



The Influence of Google Score Ratings and Reviews on Vietnamese Consumers' Online Hotel Booking Decision: A Case Study of Five-star Hotels in Vietnam

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Abstract

This study investigates whether Google score ratings and Google reviews on four hotel characteristics, namely, Facilities, Location, Staff, and Services, influence Vietnamese consumers' online booking decisions for the 5-star hotels in Vietnam. Samples were Vietnamese consumers in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of Vietnam who booked the 5-star hotel online after reading Google score ratings and reviews. Online surveys were conducted with 300 participants using the self-administered questionnaire. Multiple Regression Analysis was undertaken to determine the impact of Google score ratings and reviews on Vietnamese consumers' hotel booking decisions. The results from the analysis revealed that both Google score ratings and reviews on four hotel characteristics significantly influenced Vietnamese consumers' online booking decisions. Interestingly, Google reviews on hotel services had the highest impact, followed by reviews on location, staff, and facilities.

Keywords: *Google reviews, Google score ratings, Vietnamese consumers, Five-star hotel, Purchasing Decision*

1. Introduction

As a developing country in Southeast Asia, Vietnam has developed significantly in all fields of economy, culture, and education in recent years. With opening policies from the government, the country attracts significant investment from foreign companies and multinational corporations. In 2007, Vietnam became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which has supported all aspects of Vietnam's economic development since then. Besides the development of other fields, Vietnam also possesses a traditional culture and natural ecosystem, which is being explored for tourism purposes, with a 3,260-kilometers length of coastline from the north to the south, together with a rich tropical rain forest system. Therefore, Vietnam has become a country with tourism potential, and it has attracted investment from foreign companies. The tourist industry has concentrated on building restaurants, hotels, and tours. According to the report of the Vietnam Tourism Administration at the beginning of the year 2019, for the whole year of 2018, Vietnam welcomed 15,497,791 visitors, an increase of 19.9% compared to 2017 (Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism, 2019). Also, the standard of living of Vietnamese people has increased, they tend to spend their leisure time and money on traveling. As a result, the hospitality industry received attention from foreign partners and sources that have been supported by practitioners, government agencies in Vietnam. That is the reason why investors have built five-star hotels in famous tourist destinations throughout the whole country. In Ha Noi, Da Nang City, and Ho Chi Minh City, hotel chains owned by multinational corporations or jointly owned by Vietnamese partners at the beginning of the establishment include Sheraton, Hilton, Nikko, InterContinental, Grand Plaza, and Metropole in recent decades, which has caused a high competition in the hotel market. In the future, it is forecasted that the competition in this field will become more and more intense. Thus, in this situation, these hotels are attempting to build their brand image through high ratings and positive reviews in the online environment, which Google is an effective tool. The tourists are increasingly surfing the internet to seek the information they want, and it becomes extremely helpful in their travel planning. So far, the majority of people use Google to enquire about travel and hotel-related information. Today, the consumers often obtain more information and recommendations from role models such as influencers and their friends through word of mouth or posts and refer to the media when making their decisions on which tourist destinations or hotels for their journeys.

In this digital age, when it's time for international tourists to plan their trip, they increasingly rely on the aggregated opinions of online peers. Contributions made by users on technological platforms facilitate the interaction between like-minded community members who share shopping interests, thus facilitating the decision-making process (Amblee & Bui, 2011). Before consumers make a purchase on an e-commerce website, they are accustomed to using online reviews as basic information to decide whether they should make their purchase. After the consumers buy the particular product or service, they are likely to post their comments on the commodity on the e-commerce sites (Mo, Li & Fan 2015). Online ratings and reviews have become one of the most trusted sources for consumers involving in online purchase decision-making. Besides recommendations from friends and family, consumers' ratings and reviews, for almost a decade, have been the second most-trusted source of brand information (The Nielsen Company, 2012). As we are immersing in the digital marketing era, most hotels and resorts are utilizing digital platforms to build their brand image. Google is one of the fastest ways as mentioned above to enhance their image. It is becoming increasingly common for customers who previously used/ booked their services to express their feelings as well as to present their bad/ good experiences by giving ratings or reviews via those digital platforms (Bui & Jolliffe, 2011; Das, 2019; Chaffey, 2020).

Marketers also notice the impact of ratings and reviews, acting as electronic word of mouth. In other words, potential customers of the hotels and resorts tend to receive and read various brand or product information from online ratings and reviews. The researchers on the hospitality industry in the Vietnam market are still rare or unofficial. Accordingly, there is still a limited understanding of the interaction between the influence of ratings and reviews on Vietnamese consumers' online booking decisions. Based on this aforementioned background information, this study aims to answer the following two main research questions:

RQ #1: Do Google reviews on hotel characteristics influence Vietnamese consumers' online five-star hotel booking decisions?

RQ #2: Do Google score ratings influence Vietnamese consumers' online five-star hotel booking decisions?

2. Objectives

This study was conducted to understand Vietnamese consumers' hotel booking decisions through the internet. The objectives of this study are listed as follows.

1) To examine whether Google reviews on hotel characteristics influence Vietnamese consumers' online five-star hotel booking decisions.

2) To examine whether Google score ratings influence Vietnamese consumers' online five-star hotel booking decisions.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Online Ratings and Reviews as a Type of Electric Word of Mouth (eWOM):

Traditional "word-of-mouth" (WOM) is defined as "informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers" (Westbrook, 1987) or "an oral form of interpersonal non-commercial communication among acquaintances" (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). Besides, over several decades, Arndt (1967) together with (Westbrook, 1987) also agreed that WOM has become a form of informal interpersonal communication, between non-commercial contributors and real-life recipients about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of goods and services. Researchers in the modern era also make new comments about WOM that WOM is without third-party handling, individuals' processing, and transmitting information on a particular product, brand, manufacturer, or seller. Any two-way interactive communication activity may be reminiscent of any company or individual information being targeted, leading the viewer to acquire information, alter behaviors, and even influence purchasing behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2012). For the past decade, WOM is

considered to have had a strong impact on consumer decision-making. People often consider reviews, opinions, and advice from their friends, relatives, or someone who has previously experienced or a traditional travel agency before making a travel plan for themselves or their family (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto & Buultjens, 2009).

Historically, electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) has been viewed as any positive or negative comment about a product or business made accessible to numerous people and/or organizations and distributed across the internet by potential, current or former customers (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). eWOM has a close relationship with user-generated content (UGC) (Rodgers & Wang, 2011), UGC becomes eWOM when people share content with the online branding community (OBC). Marketers try to apply eWOM to their communications processes and engage consumers UGC (Rodgers & Wang, 2011) because eWOM has a strong influence on consumers' buying decisions.

eWOM communication is defined based on traditional WOM communication, therefore, it has many common points, but they differ in some respects. If the traditional WOM was the spread of messages only between individuals, since the advent of the internet, messages have become viral to reach more people if the message was deemed convincing enough or funny (Estrella-Ramón & Ellis-Chadwick, 2017). Many studies also showed that, with eWOM, messages expand and spread rapidly because messages are exchanged multidimensional in asynchronous mode (Hung & Li, 2007). Content is discussed by users on various electronic technologies such as forums, newsgroups, blogs, review sites, and social networking sites, which is the reason why traditional WOM became eWOM in the modern era. Also, the comparison between traditional WOM and eWOM can be seen that the messages spread in the traditional way disappear after speaking but the messages propagated by eWOM are likely to persist for a while.

Online consumer ratings and reviews as a form of eWOM experienced massive growth from the early millennium years (Brown, Broderick & Lee, 2007). They provide customer viewpoint, product details, and recommendations (Lee, Park & Han, 2008) and are one of the most reliable sources of information for choosing holiday destinations (Murphy, Mascardo & Benckendorff, 2007), and obtain trustworthy and considered credible information, compared with the information provided by the marketers that might be viewed with skepticism and possible disbelief (Park & Nicolau, 2015).

Online customer reviews (OCR) become an important tool for potential customers before they make an online purchase decision. In the online shopping environment, the consumers are not able to directly experience and evaluate the products, so they often rely on reviews and recommendations from previous buyers, intending to minimize the risks of product quality and the seller's dishonesty (Yayli & Bayram, 2009). The Opinion Research Corporation agreed with this view and assessed that OCR has been playing an increasingly important role in consumers' buying decisions, up to 61% of the respondents in their research said they consult online reviews before buying a new product or service.

3.2 Positive and Negative Online Reviews

3.2.1 Positive Online Reviews

Online reviews have a positive and important effect on the intentions of booking hotels. It has been observed that the more positive the reviews, the more likely they would be to affect buyers on online hotel bookings (Bulchand-Gidumal, Melián-González & Lopez-Valcarcel, 2013). Increases in positive feedbacks tend to lead to more positive consumer attitudes whereas negative feedbacks have the opposite effect (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). An earlier study by Park, Lee and Han (2007) had also found that the quality of the reviews increases consumers buying intention.

3.2.2 Negative Online Reviews

Negative reviews on a mass level cause negative attitudes towards hotel bookings. However, a single negative comment does not impact the booking intention of the customers (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). It has been observed that individuals are more likely to be affected by negative information relative to positive information (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel & Chowdury, 2009).

Online reviews have a positive and important effect on the intentions of booking hotels. The more positive the reviews, the more likely they would affect buyers on online hotel bookings (Bulchand-Gidumal et al., 2013). Bulchand-Gidumal and other (2013) found that, when compared with negative reviews,

positive reviews of more than 16,680 hotels in 249 tourist destinations were accounted for 70% of the total reviews on TripAdvisor, showing that online reviews are important in the hospitality industry, and are managed as a strategic communication channel as the hotel managers try to increase the rate of positive reviews. The more positive the feedbacks tend to be, the more positive the consumer's attitude, whereas the negative one has the opposite effect (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). Another study by Park and other (2007) found that the quality of the reviews increases consumers' buying intention.

3.3 Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

This paper utilizes the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to explain this phenomenon. The UGT provides a framework for understanding when and how individual media consumers become more or less active and the consequences of that increased or decreased involvement (Reichard & Lynn, 2018). UGT is a model that takes into consideration the importance of the audience. A theory that is based on the assumption that media consumers are active must delineate what it means by "the active audience" (Reichard & Lynn, 2018). The following assumptions from the UGT were applied to support the idea in this study. Firstly, the audience is active, and his/her media use is goal-oriented. Secondly, people have enough self-awareness of their media use, interests, and motives to be able to provide the researchers with an accurate picture of that use. Thirdly, value judgments of media content can only be assessed by the audience.

3.4 Source Credibility

Online reviews allow users to access detailed information with a high degree of trustworthiness and credibility, compared with information provided by advertisers (Park & Nicolau, 2015). With the same point of view, Kusumasondjaja, Shanka and Marchegiani (2012) also agreed that the reviews are more trustworthy and credible than commercial sources or intermediaries.

Previous studies on the trustworthiness of social media impacting users seeking travel information include that of Fotis, Buhalis and Rossides (2012). In their report, reviews are ordered in the third position in the list of most trustworthy sources, following relatives and friends. Specifically, the list of the trustworthy sources was ranked in order from high to low as follows: relatives, friends, reviews from other travelers on social media, official travel websites, travel companies, and advertisements on TV, radio, newspapers. As the source of information the users reach has been enormous, when travelers receive a variety of contents about their desired location, they build their trust in those contents and expect to experience similarly with travelers who wrote previous reviews (Narangajavana, Fiol, Tena, Artola & García, 2017).

Customers agree that WOM contact knowledge is more credible to minimize the risk of product purchases because people's real-life experience without a commercial intent is more convincing than media ads (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991). Credibility is interlinked with trustworthiness and is also a major factor in planning and decision-making (Dusíková, 2018). All contents created by the internet users are considered to be highly credible among travelers (Llodra-Riera, Martínez-Ruiz, Jiménez-Zarco & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2015). Travelers do not have any profit purpose while sharing their reviews (Chung & Buhalis, 2008), and most of them are anonymous so their reviews would be more objective and highly reliable. Thus, online reviews become a vital reference for travelers to reserve hotels online (Yu, Guo, Zhang & Zhao, 2016). Besides, the credibility of user-generated content is determined by prior experiences of the travelers, knowledge, and the author of the reviews. The travelers need to perceive high-quality content since it is beneficial to them (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

A review or post that is considered credible had significant impacts on travelers' decision-making process and their expectations are higher (Narangajavana et al., 2017).

3.5 Research Hypotheses

Score ratings and reviews on Google are considered customer-to-customer (C2C) review systems. There were three types of reviews in this system: positive, moderate, and negative. This study examined the numbers of star ratings and types of reviews that belong to the hotel category on how Google influences the booking behavior of Vietnamese consumers. There are several previous studies on the influence of ratings

and reviews on customer behavior in e-commerce websites of Chinese (Mo et al., 2015) and hotel booking consideration (Gavilan, Avello & Martinez-Navarro, 2018). To fill the research gap in the hotel area, this study proposes the following research hypotheses:

HP#1: Google reviews on hotel characteristics have an effect on Vietnamese consumers' online hotel booking decisions.

HP#1.1: Google reviews on "Facilities of the hotel" have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.

HP#1.2: Google reviews on "Location of the hotel" have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.

HP#1.3: Google reviews on "Staff of the hotel" have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.

HP#1.4: Google reviews on "Services of the hotel" have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.

Reputation is one of the company's intangible brand assets and is also a factor that attracts attention from the consumers. Star ratings help increase customer confidence in each purchase decision (Mo et al., 2015). The second hypothesis related to star ratings was proposed as follows:

HP#2: Google score ratings have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.

3.6 Methodology

3.6.1 Research design, Population, and Sample

This research was done by a quantitative approach method through two steps of preliminary research and official research. After researching and deducing from the previous research and fundamental models about the variables that affect consumers' buying decisions, a conceptual framework and research hypotheses were formed.

The survey was created using Google Forms, then and was sent directly to the samples via email, Facebook Messenger, online Forum, and Facebook Groups. The target population of this study was Vietnamese citizens aged over 25 years who have booked a room at any five-star hotel at least once during the past two years. A combination of the stratified and purposeful sampling technique was used, and to ensure a higher representation for the samples, the samples were also selected based on income. Due to limited time and cost and the COVID-19 pandemic during the data collection, the questionnaires were sent to the respondents in the North, Central, and South of Vietnam where the majority of five-star hotels are located.

3.6.2. Research Measurement

The questionnaire was originally designed in the English language and reviewed by experts. Then, to reach Vietnamese respondents, the questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese. After that, it was sent out to three bilingual experts who are working in the hospitality and communications industry in Vietnam to ensure that it is guaranteed the validity of the content and feasibility of the questionnaire.

Based on the results obtained from a pilot pre-test with 30 respondents, the reliability of the measurement scales through Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were tested and necessary adjustments of the scales and questionnaire items were made before its official use for data collection. Observed indicators with low Cronbach's Alpha reliability were eliminated from the final version of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was composed of five sections as follows:

1) Screening questions

The screening questions were composed of three questions regarding past experiences of online hotel booking and the name of the hotel they booked. These questions help classify the respondents to

survey questions. If they do not pass the screening questions, the respondents were deemed not qualified to answer the proceeding questions in the questionnaire.

2) Demographic data

Demographic questions in this study were aimed at identifying the characteristics of the respondents in terms of age, education, gender, and income.

3) Google reviews

The measurement of the first independent variable (IV1), Google reviews, including four hotel characteristics in the review content: 1) Facilities (FA), 2) Location (LO), 3) Staff (ST), and 4) Services (SV). For the questions on each hotel characteristics, the respondents were given answer choices of a 5-point rating scale (1 = Very negative, 2 = Negative, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Positive, and 5 = Very positive).

4) Google score ratings

The measurement of the second independent variable (IV2), Google score ratings, consists of four questions related to the five-star hotel that the respondents answered in the screening question based on the 5-point rating scales, ranging from 1 to 5 (1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree).

5) Consumers' Online Hotel Booking Decision

The dependent variable (DV), Vietnamese consumers' online hotel booking decision, was measured with four questions asking the respondents to select answers based on the 5-point rating scales (1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree).

3.6.3 Data Analysis

Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was utilized to represent the relationship between two or more independent variables and one quantitative dependent variable (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2011). To test the proposed causal relationship between two independent variables and one dependent variable, the MLR model was run and tested at the 5% significance level. The study performed multiple regression according to the Enter method: all variables were included at one time and the related statistical results were considered.

The regression results are used to test the assumptions about the multicollinearity phenomenon (correlation between independent variables) through tolerance value or VIF (Variance Inflation Factor). The coefficient of VIF or Tolerance is used to observe if there is a multi-collinearity phenomenon (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2011). It also determines the influence of factors affecting consumers' hotel booking decisions through the coefficient β . The larger β , the greater the influence on booking decisions.

3.6.4 Validity of the Study

This study examines the validity of measurement in the questionnaire by using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) developed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977). Each item in the questionnaire had an IOC score of greater than 0.5. The IOC for the entire questionnaire was 0.671 (greater than 0.5). As a result, there were no items in the questionnaire that need to be adjusted or removed. Since the content of this questionnaire had been validated, the online survey was conducted among the samples.

3.6.5 Reliability of the Study

The pilot pre-test results showed that the reliability of the questionnaire based on the criteria set forth previously was acceptable (alpha greater or equal to 0.7), and it was transformed into an official questionnaire for the actual study.

Table 1 Results of alpha reliability tests

Coding	Variables	Round 1		Round 2	
		Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
OR	Online Reviews	0.860	18	0.895	15
- FA	- Facilities	0.690	6	0.817	4
- LO	- Location	0.871	4	0.871	4
- ST	- Staff	0.877	3	0.877	3
- SV	- Services	0.772	5	0.853	4
RA	Score Ratings	0.882	4	0.882	4
BD	Booking Decision	0.865	4	0.865	4

Base on Table 1, in the first round of the reliability test, all Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the scales are 0.69 or higher. However, the corrected Item-Total Correlation Coefficients of FA5, FA6, and SV2 are lower than 0.4. Therefore, they need to be removed and retested. After removing those items, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of each scale is higher than 0.69. Moreover, all corrected item-total correlation of these items is higher than 0.4. Therefore, the scales are reliable for the actual study.

After two rounds of reliability tests, the questionnaire was revised by eliminating three indicators from the questionnaire – “swimming pool” (FA5), of which alpha is 0.093, and “gym equipment/fitness (FA6), of which alpha is 0.292, in the Facilities dimension (FA), and “Free Breakfast” (SV2), of which alpha is -0.006 in the “Services” dimension (SV). Table 2 shows the adjusted codebook after eliminating these indicators.

Table 2 Adjusted codebook after eliminating variables

Description	Coding	Indicators
Google Reviews on “Facilities of Hotel”	FA1	Design and style
	FA2	Rooms
	FA3	Beds
	FA4	Bathrooms
Google Reviews on hotel characteristics	LO1	The environment and the surrounding landscape
	LO2	Distance from the hotel to the town center
	LO3	The safety and security
	LO4	Taking taxi/ parking available for private car
Google Reviews on “Staff of Hotel”	ST1	The staff's service mind
	ST2	Staff's problem-solving
	ST3	Staff's physical appearance
Google Reviews on “Services of Hotel”	SV1	Hotel dining and dinner
	SV3	The spa/health service
	SV4	Hotels' emergency helps
	SV5	Babysitting/ child care services
	RA1	The Google score ratings of the hotel I booked reflects exactly what I have experienced at that hotel.
Google score ratings	RA2	The Google score ratings of the hotel help me to believe in the quality of the hotel.
	RA3	The Google score ratings of the hotel I booked are reliable.
	RA4	The number of stars the hotel received on Google score ratings is not enough to reflect its quality.

Description	Coding	Indicators
Vietnamese Consumers' Online Hotel Booking Decision	BD1	I definitely booked the hotel after reading its Google reviews.
	BD2	I decided to book the hotel after reading its Google reviews.
	BD3	I booked a hotel because it has a high rating score on Google score ratings.
	BD4	I did not make a reservation at the hotel that has the low Google score ratings.

4. Results

4.1 Results of Descriptive Statistics on Survey Respondents

Data were obtained via an online survey from October 1-31, 2020. More than 300 respondents answered the questionnaires, however, invalid questionnaires were filtered out. The remaining data from 300 questionnaires were subjected to reliability testing and statistical analysis.

Table 3 Demographic Information

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Age	22-30 years old	69	23.0
	31-40 years old	103	34.3
	41-50 years old	95	31.7
	Over 50 years old	33	11.0
	Total	300	100.0
Gender	Male	174	58.0
	Female	126	42.0
	Total	300	100.0
Educational level	Bachelor's Degree	259	86.3
	Master's Degree	36	12.0
	Doctoral Degree	5	1.7
	Total	300	100.0
Occupation	Government Officer	43	14.3
	Small Business Owner	83	27.7
	Large Business Owner	84	28.0
	Corporate Employee	49	16.3
	Artist/ Designer/ Working in Creative field	22	7.3
	Others	19	6.3
	Total	300	100.0
Monthly income	10,000,000 – 18,000,000VND	43	14.3
	18,000,001 – 32,000,000VND	92	30.7
	32,000,001 – 52,000,000VND	115	38.3
	52,000,001- 80,000,000VND	36	12.0
	Over 80,000,000VND	14	4.7
Total	300	100.0	

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of the respondents based on their demographic characteristics. For gender, there are a higher percentage of male (58%) than female (42%) respondents. In terms of age, the respondents' age range is from 22 to 50 years. The majority of the respondents are 31 - 40 years old (34.3%), followed by 41 - 50 years old (31.7%), 22 - 30 years old (23.0%), and over 50-year-old (11%), respectively.

In terms of educational level, most respondents in this study are Bachelor's degree holders (86.3%), followed by Master's degree holders (12%) and Doctoral degree holders (1.7%).

For occupations, the majority of the respondents are large business owners (28.6%), followed by small business owners (27.7%), corporate employees (16.3%), government officers (14.3%), artists/designers/ working in the Creative field (7.3%), and others (6.3%), respectively.

In terms of monthly income, the majority of the respondents have monthly incomes from 32,000,001 to 52,000,000VND (38.3%), followed by the range of 18,000,001 to 32,000,000VND (30.7%), 10,000,000 to 18,000,000VND (14.3%), 52,000,001 to 80,000,000VND (12%), and over 80,000,000VND (4.7%), respectively.

4.2 Results of Descriptive Statistics on Examined Variables

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Reliability Test of Examined Variables

Scales	Mean	S.D.	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Google reviews on hotel characteristics				
Facilities (FA)	3.917	0.4989	4	0.851
Location (LO)	3.382	0.5653	4	0.853
Staff (ST)	3.770	0.5621	3	0.793
Services (SV)	4.043	0.5626	4	0.836
Google Score Ratings (RA)	3.932	0.5090	4	0.815
Booking Decision (BD)	3.982	0.5744	4	0.810

Based on the above table, it was found that the observed variables' mean values are above 3.0, and the standard deviation is less than 1.0. Besides, all scales have Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of over 0.7 and can be considered that the data is reliable (George & Mallery, 2003). These scales are appropriate for this study. It proved that the scales are reliable and can be used in the next steps.

Among six predictors, "Services" has the highest mean (SV = 4.043 between positive to very positive), followed by Booking Decision (BD = 3.982 between neutral and agree), Hotel Score Ratings on Google (RA = 3.932 between neutral to positive), Facilities (FA = 3.917 between neutral to positive), Staff (ST = 3.770 between neutral to positive), and Location (LO = 3.382 between neutral to positive), respectively.

4.3 Results of Hypothesis Testing

4.3.1 Correlation analysis

Table 5 Correlations between Variables

		FA	LO	ST	SV	RA	BD
Reviews on Facilities (FA)	Pearson Correlation	1	.073	.210**	.244**	.361**	.387**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.207	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Interpretation		+	+	+	+	+
Reviews on Location (LO)	Pearson Correlation	.073	1	.166**	.163**	.116*	.356**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.207		.004	.005	.045	.000
	Interpretation	+		+	+	+	+
Reviews on Staff (ST)	Pearson Correlation	.210**	.166**	1	.261**	.344**	.435**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004		.000	.000	.000
	Interpretation	+	+		+	+	+
Reviews on Services (SV)	Pearson Correlation	.244**	.163**	.261**	1	.355**	.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.005	.000		.000	.000
	Interpretation	+	+	+		+	+
Score ratings (RA)	Pearson Correlation	.361**	.116*	.344**	.355**	1	.467**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.045	.000	.000		.000

		FA	LO	ST	SV	RA	BD
Interpretation		+	+	+	+		+
Booking decision (BD)	Pearson Correlation	.387**	.356**	.435**	.718**	.467**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	Interpretation	+	+	+	+	+	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

+ = Positive correlation

- = Negative correlation

It can be seen from Table 5 that the Pearson r coefficient was positive with the correlation of 2 independent variables (Google reviews and Google score ratings) and one dependent variable (BD), which means that as each independent variable increases, so does the dependent variable (BD). Secondly, Pearson's correlation level between predictors and dependent variable (BD) ranged from $0.3 < r < 0.5$ (Cohen, 1988). It is shown that they are significantly positively correlated. It can be seen that the Sig. 2-tailed between each independent and dependent variable is 0.000 (p is less than 0.05), which means that the correlation results are statistically significant at the 5% level. Besides, it meets the required conditions to make the Multiple Regression analysis.

4.3.2 Regression analysis

Table 6 Regression analysis results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
(Constant)	-.977	.223		-4.383	.000			
1	FA	.176	.042	.153	4.199	.000	.849	1.178
	LO	.214	.035	.210	6.135	.000	.956	1.046
	ST	.183	.037	.179	4.905	.000	.843	1.187
	SV	.565	.038	.554	15.045	.000	.830	1.205
	RA	.145	.044	.129	3.319	.001	.745	1.342

Adjusted R^2 : 0.664

Durbin-Watson: 1.794

ANOVA^a (sig.): 0.000

Dependent Variable: Booking Decision (BD)

From Table 6, the adjusted R^2 (Adjusted R-square) is 0.664 ($p < 0.001$). This statistic means that 66.4% of the booking decision (BD) change can be explained by five independent, conditional-responsive variables. In this test, the Durbin-Watson coefficient is 1.794, which is in the acceptance zone. Therefore, there is no relationship between the residuals.

ANOVA sig (F) = 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a linear relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable; that is, the independent variables can explain the dependent variable (BD) variation.

The VIF magnification coefficients of FA, LO, ST, SV, and RA, are between 1 and 10, indicating that the multicollinearity phenomenon does not occur (Trong & Chu, 2008). Therefore, the relationship between the independent variables does not affect the multiple linear regression model's interpretations.

With all results, it can be seen that the regression model is consistent and statistically significant. A regression model with unstandardized beta coefficients (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2006) is as follows;

$$BD = -0.977 + 0.176 FA + 0.214 LO + 0.183 ST + 0.565 SV + 0.145 RA + \varepsilon$$

4.4 Hypothesis Testing Results

Based on the above equation, the results of hypothesis testing can be inferred below.

Table 7 Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Description	Result
HP#1	Google reviews on hotel characteristics have an effect on Vietnamese consumers' online hotel booking decisions.	Accepted
HP#1.1	Google reviews on "Facilities of hotels" have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.	Accepted
HP#1.2	Google reviews on "Location of hotels" have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.	Accepted
HP#1.3	Google reviews on "Staff of hotels" have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.	Accepted
HP#1.4	Google reviews on "Services of hotels" have an effect on Vietnamese Consumers' online hotel booking decisions.	Accepted
HP#2	Google score ratings have an effect on Vietnamese consumers' online hotel booking decision	Accepted

5. Discussions

5.1 Discussions Based on The Uses and Gratification Theory

According to the Uses of Gratification Theory (UGT), individuals use media for four basic purposes; surveillance, personal identity, personal relationships, and diversion. With the support of modern technology devices, consumers can access communication and information more easily, so they tend to look for useful and objective information that suits their needs and their preferences. They also tend to travel freely and are willing to plan their travels ahead, thus renting a hotel room during their travels is inevitable. Also, to avoid the risks in the booking process, the consumers are likely to carefully consider previous hotel guests' reviews. The reviews shared on the Google platform are those that meet the information needs of Vietnamese consumers. Thus, the findings of this study reinforced the core assumption of the UGT by showing that the consumers take an active role as media users in terms of information seeking.

5.2 Discussions Based on Source Credibility

Based on the theory regarding source credibility, three characteristics of sources -- physical attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise - influence persuasive communication (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). Potential consumers generally trust product reviews more than the commercial information given by the product producers or brands. Relatives, friends, and other individuals with relevant expertise and/or expert communicators are considered trustworthy, product reviews by these sources become trustful information for the consumers when making purchase decisions. As a consequence, the hotels take advantage of positive customer reviews to convey to their target audience, what they desire their customers to have, and their first impression of their hotel via social media. It can be seen as a form of enhancing hotel branding through the customers' reviews.

5.3 Discussions Based on the Past Studies

All the proposed research hypotheses were supported by the findings of this study, which confirmed the hotels' characteristics on Google Reviews (namely Facilities, Location, Staff, and Service), and the hotels' Google score ratings influence Vietnamese consumers' decisions on 5-star hotel bookings. Research concerning the influencing factors on the booking decision of Vietnamese consumers was shown to be positive, as it was observed that the beta coefficients of the independent variables in the regression equation had values greater than 0. Thus, when these factors increase, the Vietnamese consumers' booking decisions also show an increase. Experimental research has provided evidence of the impact of Google reviews on the consumers' decisions (Gavilan et al., 2018; Mo et al., 2015; Danish, Hafeez, Ali, Shahid & Nadeem, 2019).

The results of this study are consistent with some previous studies. The study of general consumer online shopping behavior by Mo et al (2015) found that positive reviews have a positive effect whereas neutral reviews have no impact and negative reviews have a negative impact on the purchasing behavior of the consumers. However, in the hospitality sector, the findings of this study do not only support another finding by Danish et al (2019) that positive online reviews influence consumer booking intentions but also reject the findings that negative online reviews affect the consumers' decisions. Another study by Gavilan et al (2018) concluded that web users trust lower numeral ratings than higher ratings, and for the hotel industry, web users tend to choose hotels with better ratings.

In the above studies, reviews and ratings are one of the factors in their conceptual models and the researchers tend to consider whether or not they have an impact on consumer decision making. This study, instead, considers reviews and ratings as the two main factors in the proposed research model, dimensions of those factors mentioned by the reviewer in their Google reviews influencing customers' booking decisions were further examined. Therefore, this study does not only strengthen previous research results but also reveals new findings regarding the content of the product reviews concerning the characteristics of the 5-star hotel that have a significant impact on Vietnamese consumers' hotel bookings. Those hotel reviews include facilities, service, location, and staff.

5.4 Discussions Based on Researcher's Expectations

The research results have addressed the two Research Questions:

RQ #1: Do Google reviews on hotel characteristics influence Vietnamese consumers' online five-star hotel booking decisions?

RQ #2: Do Google score ratings influence Vietnamese consumers' online five-star hotel booking decisions?

In addition to these questions, the findings also showed that the content of the consumer reviews regarding the four main hotel characteristics - Facilities, Location, Staff, and Service - significantly influenced Vietnamese consumers' booking decisions.

Surprisingly, Google reviews on Service and Staff are the two most influencing factors, demonstrating that Vietnamese consumers are more concerned with intangibles factors than tangible factors of the hotel. The findings are useful for hotel managers to pay more attention to investing in hotel-based human and services factors rather than over-focusing on building hotel facilities. The reason is that when visiting the hotel, the consumers would prefer to contact and communicate with humans (staff) first. It can also serve as a role of communication; interpersonal communication is considered to be more important than any other mass media. It is, therefore, an important observation that, in the current context, with the adoption of new digital technology and communication, the advent of social networking sites increases this impact. Google's role in the modern life of Vietnamese C2C activity is extremely important and also increases the interaction between users, creates a community, and forms new behaviors among Vietnamese consumers. It becomes a habit of potential customers to read Google hotel reviews and/or Google score ratings before making booking decisions in their travel plan.

6. Conclusions

In addition to positive and significant correlations between four hotel characteristics in Google reviews, Google score ratings, and Vietnamese booking hotel decisions, this study also successfully provides empirical evidence that Google score ratings and reviews have a significant impact on Vietnamese consumers' hotel booking decisions. It was found that Vietnamese consumers rely strongly on Google hotel reviews before deciding to book a 5-star hotel. The findings also reveal the varying influences of review contents regarding four hotel characteristics. In particular, the hotel characteristics that most affected Vietnamese consumers' booking decisions are services, followed by staff, location, and facilities of the hotel, respectively. Interestingly, it was found that Google score ratings are rated as the least important factor when compared with other factors.

This study has some limitations in terms of time and research subjects. The research time was limited as being part of a graduate study. As for research participants, it is challenging in reaching the participants who are busy and belong to the five-star class. Therefore, it was quite difficult for the researchers to access the participants in person. Another limitation is that the questionnaire was created using Google Forms so the researchers did not grasp the respondents' emotional nuances but depended entirely on the responses received.

The study has some implications for future studies. Firstly, the study could benefit from a more longitudinal run to reach a higher number of samples. Besides Google, several third-party websites provide consumer reviews and star ratings such as Booking.com, Agoda, and others. Future studies could focus on hotel ratings and reviews on these third-party websites and how they affect Vietnamese consumers' booking decisions. The tourism market in Vietnam is in exponential growth, and it is attracting not only domestic visitors but also millions of foreign tourists annually. Therefore, a similar study on foreigners' behaviors when they travel to Vietnam is also essential. Future studies should consider which hotel characteristics this group prefers when deciding to reserve a hotel in Vietnam. Social media is still an essential channel to implement hotel branding campaigns. Furthermore, a study on how Vietnamese consumers are affected in booking decisions when examining the reviews of 5-star hotels on social media such as Facebook should be investigated.

As for implications for communication practitioners and the hotel industry, this study will be a valuable reference source for them in their strategy development to win over Vietnamese consumers. Businesses need to be aware of the importance of Google reviews. It is necessary to develop a clear and smart strategy and utilize these approaches effectively for their marketing or brand communication. Based on the consumers' reviews, the communications administrators need to recognize and respond to the customers' problems, which helps prevent future communication crises for their businesses while improving the hotel service quality, which will, in turn, attract more consumers.

During the booking process, the consumers tend to consider hotel reviews from various trustworthy sources as a reference such as from their friends, relatives, or reviews on Google before making the final decision. Web-users are also very interested in the featured reviews, particularly on the reviews that show up first, then they will form an idea of the hotel, the quality of the hotel, and the expected experience. Therefore, a recommendation to Google is to prioritize full reviews that cover the full range of hotel properties that are allowed to be displayed first. It helps the web-users to quickly shape their impression of the hotel before making a booking decision. With modern engineering and technology, creating this attribute is easy.

Besides, it is necessary to understand which hotel characteristics in Google reviews affect Vietnamese consumers' booking decisions. From there, the communications administrators need to listen and respond to their customers' problems, which helps prevent future communication crises for their businesses while improving the hotel service quality, which will, in turn, attract more consumers.

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