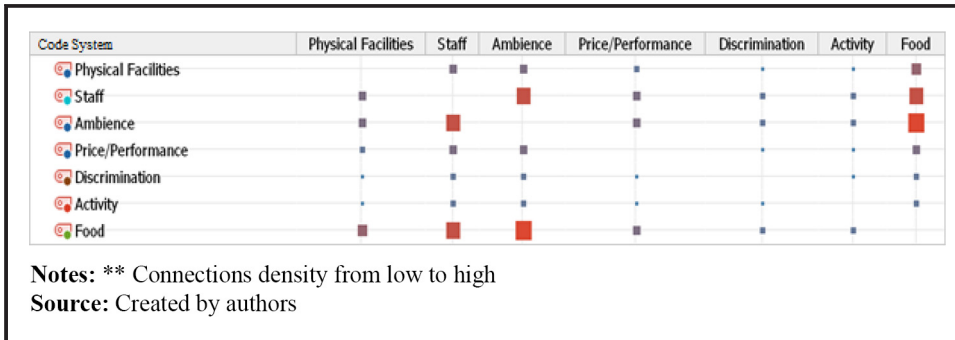
The failure of devices such as air conditioning, which have become standard in most hotels, leads to many unhappy guests who are more than willing to vent their frustrations online. This demonstrates the critical role not only of frontline workers in hotels but also of maintenance staff behind the scenes. Therefore, it is important to monitor the condition of all technical devices and intervene in case of possible failure to prevent guest complaints.

Among the guests' most intense complaints with regard to rooms were those related to housekeeping. Slipshod cleaning and neglect of equipment in need of maintenance or attention were the main reasons for complaints, hence the prominence of "cleaning" in the word cloud. Cleanliness of the common areas was an important issue for guests. For example, other guests were seen entering the toilet near the swimming pool barefoot before entering the pool again, thus raising concerns about pool contamination. In light of such concerns, hotels must take the necessary measures to maintain the cleanliness of their premises, giving guests peace of mind in turn.

As shown in [Figure 2](#) and [Table 1](#), approximately 76% of the interpretations involved the word "staff," particularly with regard to behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that the personnel to be employed in tourism enterprises should consist of those trained specifically in tourism. At this point, it is of great importance for tourism enterprises to collaborate more with institutions that provide tourism education.

When creating codes, relationships will form between the same themes in a comment. The relationship here is about the extent to which the themes are repeated together by different participants. [Figure 3](#) shows the relationships of the themes with each other/the frequency of their repetition. The fact that the icon (square) at the diagonal intersection points of the themes in the figure acquires dark tones of red or grows gradually indicates that the frequency of using the themes together has increased. The strongest relationship between these relationships was formed between the themes of food and ambience. These two themes were repeated by different participants more frequently than the other themes. This is because people pay special attention to hygiene and cleanliness in ambiances where

Figure 3 Code relations browser



they eat. Also, concerns about staff have deeply connected with dining and the ambience. Some tourist complaints showing these relationships are given below;

..... In the restaurant, the *food* is bad, but the *waiters* are very interested.

..... There is no ventilation and air-conditioning system in the stairs and corridors, so the smell of *food* and bad odors dominate in these *ambience*.

..... The worst service around Belek, poor quality, *unhygienic*, uninterested *staff*.

..... There is a queue everywhere to *food*, ice cream, drink etc. *Employees* are insufficient.

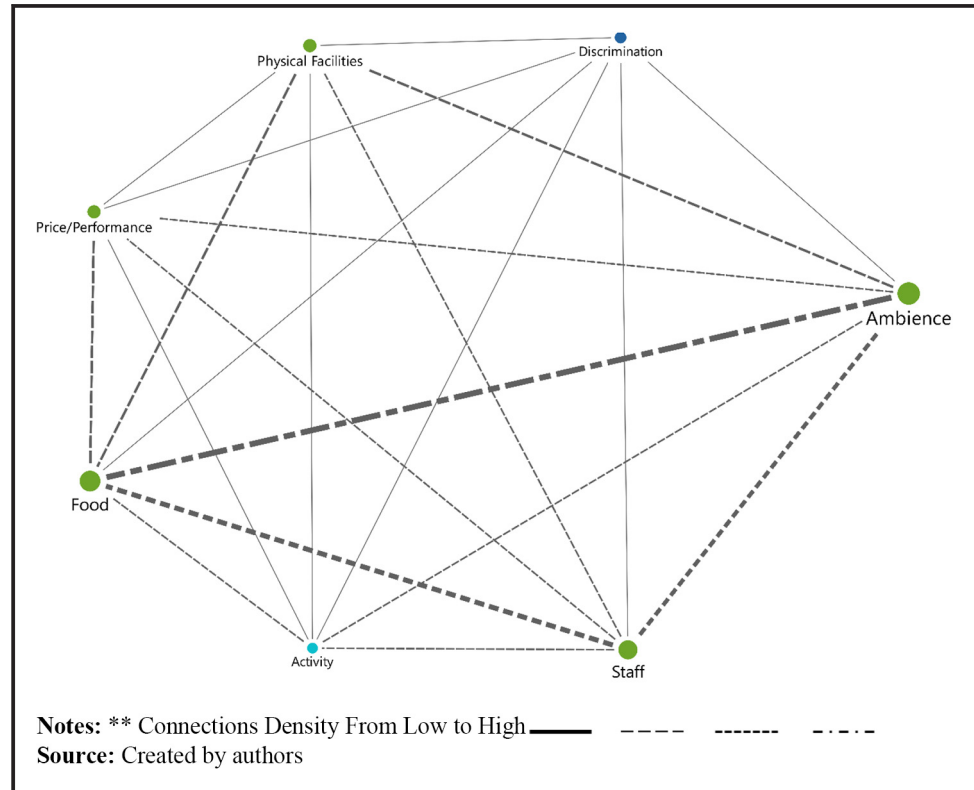
The relationship map given in [Figure 4](#) was used to support relationships between themes. There is a strong relationship between the dining theme and the ambience and staff themes. Although the theme of discrimination also includes the theme of discrimination, it appears that it has a weak relationship with other themes in the relationship map. Domestic tourists think that they have been discriminated against in terms of ambience and food. It is thought that there are very few elements reflecting local architecture in hotel ambience, and in this case, it disturbs domestic tourists. In addition, local tourists argue that international cuisine should be high and local cuisine products should be included in hotels.

The theme of food has a strong relationship with ambience. This is likely because codes of cleanliness are often linked to certain ambience. Hence the frequency of complaints about ambience where buffets or snack bars were installed. These complaints include environmental cleanliness, as well as complaints of cleanliness regarding staff. To mitigate the prevalence of such complaints, staff should pay attention to the cleanliness of any equipment located in the environment in question, while also taking care to keep areas where food is eaten especially clean.

There is also a moderately strong relationship between food and price/performance. Many guests noted that the price they paid for the service they purchased was too high compared to the services they received. Some guests reported seeing little red meat in their meals, and others reported seeing no red meat at all. Many guests also complained about the taste of their food.

Food and ambience were moderately related to the theme of physical facilities as well. Factors such as the general physical structure of a hotel and the layout of rooms fell within the category of physical facilities. Since those who can afford to travel generally represent a demographic increasingly accustomed to higher standards of living, hotel guests have begun paying stricter attention to even the smallest details in a hotel. Hence the emergence

Figure 4 Code relationship map



of a relationship between physical facilities and food. Guests have started to comment on the quality of the equipment used in hotels, such as plates and silverware. They also pay attention to factors such as the lighting or architecture of the area where food is eaten (Figure 5).

Physical possibilities are further associated with ambient contact. Many factors are examined by guests, such as cleaning of rooms, general view of the hotel, and whether or not the hotel has been renovated. Also, the adequacy of high-traffic areas such as pools and water park was shown to be of importance for the guests staying in the hotels.

Quantitative evidence of the qualitative approach

The MAXQDA program also provides quantitative arguments for the relationships among the themes used in the research. In this context, the most important analysis that provides information is the correlation analysis. Table 3 shows the results of the correlation analysis between the themes in the research. The obtained correlation coefficients are tested at 95% ($p < 0.05$) and 99% ($p < 0.01$) confidence intervals. Staff theme was associated with low ($0 < r < 0.33$) or moderate intensity ($0.33 < r < 0.66$) at 99% confidence interval with all other themes in the study. This result about the staff is very important for tourism, which is a service-oriented industry. Similarly, the theme of food was found to be related to all of the other themes. This relationship, which was found at the 95% confidence interval and low intensity with the Price/Performance theme, was at 99% confidence interval and moderate intensity for the other themes. Similarly, ambience and discrimination themes were related to all other themes. The relationships of the discrimination theme with other themes were generally within the 95% confidence interval.

Figure 5 Code co-occurrence model

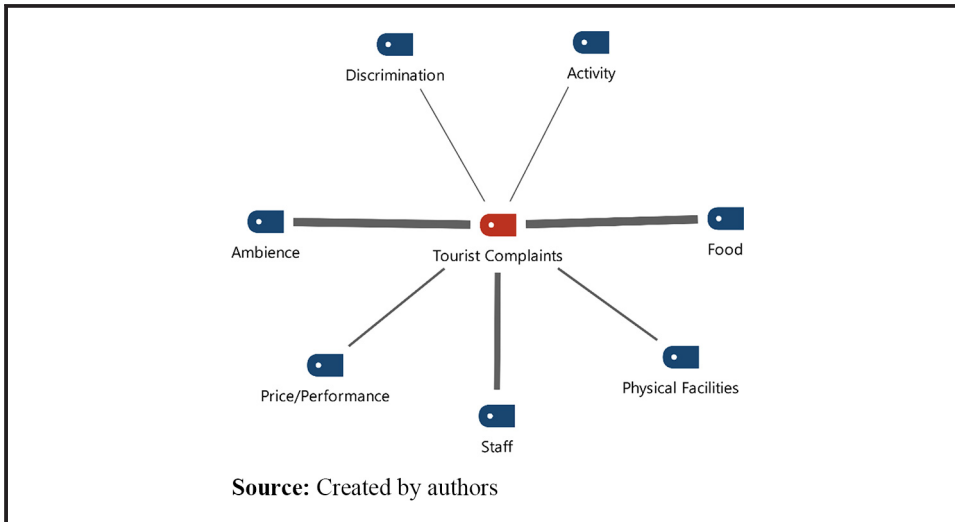


Table 3 Correlation analysis between themes

Codes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Physical facilities (1)	1						
Staff (2)	$r=0.328$ ($p=0.000$)*	1					
Ambience (3)	$r=0.233$ ($p=0.008$)*	$r=0.462$ ($p=0.000$)*	1				
Price/performance (4)	$r=0.139$ ($p=0.319$)	$r=0.254$ ($p=0.003$)*	$r=0.249$ ($p=0.004$)*	1			
Discrimination (5)	$r=0.216$ ($p=0.019$)**	$r=0.305$ ($p=0.000$)*	$r=0.217$ ($p=0.018$)**	$r=0.202$ ($p=0.034$)**	1		
Activity (6)	$r=0.139$ ($p=0.320$)	$r=0.321$ ($p=0.000$)*	$r=0.292$ ($p=0.000$)*	$r=0.100$ ($p=0.923$)	$r=0.216$ ($p=0.019$)**	1	
Food (7)	$r=0.390$ ($p=0.000$)*	$r=0.482$ ($p=0.000$)*	$r=0.416$ ($p=0.000$)*	$r=0.206$ ($p=0.029$)**	$r=0.314$ ($p=0.000$)*	$r=0.382$ ($p=0.000$)*	1

Notes: *Significant at $p < 0.01$ level; ** Significant at $p < 0.05$ level; $N = 179$

Source: Created by authors

According to the results of the correlation analysis in Table 3, the number of themes for which no relationship could be detected is only 3. According to the opinions of the participants, no relationship was found between physical facilities and price/performance themes. Similarly, the price/performance and physical facilities themes were not related to the activity theme. The results of the correlation analysis show that the themes of the study were well constructed.

In a study, variance tests are performed when there is only one independent variable (factor) above the dependent variables. This method, which is frequently used in quantitative research methods, becomes suitable for qualitative data through the MAXQDA program. It is thought that these tests, which provide quantitative evidence for the relationships in qualitative research, will become more common in the near future. The prevalence of mixed-type research supports this situation. It shows the interaction between the research problem and the research themes in qualitative research. It is understood from Table 4 that all the themes established within the scope of this research have different variances ($p < 0.05$). In this context, it can be said that tourist comments have a significant

Table 4 Variance analysis

Themes	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p value	Eta squared
Food	479.651	10	47.965	24.688	0.000*	0.595
	<i>Homogeneity of variance = Levene: 5.615, p value: 0.000, valid cases: 179; missing cases: 0 (0.0%)</i>					
Staff	280.625	10	28.062	15.393	0.000*	0.478
	<i>Homogeneity of variance = Levene: 4.670, p value: 0.000, valid cases: 179; missing cases: 0 (0.0%)</i>					
Ambience	334.889	10	33.489	14.097	0.000*	0.456
	<i>Homogeneity of variance = Levene: 6.113, p value: 0.000, valid cases: 179; missing cases: 0 (0.0%)</i>					
Physical facilities	54.023	10	5.402	5.177	0.000*	0.236
	<i>Homogeneity of variance = Levene: 1.956, p value: 0.041, valid cases: 179; missing cases: 0 (0.0%)</i>					
Discrimination	19.405	10	1.941	4.967	0.000*	0.228
	<i>Homogeneity of variance = Levene: 4.544, p value: 0.000, valid cases: 179; missing cases: 0 (0.0%)</i>					
Price/performance	40.255	10	4.025	4.288	0.000*	0.203
	<i>Homogeneity of variance = Levene: 3.108, p value: 0.001, valid cases: 179; missing cases: 0 (0.0%)</i>					
Activity	16.854	10	1.685	3.540	0.003*	0.174
	<i>Homogeneity of variance = Levene: 2.938, p value: 0.002, valid cases: 179; missing cases: 0 (0.0%)</i>					

Notes: *Significant at $p < 0.05$ level; factor = tourist complaints

Source: Created by authors

difference (in terms of content) from the complaints identified. The participant's opinions in the tourist comments differ in the context of the determined themes.

Results and discussion

The present study evaluated complaints about hotels in the Belek district of Antalya Province, as posted on the "Otelpuan" site. When analyzing these complaints, seven themes come to the fore: ambience, food, staff, physical facilities, price/performance, activity and discrimination. In the resulting frequency of words, the most prevalent word was food. Given the importance of food and beverage services as primary factors in the satisfaction of hotel guests, it is concerning to see so many complaints about food. Some of the complaints identified here were also identified by [Liu and Li \(2019\)](#). Researchers reveal that there may be complaints that focus on issues such as atmosphere and restaurant (food). These complaints differ according to some descriptive characteristics of tourists. Such problems, which are the subject of complaints, can deter guests from stopping over in the same hotel. This is why solving these food-themed problems is important. Solving the problems of food can be achieved by increasing overall quality and variety of flavors. In addition, a cordial atmosphere can go a long way in improving guests' dining experiences. [Ling, Karim, Othman, Adzahan, and Ramachandran \(2010\)](#) state that solving food-related problems and creating a positive food image will eliminate complaints and mediate tourist satisfaction.

According to the content analysis, after the word "food," "room," "bad" and "cleanliness" are the words with the highest frequency values. Also, there is a strong relationship between dining and ambient themes. There were complaints about cleaning of rooms and facilities, especially with regard to the pool and its surroundings. [Fernandes and Fernandes \(2017\)](#) reveal that one of the most common complaints of tourists is cleaning. Staff are in a position to recognize these problems and start the process of providing solutions. Therefore, the level of guest satisfaction in many hotels may be less a matter of branding than of training. That said, any business that has adopted the principle of guest satisfaction must begin with the recruitment of appropriate staff and orientation. Staff comprise a primary building block in ensuring the satisfaction of guests in a hotel. Reducing complaints about cleaning to a minimum can be solved by training housekeeping staff to carry out more planned and meticulous work. The training of the professional staff can be found in tourism vocational high schools, as well as associate and undergraduate training. However, it appears that even the training given in schools is based more on theory than practice. This disparity must

be rectified. The opinion that the training of the personnel and the approaches they will develop accordingly will be effective in solving the problems expressed here was also discussed in the context of front office personnel by [Ross \(1996\)](#).

Another theme is physical possibilities, to which food and ambience were shown to have moderate connections. Physical possibilities have been a subcategory theme in a hotel service for a long time, but innovations in technology and aesthetics have made patrons more aware than ever of architectural details. Guests comment not only on the architecture of the facility but also on the quality of the equipment used in food and beverage settings, including plates, cups and silverware. In particular, the plan and facilities of a newly established hotel must be made in such a way that they meet the demands of guests while appealing to their visual tastes. [Tovmasyan \(2020\)](#) considers physical elements as an element of quality and states that physical competencies can reduce tourist complaints. [Kumari, Khanna, Kumar, and Patyal \(2020\)](#) argue that ambience as a physical element can be a determining factor in developing grievance or loyalty. It can be said that the complaints of tourists will decrease if the physical environment/ambience meets the expectations of tourists.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged at the end of 2019, has brought a serious break in tourism activities. It is possible to say that the tourism movements, which started to normalize by the middle of 2022, have followed an unusual course. [Şengel \(2021\)](#) considers the normalization in tourism as the “new normal” and suggests the pandemic as an opportunity to restructure tourism. Because of the pandemic, a product supply shaped according to changing consumer demands and expectations has begun to emerge. In this context, tourist complaints focus on issues such as hygiene ([Naumov, Varadzhakova, & Naydenov, 2021](#)), social distance rules ([Şengel, Genç, Işkın, Ulema, & Uzut, 2020](#)) and food and beverage environments ([Miftah, Widianingsih, Muhtar, & Sutriadi, 2023](#)).

Contribution to the field of mixed methods

In recent years, it is seen that mixed methods are encouraged in scientific studies. This situation increases the number of studies using mixed methods ([Zhou & Wu, 2022](#)). In this way, the opinion that the research results are more reliable and generalizable is gaining popularity. [Man et al. \(2019\)](#) emphasize that the mixed use of qualitative and quantitative research is accepted as an important indicator of transparency. It is also recognized that it is difficult to differentiate the data collection method in many studies. In this study, it offers an alternative solution to ensure the reliability and generalizability of the data in some studies that are difficult to use. This new perspective, which offers an important alternative in mixed-type research and is used for the first time, can be applied in studies in which qualitative research methods are used in social sciences. Consistency between the results can be expected by analyzing the data obtained with a single research method and the mixed analysis method. In particular, the use of MAXQDA, which is a qualitative analysis program, enables analyses suitable for qualitative and quantitative research methods and makes significant contributions to the reliability and generalizability of research results ([Azzopardi & Nash, 2016](#); [Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019](#)). Developments in research methods and possible future trends provide indications that the mixed analysis method in this study will become widespread in the future.

Theoretical implications

The theoretical background on tourist complaints contains very strong data. In the literature, it is seen that complaints against tourism supply providers are increasing day by day. The importance of these studies is increasing day by day, especially since the issues that are directly related to marketing, such as image, satisfaction and quality, are provided by the tourists who are their direct addressees ([Kim & Lynn, 2007](#); [Berry, Tanford, Montgomery, & Green, 2013](#)). In this context, [Kim and Lehto \(2012\)](#) show that there may be a negative interaction between satisfaction and tourist complaints. All of the complaints

identified as a result of this study are related to basic and complementary services that may negatively affect the satisfaction level of the guests. In this context, it can be said that the study produces results similar to those in the literature in this aspect.

The theoretical background on the subject states that customer complaints will increase more and more. Because, thanks to the developing WEB 2 technologies, people become producers in social networks (Şengel, 2014). Thus, consumers criticize the goods or services they are not satisfied with on these platforms and create complaints (Liu & Li, 2019). The current conjuncture seems to encourage producers to express their negative experiences (Au, Buhalis, & Law, 2009). Lee and Hu (2004) consider this situation to be one of the most important factors in technology-based marketing activities in the literature. It can be said that such online complaint sites have an important place in e-marketing activities, which are becoming increasingly important in tourism.

In the literature, there are many studies on tourist complaints made on international online platforms. It is known that studies on this subject focus on TripAdvisor, a complaint platform (Vásquez, 2011; Fernandes & Fernandes, 2017; Khorsand, Rafiee, & Kayvanfar, 2020). Unlike TripAdvisor, it is known that there are studies about platforms such as booking.com (Borges-Tiago, Arruda, Tiago, & Rita, 2021) and expedia (Evans, 2009) where hotel reservations are made and tourist complaints are made. In recent years, the number of studies on the Airbnb platform working in a similar format has been increasing (Alrawadih Demirdelen, Dinçer, & Dincer, 2022). This study on the "Otelpuan" platform contributes to the literature on international tourist complaints from a domestic tourist perspective.

Practical implications

Determination of tourist complaints has become one of the most important phenomena in modern tourism movements. Because the competitive conditions in the tourism industry are challenging at both macro and micro levels, it becomes difficult to get a share of the market. By analyzing tourist complaints, businesses or destinations have the chance to build a production process that will provide customer satisfaction by identifying the wishes and expectations of the guests (Lee et al., 2011a, 2011b). Kozak and Tasci (2006) report that practices based on these tourist complaints can be an important key to creating loyal customers. These studies can be a source for the development of the concept of service quality. Because the direction or severity of customer comments is shaped according to the quality of the service received. The results of this study also support this view (Robledo, 2001; Hsu, Kang, & Lam, 2006). In this study, the emergence of complaints such as physical facilities, staff, ambience, price/performance, discrimination, activity, food that affect the service quality and shape the expectations of the guests also supports this situation.

Touristic destinations or businesses provide services at the national level as well as at the international level. It can be said that academic studies on tourist complaints, which are generally the subject of research at the national level, are limited. For this reason, this research presents a projection for businesses and destinations that want to get a share of the domestic tourist market to get a share in the tourism market at a national level, as tourist complaints at the national level reveal. This makes important contributions to the development of a strong image for businesses and destinations. Beerli and Martín (2004) make similar observations in their study. It provides further evidence of destination or business image as it presents direct consumer opinions (Liu & Li, 2019). The study reveals practical results for tourists, too. The results of the research reveal the difference between the expectations of tourists in the regions subject to the study and the reality of destinations or businesses. In this case, it can affect future travel and vacation plans positively or negatively (Hannigan, 1980). It reveals how important the reflection of this fact, which Hannigan discussed more than 40 years ago, to today's world can be. Because the virtual environments that emerged as a result of the developments led by technology cause the difference between tourist expectations and the reality of touristic products to deepen. In

addition, the increase in the number of scientific studies on the subject day by day also supports this situation. One of the suggestions to be made for tourism professional businesses is that there should be different applicable plans or policies against global-scale crises. As a matter of fact, this research setup deliberately does not include the data of the pandemic period in the study, but the literature on the subject reveals that customer complaints or expectations differ in global crisis situations such as pandemics (Berry, Danaher, Aksoy, & Keiningham, 2020; Şengel et al., 2020; Ongsakul, Kajla, Raj, Khoa, & Ahmed, 2022).

It is clear that sites such as “Otelpuan” can make or break a business depending on the type of comments being left on the platform. As a social space for sharing of ideas, it is conducive to direct and honest assessments of hotel quality. Thus, the Otelpuan site has functional value, as the comments that tourists make on such sites are vital to the robustness of the industry. Comments made on a website might just be the first contact between any business, tourism-related or otherwise and a potential customer. Thus, businesses would do well to advertise and promote their services through these sites, where feedback of all kinds may be used in the interest of bettering said services. Businesses that refuse to correct themselves in the face of negative comments will be unable to continue their activities in a competitive environment. On the other hand, businesses that take these comments to heart and make a genuine effort to correct relevant issues will be able to survive in the competitive environment and ensure the satisfaction of their customers.

This study is important in terms of determining the patterns or tendencies of previous complaints, researching the main causes behind certain complaints, producing innovative solutions based on findings and providing suggestions to the stakeholders on the subject.

Limitations and future studies

This study was carried out only to determine the complaints made by domestic tourists to hotels in a region in Turkey. The lack of such studies, especially at the local level, reveals the importance of this study. However, the fact that the study focused on only one region raises concerns about the generalizability of the study results. In future studies, tourist complaints can be detected by making use of national-level complaint platforms used in other countries. Studies in which opinions are obtained with the help of questionnaire, which is a quantitative research method and data collection tool, can be carried out in the region that is the subject of this study. Thus, it can be tested whether the themes obtained because of qualitative research have high frequency as a result of quantitative research. Also, the pandemic period was disabled in this study. By including the pandemic period in future research, the differentiation in complaints in global crisis situations can be monitored.

Note

1. MAXQDA works with a vast range of data formats. Text documents, Excel tables, PDFs, images, website data, audio or video recordings, SPSS files, bibliographic records, focus group discussions, and YouTube comments can be analysed via MAXQDA.

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Further reading

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