



International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research

ISSN : 0972-7302

available at <http://www.serialsjournals.com>

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Volume 15 • Number 23 (Part 2) • 2017

A Content Analysis of Consumer Online Restaurant Comments in Delhi/NCR

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the content analysis of 3,358 online customer comments from the elite restaurant review websites namely Zomato, Trip Advisor and Dineout regarding three hundred fine dining and casual dining restaurants in Delhi/NCR. Analysis shows that favourable comments far outnumbered the negative reviews of the restaurant by consumers. This study's main purpose was to identify the factors that are most salient in a guest's evaluation of a fine dining and casual dining restaurants in Delhi/NCR. Although food is established as the king of the meal experience in most of the other studies, the starter also is cited as a highly memorable item in many online consumers' comments. A preference structure model emerges suggesting that customers consider food, service, ambience, price, menu, and decor when reflecting on their experiences. Contrary to expectations, the model remains relatively constant when tested in times of economic plenty and economic crisis. Depending on how management monitors and responds to them, comments on electronic guides and in social media can destroy a restaurant or help secure the business's longevity. Restaurant managers who respond successfully to comments in electronic forums can turn an unsatisfied customer to a loyal one. Thus this study provides insights for both restaurant owners as well as consumers on online consumer comments on varied attributes of restaurants.

Keywords: Online restaurant comments, fine dining, casual dining, Delhi/NCR.

1. INTRODUCTION

Restaurants operate in a competitive and dynamic environment (Berezina, Bilgihan, Cobanoglu, & Okumus, 2016). Restaurants employ different tools to assess and address customer satisfaction and behavioural

intentions, these employ tools can be a guest feedback form or it could be an online review of the restaurants on the websites. There are so many restaurants in Delhi/NCR region which get their reviews through online only. These restaurants aim for customer satisfaction by providing good meals and great service. Today's customers prefer using online product review forums to express their views about restaurants in an unbiased manner. It has proved to be a better and more influential source of information with a known percentage of 26 reporting to contribute these reviews, while 61% of the consumers find these valuable (Dellarocas, Gao, & Narayan, 2010) Social media has changed the consumers perception about the Restaurant quality how they evaluate the product of the restaurant and how the product feedback of the restaurant product. Facebook has become a brand of product information, as in 2012 one of every five consumers searched Facebook for some or other products and almost 42% consumers became friends with each other on this social networking site. This site shows all the details of the restaurant in terms of locations, menus and feedbacks. Social media has given a good platform to do the business (Salmalina, Hazarina, & Murphy, 2015). It was about time to realize the importance of social media for business. Many operators now realize the importance of social media while doing the business. These social media website helps them to give the product review accurately to the consumer so that they can choose the restaurants where they want to go.

Over the years, around millions of members are active on social media who shared 20 billion photos amongst all the people. It has been seen that around 60 million photos has been uploaded on an average basis daily and 1.6 billion likes per day. Perhaps few social networking sites are more popular such as Facebook and Instagram. These applications can be accessed by through smartphones anywhere and anytime. (Salmalina, Hazarina, & Murphy, 2015)

A study done intended to provide an environmental scanning of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) for restaurants in Delhi/NCR as a comprehensive 'health check', thereby providing a summary of the qualities that the restaurants possess and lack. Second, the findings will determine whether expensive restaurants generally perform a better job towards achieving customer satisfaction than inexpensive restaurants do (Murphy, Forrest, & Wotring, 1996). With the previous ways of reviewing like the Word of mouth has now been replaced by the online review section offered by numerous websites and social networking forums. It is now necessary to analyse how a population's post consumption online review for restaurants in reality affects the popularity of the restaurants. The consumer's post- consumption review is seen to have trend towards the less likely available or less successful products of the restaurant in the area. But at the same time, however an equal number of customers give a good review. This depends on a number of factors, but most important of them all is the popularity of the website, namely, Google local tour guide, Yelp, zomato.com, tripadvisor.com etc. A study done states that the focus is more on the 'consumer content contribution' rather than consumption decision they make themselves. They also defined propensity to review as the conditional probability that a "representative" consumer of a population will contribute a review for a product conditional on having purchased it. (Dellarocas, Gao, & Narayan, 2010)

Several studies have been conducted on customer reviews online in terms of more frequent factors like food, service ambience and also less frequent factors like waiter, his knowledge, the chef, etc., but failed to prioritize the factors in terms of expectation and satisfaction. In today's fast developing technology dependent society, the online review websites are both preferred and referred to more than word of mouth. It has indeed made restaurant choices an easier task even in an unknown city or even country. Hence, the

purpose of this study was to analyse the content of the reviews of three popular websites commonly used in India – www.zomato.com, www.yelp.com and www.tripadvisor.com, and also, analyse the trend of the Indian customer expectation and satisfaction levels of restaurants in Delhi NCR.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The importance of analysis of online review by restaurants: It is seen that even though hotels dedicate their efforts to assess and recover (if necessary) customer satisfaction, it is seen that there is a problem that guests' have an unwillingness to share their experiences and provide feedback to hotels. (K & et. al., 2015) It is also seen in previous research that the majority of customers do not act on the dissatisfactory service and are reluctant to complain. (K & et. al., 2015) Such reluctance to complain and provide feedback to hotels may take away an opportunity to perform service recovery and improve the service level in hotels. It is important to note that the Internet makes it easier for customers to share their experience via review websites, social media, blogs, and other online platforms. (K & et. al., 2015)

The need to understand consumers' needs and wants has been a major source of success for hotel organizations. Investigating the valence of online reviews and making changes to hotel attributes and performance is a novel approach. (Phillips, Barnes, Zigan, & Schegg, 2016) The online customer reviews are in the form of eWOM is now an information source in customers' decision-making and is found to be more successful in influencing customers than traditional marketing. (Phillips, Barnes, Zigan, & Schegg, 2016) Eventually, it is social media marketing which has emerged as a dynamic and challenging field in a marketing manager's toolkit. Also, the tourism organizations cannot ignore the information exchange that is happening among their consumers through online reviews. (Phillips, Barnes, Zigan, & Schegg, 2016)

Content of Online Reviews of Restaurants: The objective of this study was to assess the determinants of customer satisfaction in hospitality venues through analysis of online reviews using text mining and content analysis of 42,668 traveller's online reviews of 774 star-rated hotels. The data was obtained from the popular third-party website daodao.com (the official TripAdvisor website in China). (Li, Ye, & Law, 2013) Content analysis is a type of research technique used for making valid inferences from texts to the systematic and objective identification and categorization of characteristics. Content analysis was employed in studies of the hospitality and tourism industry, such as travel blogs, web pages, and reviews and complaints. (Li, Ye, & Law, 2013) The study employed content analysis and identified various categories as key factors that influence customer satisfaction and then quantified and tallied the categories in the chosen reviews. (Li, Ye, & Law, 2013)

This study explored a consumer rating and review website that reflects the dining experience in restaurants in Macau. The study had two objectives: first, was to assess the quality of the restaurants through electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and second, the comparison between expensive and inexpensive restaurants based on customer satisfaction. (Lei & Law, 2015) This study had specifically adopted the definition of a 'review' as an unstructured yet complete text which is distributed into complete sentences called 'comments' by various online reviewers. The study used 'simple frequency counts' on the online comments by customers on TripAdvisor.com. (Lei & Law, 2015) Each of the comments were categorised and assigned as positive, negative or neutral. The results obtained showed that the overall customer satisfaction was positive, but interestingly, expensive restaurants had a higher percentage of negative comments than the inexpensive restaurants in Macau. (Lei & Law, 2015)

This study aims at examining the online comments or ‘underpinnings’ of both satisfied and dissatisfied customers using the text-mining approach. The online reviews or comments were analysed from TripAdvisor.com for Sarasota, Florida (K & et. al., 2015). The study stated that it is crucial to divide the reviews into positive and negative categories in relation to internal validity. But the results revealed both common and unique categories for positive and negative reviews, as a contrast to the assumption of a consistency in the reviews about the hotels and their recommendations. (K & et. al., 2015) The study results indicate that satisfied customers recommended a hotel to others refer to intangible aspects of their hotel stay, such as staff members, more often than unsatisfied customers. While the dissatisfied customers point out the more frequently the tangible aspects of the hotel stay, such as furnishing and finances. (K & et. al., 2015)

One of the studies used partial least squares path modelling as a method to assess the review availed by online reviewers. The research model included three distinctive areas of the hotel: physical aspects; quality of food and drink; and human aspects of service provision. (Phillips, Barnes, Zigan, & Schegg, 2016) It was with the increasing popularity of the Internet that the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on social media has become such an important tool for customers seeking and sharing information on products and services. (Phillips, Barnes, Zigan, & Schegg, 2016) The results indicated that the hotel facilities which included the quality of rooms, Internet provision and building showed a higher impact on hotel performance, and that the positive comments have the highest impact on customer demand. (Phillips, Barnes, Zigan, & Schegg, 2016)

The aim of the study was to investigate the kind of online hotel review content that has much more importance while domestic tourists search information about the hotel. The various dimensions with regard to the importance of the online hotel review contents were determined by exploratory factor analysis. (BAYER & AKSÖZ, 2015) T-tests were used to understand whether there was a significant difference between the factors both in the interviews and eWOM. The findings of the research showed that these contents can be collected the following factors listed as “staff”, “food and beverage”, “hotel overall” and “rooms” according to their importance at the tourists’ hotel choice decisions. (BAYER & AKSÖZ, 2015)

The study presented the brand image of hotels in Mainland China which were perceived by international traveller’s using a content-analysis of online hotel reviews. The data included 970 online reviews by international travellers in 10 major cities in Mainland China from TripAdvisor. (Jiang, Gretzel, & Law, 2014) The first phase used two characteristics of the reviewed hotels which were hotel type and star-rating. Following which the reviews were manually coded into the 3A (*attributional, affective and attitudinal*) aspects of hotel image. The coding scheme indicated whether the ‘attributional’ item was commented on or not in the review, but it also recorded the sentiment of the comment, e.g. if it was positive, negative, or neutral/mixed/cannot be told. (Jiang, Gretzel, & Law, 2014) Also, the attitudinal dimension of hotel brand image was coded based on the comments whether the reviewer would like to return or recommend the hotel to others, such as value 1 representing “intention to return or recommend”; 2 “no intention to return or recommend”; 3 “conditional intention to return or recommend”; and 4 “not mentioned”. (Jiang, Gretzel, & Law, 2014).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by analysing comments in the restaurant review websites of Delhi/NCR region, namely Zomato, TripAdvisor and Dineout. These particular websites were selected for two reasons, first

these websites are well known among people of Delhi/NCR region, and second, the reviewers had to register in the website to post a review regarding a restaurant. Hence taking into consideration web traffic and authenticity, these restaurant review website were chosen. Further for this study only reviews from casual dining and fine dining restaurants were taken into consideration and reviews from both gender and all age groups were taken into consideration.

The primary aim of this study was to study the factors that are more frequently and less frequently stated by customers in their reviews. For this a simple dichotomous questionnaire was prepared based on a number of factors reviewers mention in their comments. The categories include comments – positive, negative or both, customer satisfaction factors- food, service, ambience, price, menu and/or design & décor; factors cited less frequently in reviews- waiter or waitress, whether friendly, knowledge about dishes and specials and/or the chefs role in service and comfort; the most talked about course – breakfast, entrée, main course, dessert, and/or the beverage; the most memorable food choice – fish, chicken, lamb, pork and/or vegetarian; and the type of drink discussed more frequently- wine, beer, cocktails and/or mock tail. The various factors were assessed mainly by the presence of the factor in the review irrespective of whether it is positive or negative. This helps in identifying and analysing the key factors that influence a meal experience for one or many reviewers. This approach of analysis gives a positive contribution to understanding the consumer’s expectations.

For this study, convenience sampling method was being adopted for selecting casual and fine dining restaurants from three websites in Delhi NCR region. From each of the website, 100 restaurants were selected and a total of 3358 reviews from January 2017 to March 2017 were being taken into consideration. The analysis was done by analysing over 5-7 reviews for a restaurant with over hundred reviews that fell within the time frame that the study included. Certain restaurants had lower than ten reviews, hence all the reviews were analysed. The data was finally collected, tabulated and coded for analysis.

4. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The reviewers of the three websites, namely zomato.com, tripadvisor.com and dineout.com, included both genders in a varied proportion with males being a greater percentage than females, although their numbers are not analysed in complete totality. It appears that reviewers of all age groups posted on this site. Another common factor noticed was that there were a few reviewers who were more frequent in posting their reviews than the rest. This was a possible conclusion since the restaurants were taken from Delhi NCR specifically.

Table 1
Positive and Negative Reviews received

	<i>Received Positive reviews</i>	<i>Did not receive positive reviews</i>	<i>Received negative reviews</i>	<i>Did not receive negative reviews</i>
No. of Restaurants (<i>n</i> = 300)	272	28	154	146
Percentage (%)	90.67	9.33	51.33	48.67

From Table 1, it is seen that out of the 300 restaurant reviews taken into consideration, specifically from the fine-dining and casual dining sector, the percentage of the positive comments received by the restaurant was 90.67% (272) and 9.33% (28) did not receive any positive comments. While, 51.33% (154) did receive negative comments and 48.67% (146) did not receive any negative comments in the reviews.

Overall, a lineage towards a greater number of positive reviews is seen, but the receipt of negative reviews is almost equal. Hence, we can conclude that the positive comments outweighed the negative comments in the time period of 2015 to present. But it was also observed that a very small number of both fine dining and casual dining restaurants received mixed reviews. This could be so, since reviewers nowadays expect greater value for money, not only, in terms of quality but also quantity of food, service and ambience.

Table 2
Customer Satisfaction Factors Mentioned Most Frequently in Reviews

	<i>No. of Restaurants that received reviews (n = 300)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Food	287	95.67
Service	248	82.67
Ambience	164	54.67
Menu	154	51.33
Price	147	49
Design and Décor	45	15

The Customer Satisfaction Factors showed a rather interesting result. The highest ranked customer satisfaction factor was food with 95.67% (287), since reviews did include taste, quantity, and quality of the food being served at the restaurants. This was followed by service with 82.67% (248) reviews. Service has indeed become an integral part of the food industry. Reviewers were critical on factors such as type of service, time of service, the personnel of service. The ambience of the restaurant was mentioned only by a little more than half of the reviewers, i.e. 54.67% (164). It was observed that reviewers paid no attention to the ambience of the restaurant most of the time and most reviews mentioned about the improper lighting of the restaurant. The price and menu are two collaborative factors with 49% (147) and 51.33% (154) respectively. The customer satisfaction greatly depends on the amount of money he/she pays at the end of their meal. But interestingly, the review percentage is less than half of the total restaurants analysed. Despite of the low percentage, the reviews did mention that customer refused to return back to restaurant if the quality and quality for the price did not improve. The menu forms the base of the restaurant. Most reviewers were pleased with menu set, although a good share of them were unhappy with the low vegetarian options. The intricate details of the design and décor of the restaurant lies unnoticed by the customer and the 15% (45) proves the statement. It is definite that food is the top agenda when customers reflect their experiences as reviews, followed by the remaining factors.

Table 3
Most factors cited Less Frequently in reviews

	<i>No. of Restaurants that received reviews (n = 300)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Waiter or waitress	77	25.67
Behaviour	59	19.67
Chef	39	13
Knowledge	37	12.33

The service in the food industry in spite of being an important factor, it is the less frequently mentioned factor in reviews in terms of its specificity with waiter/waitress, their behaviour with the customers, their knowledge about the menu and specials. Out of the 300 restaurants reviewed, the waiter/waitress were

mentioned only 25.67% (77). It was observed that it contained a mixture of reviews with both good and bad reviews with 19.67% (59) specifically on behaviour of the service staff. The behaviour comprised of both friendliness and even stated disrespectful moments. Another quality of the waiter/waitress analysed was the knowledge of the menu and specials which seen in only 12.33% (37) of the total reviews. The top agenda of the customer is food, but the chef is not often discussed by customers unless the chef is a celebrity chef. A similar trend was seen in this study where 13% (39) of the total restaurants reviewed mentioned about the chef, a majority being a celebrity chef run restaurant.

From the comments that specifically discussed a menu category (Table 4), it becomes evident that the largest percentage of customers did remember main course 88% (264), over any other category discussed. This was followed by starters with 86.67% (260) which is at a close margin from the main course. This could be so that most times the starter is ordered only during dinner and skipped during a lunch order. This area could use further research for a more definite answer.

Table 4
Most-Talked About Menu category

	<i>No. of Restaurants that received reviews (n = 300)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Main course	264	88
Starter	260	86.67
Beverage	155	51.67
Dessert	119	39.67
Snack	66	22
Breakfast	14	4.67

The least discussed were the dessert, snack and breakfast category with 39.67% (119), 22% (66) and 4.67% (14) respectively. Most restaurant reviews analysed included lunch and dinner categories and low breakfast places, hence the low percentage of breakfast category being discussed. Most Indian meals end at the main course, since the starters and main course are heavy meals leaving no space for dessert. Also, it has been noticed personally or word-of-mouth that price is a major factor that defines the placement of the dessert order. The beverage reviews was 51.67% (155) and is considered as a general category, which further discussed in detail as most discussed beverage in Table.

Table 5
Memorable Food Types

	<i>No. of Restaurants that received reviews (n = 300)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Vegetarian	259	86.33
Chicken	229	76.33
Fish	80	26.67
Prawn	47	15.67
Lamb	46	15.33
Pork	27	9

Although the significance of the analysis of the memorable food types (Table 5) are high in two particular types, namely vegetarian and chicken with 86.33% (259) and 76.33% (229) respectively. This in particular highlights the choice of customers of the region Delhi NCR which is located in the North

of India where a majority of the population are vegetarians by choice and faith and the non-vegetarians prefer chicken over other meats available. Being a region away from the coastline, the choice of fish is a delicacy or a part of particular cuisine like Asian. Hence, a striking low percentage of 26.67% (80) reviewed fish in their reviews, all of which were positive comments. The next food types also belong to particular cuisines of Asian and Indian and are not specifically consumed frequently by customers in the region. These include lamb and pork which were discussed only 15.33% (46) and 9% (27) in particular cuisine-specific restaurants. Further research possibilities include this particular sector, which could compare the reviews of two different regions in India to see a more diverse discussion in terms of food types, which are controlled by factors such as religion, politics and personal choice.

Table 6
Type of drink discussed

	<i>No. of Restaurants that received reviews (n = 300)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Beer	30	10
Mocktail	29	9.67
Wine	28	9.33
Cocktail	22	7.33

Another sector to be highlighted and discussed in detail is the type of beverage (Table 6). The significance of the findings in this sector when compared to the others are low. The reasons being low consumption by choice, restaurants not having a bar license, liquor restricted to bars and lounges only and/or insufficient options of liquor. Only a small number of reviews of the 300 restaurants reviewed wine, beer, cocktails and mock-tails, i.e. 9.33% (28), 10% (30), 7.33% (22) and 9.67% (29) respectively.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examines the consumer generated internet content, often called “word of mouth”, which has already become a critical element in guest’s determination of whether to visit a restaurant. The old concept of viral marketing, as generated by the operator, has become meaningless with the shift in power from the market to the consumers (Pantelidis, 2010).

The research evidence suggests a positive contribution of the reviews to the consumers and the restaurateurs, since there are more positive reviews as opposed to the negative reviews after thorough examination. Thus, it can be concluded that of the 300 restaurants analysed, most of them are delivering good products, service and creating a good ambience for a comfortable and memorable meal experience. In this research, food is the top agenda on the consumer’s factor list followed by service and ambience and interestingly, pricing and menu are on the low end of the spectrum. But the end analysis does state that the price does impact the reviewer’s choice of returning to the restaurant for a second time if expectations are not met or improved upon. The main course was the most talked about course, followed by starters and desserts. This could be due to the trend of the typical Indian meal where main course is the most important, starter may just be a formality and dessert is optional. Most restaurants reviewed did not serve breakfast, hence it was found to be on the lower end. Hence, main course is the most talked about course by the consumers after they leave a restaurant. A similar trend was seen with the choice of food picked by the consumers, where a majority of North Indians are vegetarian and if any other, they would choose chicken over other options of meat preferably. The other meats like fish, prawn, pork and lamb are uncommon

and are specific to certain cuisine specific restaurants only. The overall reviews were positive for this sector and it was well appreciated by consumers. The beverages when analysed in detail showed low yet significant numbers since most restaurants analysed were family restaurants with no alcohol service. The few restaurants that did serve alcohol and mock-tails were luxury dining restaurants. Beer got a higher percentage, followed by mock-tails, wine and cocktails. This could be a factor influence by personal choice, but more frequently because of a small range of choice available.

The food and beverage industry has a second important factor that influences the meal experience which is the service. Customers are welcomed, seated and made comfortable throughout their meal at a restaurant. The research shows that reviewers are critical towards the service in restaurants and most reviews are sceptical. Luxury Dining Restaurants had more positive feedback with respect to the service in terms of the waiter, his attitude and knowledge of the menu and specials in particular. The others had a more negative review regarding the service in terms of inexperienced staff, late service of meals, and disrespectful behaviour of the waiters. The restaurants have replied to such comments and promised improvement which is a possible future research prospect. The Reviews of chefs are certainly concentrated more in restaurants of celebrity chefs where the name of chefs are mentioned and acknowledged for their great work. This is a less frequently talked about factor since most reviewers are unaware about the chef and fail to acknowledge the chefs.

‘Word of mouse’ is thus a more influential factor on customer’s food choices in the present date over ‘word of mouth’. The research does showcase the factors influencing the customers most frequently and less frequently. It was also seen that customer review did mention that ‘after reading the positive reviews of a certain restaurant that they wished to try the place’. Hence with the increased dependency and ease in us of technology, reviewers and new consumers seek the choice of restaurants from these websites. So also, the restaurants use these reviews as a platform to rectify their mistakes if any and improve upon their quality if necessary.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study did repeat restaurants from the three different websites. Hence creating an overlap of reviews in analysis.
2. Coding was done manually and it is impossible to eliminate all errors.
3. The study did not include all the restaurants from Delhi NCR region.
4. The study did not analyse all the reviews of the restaurant due to time constraint.

Scope of Further Research

1. Compare the reviews of two different regions in India to see a more diverse discussion in terms of food types which are controlled by factors such as religion, politics and personal choice.
2. The reason why Indians in particular do not order a complete three course meal for lunch or dinner.
3. Comparison in the reviews between two years to see a progress or decline in the review grading.
4. Analysis of Restaurant response and action taken with respect to customer review.

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