

Article Title

Role of user-generated photos in online hotel reviews: An analytical approach

Citation

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Abstract

While user-generated content has been studied extensively in the hospitality and tourism domain, the value of user-generated photos is not well understood due to theoretical and methodological barriers. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of user-generated photos in online hotel reviews in terms of how they are generated and how they contribute to online reviews. The research questions are examined using descriptive analysis and regression analysis based upon approximately 538,000 online hotel reviews collected from TripAdvisor. Findings show that people tend to post photos for hotels with a higher level of service or luxury or when they had a positive experience staying at hotels. User-generated photos are informative of online hotel review helpfulness and the interactions between these photos and other review information cues, such as review sentiment and review topics. Limitations and directions for future research are also discussed.

Conclusion

The research shows photo-embedded online hotel reviews contain informational values just like the textual contents. Especially, it turned out from the study that guests who stayed at the two-star hotels put more core product- related pictures, while guests who stayed at the three-star hotels posted more facility-related photos and guests who stayed at the four and five-star uploaded more value-added products related pictures. This implies that hotel managers should acknowledge the importance of online reviews with photos to figure out their hotels' strengths and weaknesses through the contents of reviews. Moreover, they should focus on user-generated reviews to learn which factors make guests contented or dissatisfied to respond to their needs effectively.

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