

Online review management: tools and practices from Baltic perspective

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<p>In recent decades, the Internet has revolutionized the hospitality industry: online reviews became one of the most major factors in purchase decision making process. The rapid growth of online sales channels, review platforms, social media etc. has led to the emergence of a huge amount of user-generated content, and online review management has become an essential part of hotel management.</p> <p>This study provides an analysis of theory and online review management functions performed by Baltic accommodation providers, including their motives, tools and operational processes. The commissioner of the study is Estonian brand hotel chain Hestia Hotel Group, a rapidly developing company, that currently operates 10 hotels in Estonia and Latvia. The results of the study will be beneficial for developing online review management strategy.</p> <p>The aim of this study is to improve the knowledge about online review management among Baltic hoteliers and develop a list of guidelines how to manage online reviews on general level. The research question of this thesis is: what's done and what's can be done to manage guest online reviews simply and efficiently?</p> <p>Theoretical part of the study focuses on online reviews management concepts and information with regards to consumer behaviour, online reviews' role in purchase decision making process, nature and environment of online reviews, and online review management actions. The circular online review management framework designed as a conclusion of theoretical part suggests a construction for the development of an interview guide.</p> <p>In order to achieve the aim of the study, multiple case study approach is applied as research method. In the context of this study 15 case hotels has been investigated, including 5 Hestia hotels, and semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method of data collection. An interview guide used as an aid to conducting interviews, includes various types of questions focused on research objectives.</p> <p>The results of study are presented in the form of discussion that overviews the current situation in case hotels, as well as a list of guidelines how to perform online review management functions on general level, including 6 essential stages: monitoring, filtering, responding, learning, improvement, and encouraging.</p>	
Keywords Online reputation, online review management, online guest reviews, user generated content, applied marketing, hospitality industry	

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Key definitions

Big data - huge volumes of heterogeneous and fast-flowing digital information that cannot be processed with traditional tools.

B2C – business to customer – a form of commercial relationship between business and end-user.

C2C – customer to customer – a form of relationship (incl. commercial) between two individuals for the mutual satisfaction of their interests.

CRM or *Customer relationship management* - a software for organizations designed to automate customer interaction strategies.

eWOM or *Electronic word-of-mouth* – a method of transmitting information about a product or service from a consumer to a consumer on the Internet

Online reviews - product and service reviews created and posted by users on the Internet.

ORM or *Online review management* – a practice of developing strategies that drive the public perception of a business on the Internet.

OTA – online travel agency – a travel agency selling its products and services via the Internet.

UGC or *User generated content* - information-relevant content created by Internet users, voluntary mention of the subject of marketing on the Internet for free.

WOM or *Word-of-mouth* - a method of transmitting oral information about a product or service from consumer to consumer

1 Introduction

The 21st century is the era of high digital technologies. Over the past 10 years, the hospitality industry has experienced a real online-revolution. According to World Tourism Organization's report 2014, the hospitality sector has significantly transformed with few areas showing so much dynamic change and innovation as the online space. The online-reviews has revolutionized the travel decision-making process and this impact has become especially important for accommodation providers (UNWTO 2014, 5).

Nielsen's Global Trust in Advertising Survey 2015 which covered 30,000 online respondents in 60 countries shows that the most credible advertising comes straight from the people we know and 83% of respondents take an action based on opinions of friends and family members (Nielsen N.V 2015, 8). Silverman (2001, 23) defines word of mouth as "the most powerful force on marketplace ". Phillips (2013, 26) notes that marketers use the power of WOM marketing to increase brand awareness, preference, and purchase eventually learn a fundamental truth. According to study of McKinsey & Company, word of mouth is the primary factor behind 20 to 50 % of all purchasing decisions. (Bughin, Doo-gan, & Vetvik 2010; 2)

In the hospitality and tourism sector, people daily face satisfied and dissatisfied clients. Undoubtedly, most hoteliers try to prevent or neutralize the conflict before it goes online, making all possible efforts. In connection with the rapid growth of the online industry and social networks, many people got an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences globally and to be heard by others. Accommodation service providers anxiously note, nowadays a single unhappy customer can damage or even destroy your business online-reputation within hours. Business owners and executives are extremely sceptical of negative feedback. PwC's research "Why hotel reviews matter and how hotels respond" conducted in 2015 suggests that hotels should embrace online reviews as an opportunity for constructive information exchange between client and accommodation service provider. (PwC 2015, 7). Baer (2016, 8) believes in the power of negative feedback and offers to monetize criticism.

This work is dedicated to online reviews. Study participants were asked to understand the nature of online reviews, determine its importance to business, and share the basic tools and methods of online-review management within their companies.

1.1 Problem background

In the era of big data people are not limited to use certain channels and sources. Global network works in mysterious ways. The virtual space is too large to be tracked and it challenges the hotels.

From a tourist perspective, nowadays there are many ways to review a product or service. Customer review sites (TripAdvisor, Yelp etc) allow to post travel-related content without any restrictions. Travelers may feel free and creative to express their thoughts globally. OTA (Booking.com, Expedia etc) also urge their customers to leave feedback. This process is more automated, and it allows to cover large volumes of reviewers. People also willingly post their reviews using social media channels (Google+, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). Each of the users has its own audience and this works as word of mouth.

The century of high information technology implies not only challenges, but also the solutions. Currently, the market offers a lot of specialized software that allows the hoteliers to track the reviews across the web and deliver this data to the necessary department very quickly. Software (ReviewPro, Reputize, Revinat etc) developers promise to enable clients to obtain a deeper understanding of online-reputation performance, strengths and weaknesses, to provide actionable insights to increase guest satisfaction, online-scores and ultimately revenue. One of the objectives of this research is to investigate how actively and efficiently Baltic hoteliers use modern professional tools.

Since this research was conducted among Baltic hoteliers based in Tallinn and Riga, the next figures taken from PWC's global research "Online Reputations: Why hotel reviews matter and how hotels respond? ", undoubtedly deserve being noticed.

Tallinn and Riga were assigned to the Eastern European region. The results of the study showed that Riga's hotels respond on average to 5% of online reviews, which is below the regional average - 9%. Negative feedback received more responses than positive one. Neutral reviews received less attention. Tallinn's hotels showed more positive figures responding on average to 7% of online reviews, which is still less than the regional average, but still more than Riga's figures. Positive reviews received twice frequent attention than negative ones, neutral reviews were the most unpopular. In both cases response rates varied by hotel stars, with 5-stars hotels respond about 7-10 times more often than 3-stars. (PwC 2015, 42-43)

Eastern Europe Region, including Riga and Tallinn, shows the lowest rates in comparison with average figures of Western and Central Europe (13% respond), Middle East & Africa (18% respond) and India (27% respond). Those data became the starting point of this study and prompted to delve into the nature of managing online reviews in Baltics.

1.2 Personal motivation

Considering a growing popularity of online reviews, the topic of the study was chosen due to several personal reasons. Hestia Hotel Group, a company the author of this paper works for, takes the solid position in the Baltic hospitality market, operating 10 hotels and providing employment for more than 400 employees. The lack of an online review management strategy prompted the author to explore this issue at a deeper level, observing the processes within a company as well as outside of it.

Author's 10 years working experience in the hospitality industry took place in four different organizations. Guest feedback has always been a reflector of service quality and an important communication tool between the guest and hotel management, but none of those organizations had online-review management strategy. In this case, the findings might be useful for Estonian accommodation service providers – participants of this research and other interested parties.

1.3 The aim of research

The aim of this study is to improve the knowledge about online-review management among the Baltic accommodation service providers and to offer list of guidelines how to manage their online reviews on general level.

The research question of this thesis is: what's done and what's can be done to manage guest online-reviews simply and efficiently?

1.4 Practical objectives

In the context of this study, the author sets the following practical objectives:

- 1) to research the ORM processes within Hestia Hotel Group;
- 2) to research and compare the ORM processes among Baltic accommodation service providers;
- 3) to create framework and list of guidelines for planning and implementation of online-review managing processes on general level.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

This paper divided into five main sections: introduction, theory, methodology, analysis and discussion. As an introduction, the author argues for the relevance of the topic and personal motivation, giving a brief overview of the objects of study, research goals and practical objectives.

The theoretical part examines the stages of the purchase decision-making process of making, the concepts of WOM and eWOM, and its impact on purchase decision. The next sub-chapter looks at the nature of the online reviews and the environment. Issues regarding online review management are discussed in the third sub-chapter. ORM framework is outlined later as the summary of theoretical part.

The respondents to this study were asked to discuss on every sub-section of the theoretical part, which are reflected in the interview-guide presented as an annex to this study.

The case study was chosen as the methodology for this this thesis. Methods of research and data collection outlined in the second main section. Since online review management is about situations and guest experiences, respondents were asked to analyse situations, diagnose problems and present their solutions during the interview. As part of the study, 15 cases were investigated.

The third main section covers the analysis of all the interviews and its interpretations, and its aim is to relate the connections to the existing research theory. Discussions and future perspectives raised from this study are drawn in the final section.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first one gives a brief overview of buying processes. The second one looks at the nature and environment of online reviews, and its impact on hospitality industry. Providing information on the importance of online reviews, the third part of this section is devoted to online-review management, its basic concepts, tools and methods. Online-review management framework presented in the end of section as the summary of theoretical part.

2.1 Buying process, WOM and eWOM

Section 2.1 analyses the types of buying behaviour and purchase decision-making process through the prism of the hospitality industry. This section also explores the concept of word-of-mouth on the background of global digitalization and the basic principles of C2C interaction. To summarize this section, the author sets two goals: 1) to investigate which influence do WOM and eWom have on purchase decision making process; 2) to find out how it goes on every stage of purchase decision-making process.

2.1.1 Consumer buying behaviour types

Buying behaviour can be defined as “a process, which through inputs and their use though process and actions leads to satisfaction of needs and wants” (Enis 1974, 228), driven by emotional and mental needs of customers and behavioural reactions. (Stallworth 2008, 9)

In the meantime, Kotler and Armstrong (2010, 172) emphasize the importance of understanding consumer buying behaviour and the ways how the customers choose their products and services can be to provide them with competitive advantage over its competitors. Kotler and Armstrong suggest studying the consumer buying behaviour to set the strategies towards offering the right products and services to the right audience of customers reflecting their needs and wants effectively.

Marketers note there're a lot of the reasons behind consumers making purchases. According to Kotler, the choice of strategic marketing models directly depends on behavioural models. The behaviour of buyers can be divided into the following four types: 1) complex purchasing behaviour, 2) dissonance-reducing buying behaviour, 3) variety-seeking buying behaviour, and 4) habitual behaviour.

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2010, 176), complex purchasing behaviour prevails in the selection of expensive products with a significant difference in the characteristics of brands. To make a final decision, the client makes all possible efforts to learn more about the product, its characteristics, quality and reliability.

In case of dissonance-reducing buying behaviour, there're insignificant differences between the brands, however the customer is highly involved with an expensive or risky purchase and more focused on the specifications of the product, its features and prices, than on the brand (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 176)

Variety-seeking buying behaviour may occur in situations of low involvement, but the differences between the brands are significant. Customer tests different brands in terms to check the variety of products. This type of behaviour is the consequence of a huge range of products. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 177)

Habitual behaviour is characterized by a minimal waste of time for purchase procedure. This attitude is typical for inexpensive products or services. The involvement is low, the differences between brands are insignificant. In this case, it is important that the product or service could be visible and easily accessible as possible. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 176)

2.1.2 Buying process: classic model

The decision-making process is always accompanied by doubts and reflections that give rise to the possibility of choice and circumstance. Many different options may confuse and even make a stress. Getting into the store, the buyer begins to compare the products and delve into their characteristics. One buyer makes purchases on emotions, the second one spends a lot of time reading the reviews about the product.

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2010, 177), the buying process begins long before and continues long after the actual purchase. Their widely known model of the buying decision process consists of the following stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase.

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2010, 178), need recognition stage refers to a need or problem, which could arise from internal or external stimuli. Internal stimuli have strong connections with the human physiology (such as hunger, thirst, etc). External stimuli asso-

ciated with marketing activities (such as advertising or word-of-mouth). Problem recognition is the first step in this process that may occur because customer is looking for something new (Kardes 2011, 8).



Figure 1 Buying decision process (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 177)

On the stage of information search customer is looking for information about product or service. This process can be considered as the activation of existing knowledge, or the acquisition of new information. This can be referred to as “the stage of the buyer decision process in which the customer is motivated to search for more information.” (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 178). Since the Internet has become an important tool for information search, online environment effectively involves in purchase decisions process. The different types of decisions may affect the level and direction of the search. (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010, 518).

Alternative evaluation can be defined as “the stage of the buyer decision process in which the consumer uses information to evaluate alternative brands in the choice set.” (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 178). In this stage customers should consider which alternative would be the best to satisfy their needs (Blythe 2008, 287).

The process of making a purchase decision depends on the emotional, cognitive and behavioural involvement of the consumer. On the stage of purchase decision, the customer is ready to choose between the alternatives and make final choice. However, two more factors may intervene on the way from intention to decision making: unforeseen circumstances and the opinions of other people. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 179). The choice may be affected by the gathered information from different sources therefore Internet is a perfect environment in this stage (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010, 584).

After purchase, the customer will be either satisfied or dissatisfied with it. This final stage can be described as post purchase behaviour. At this stage marketers want to make sure

their product is up to the customer's standards. If the product falls short of the expectations of the customer, then the customer is disappointed with their purchase. If the product exceeds the customers' expectations, then they are happy. When a customer is dissatisfied with a product then chances of them spreading their frustrations about the product to others is very high. The company sees this as a negative advertisement for their products. It is very important for companies to satisfy customers in order to keep their customer loyalty and to bring in new customers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 179) The quality of the decision becomes most important thing, customers compare the results with their expectations. (Kardes 2011, 9).

2.1.3 Concepts of WOM and eWOM

One should note here that interaction between customers takes place at each stage of the purchase decision-making process. They are influenced by other people's opinions. Customers exchange information about brands and this information is taken into account making a purchase decision.

Dellarocas (2003, 1407) defines word of mouth as ancient way of conveying information. According to Litvin (2008, 459), from the marketing perspective, WOM is person-to-person communication tool about brands among those people who are not commercial entities. Silverman (2001, 17) evaluates WOM more powerful than traditional marketing, since the interaction between people is fairer and more reliable than commercial communication between customer and business.

One of the earliest definitions was suggested by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1966, 27). WOM was defined as tool of exchange of marketing information between customers, which plays fundamental role in shaping of buying behaviour.

Many earlier studies also demonstrate the ultimate importance of WOM for customers' purchase decisions (Blackwell, Miniard, Engel, 2001; 6), especially in the context of services (Murray & Schlacter 1990, 52), which are intangible and cannot be easily described. According to Murray & Schlacter (1990, 53), customers tend to rely on word of mouth as an experienced source of information, to minimize or even to prevent a risk.

Due to global spread of the Internet, word of mouth has acquired digitalized forms: nowadays, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), defined as one of the most influential informal media sources among customers, businesses, and the population at large. (Huete-Alcocer 2017, 1).

eWOM, also known as electronic word of mouth, or mouse WOM, refers to any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet” (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, Gremler; 2004, 39).

According to Litvin (2008, 461), since the hotel industry offers services i.e. intangible goods, it cannot be assessed until the completion of the purchase. Since the customer cannot rely only on technical specifications, this is a high-risk process, so that’s post-purchase behaviour stage should be carefully monitored by hoteliers and used as the advantage of their marketing competition, especially in the internet.

2.1.4 Impact of eWom on purchase decision-making process

Yang (2017, 97) calls the companies view WOM and eWOM as an opportunity to learn the customers’ needs and promote their products or services to meet those needs, thereby increasing their loyalty. According to Nielsen’s research “Global trust in advertising” (2015, 10), 78% of European respondents trust in recommendations from people they know (WOM) and 60% rely on consumer opinions posted online (eWom).

Initially, the internet supported only the information search stage (Karimi 2013, 59), but recently eWOM has extended the internet’s influencing role to all the decision stages. Current sub-chapter focuses on the impact of eWom at each stage of the purchase decision process. Table 1 (Mishra 2016, 226) offers an insight about five different stages:

Table 1. Stages of Purchase Decision Process and eWom's impact (Mishra 2016, 226)

Stage	Example of eWOM Touch Points
<i>Problem/Need Recognition</i>	External stimuli-ads on websites, personalization, and recommendations + social influencers
<i>Information Search</i>	Search engines, social media, product websites, e-retailers
<i>Evaluation of Alternatives</i>	Websites with compare options, social media for feedback, online review, and rating websites.
<i>Purchase Decision</i>	Channels (e-commerce websites), discussion and feedback on social media
<i>Post-purchase Behaviour</i>	Review sites, social media, online ratings and reviews, feedback on social media or product sites

Information presented by social media influencers may impact consumers' beliefs, opinion and attitudes (Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong 2017, 22) and drive consumer purchase intentions. In addition to celebrities, even an ordinary user may provoke external stimuli for purchase, posting attractive self-generated content in social media.

According to Chatterjee (2001, 130), eWOM (as well as traditional WOM) is an effective tool on stage of information search, when a customer is unfamiliar with a service provider, for example in terms of travel planning. As it was noted above, the information left by other users has no commercial background, which mean that it's more truthful and valuable. For these reasons, customers are happy to turn to it at the information search stage.

After collecting information about the product, the client takes a step towards evaluating alternatives. According to Kotler and Keller (2016, 197), at this stage the customer is trying to identify the benefits of a product that could satisfy his needs. In this case, the reviews of other guests serve as the source of the most exclusive information based on personal experience. Mudambi & Schuff (2010, 185) state that each of these options has the potential to add value.

Purchase decision is the fourth and the decisive stage, when all previous actions turn into an actual purchase (Kotler & Keller 2016, 199). Obviously, rational factors such as product functionality and price drive purchasing decisions. However, exclusive information about additional attributes obtained from online-reviews may increase purchase intentions. Lertthairakul & Panjakajornsak (2014, 143) confidently argue that online-reviews do make difference and influence the purchase intentions which eventually will alter the final decision.

The post-purchase behaviour stage as an excellent analysis base allows to measure a balance between customers' expectations and reality. According to Kotler & Keller (2016, 200), the stage of post-purchase behaviour allows to identify satisfied and dissatisfied customers, as well as measure of their loyalty to the product.

2.2 Online reviews & hospitality industry

Information technologies have changed hospitality field globally. Today, the tourism services market is saturated with Internet technologies and fully adapted to them. The basic components of travel, such as transport booking, hotel reservations, car rentals, are the most frequently requested and used via the Internet. This trend is explained by easy access to the Internet from any electronic device, that's why users can't imagine themselves without gadgets.

In the previous sub-chapter, a multitude of arguments are presented in favour of online reviews, which are one of the most important leverages and motivators for making a purchase. Since the hospitality industry is an area of "intangible" services, the personal experience of other customers is meaningful factor at the stages of information search and evaluation alternatives and can play a key role in the final decision making.

According to UNWTO's (World Tourism Organization) report 2014, customers visit around 14 travel sites 14 travel-related searches on search engines before making an online hotel reservation. User generated content offers an independent and trusted evaluation of the quality of hotel services and facilities, thereby facilitating other customers in the choice of their accommodation. Online reviews also provide a framework for accommodation providers to market and position themselves according to customers' needs and expectations. (UNWTO 2014, 6)

The study of hotel online reputations conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers's in 2015 also confirmed, that online reviews became an important source of information for customers booking accommodation and travel. Customers trust guest reviews more than official business communication, because they assume that it's unprejudiced content. (PwC 2015, 4)

Couzin and Grappone (2013, 2) consider online reviews as one of the most important marketing channels. In their joint book „Five Stars: Putting Online Reviews to Work for Your Business“, the authors provide the following statistics based on previous studies: 1) On average, a consumer will look at over 10 information sources before making a purchase; 2) 79% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations; 3) Over half of young people aged 18 to 34 say they trust online reviews more than the opinions of friends and family. (Couzin and Grappone, 2013, 2)

Moreover, many studies indicate a direct connection between online reviews and business financial performance. As it has been already mentioned, customer reviews are provided in addition to product descriptions, reviews from experts, and personalized advice generated by automated recommendation systems. Each of these options has the potential to add value for a prospective customer. (Mudambi & Schuff 2010, 185)

The previous chapter was devoted to the concepts of WOM and eWOM in the classical sense, their impact on consumer behaviour and all stages of purchase decision-making

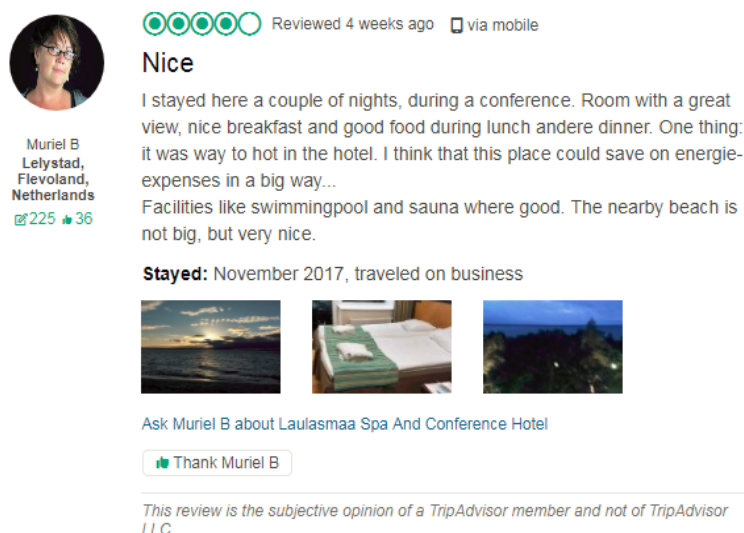
process. This chapter looks deeply at online reviews as a type of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication tool in the context of hospitality business performance.

2.2.1 The nature of online reviews

Online customer reviews can be defined as a textual description of product's characteristics, e.g. advantages and disadvantages (Lackermair, Kailer & Kanmaz 2013, 1), peer-generated product evaluations posted on company or third-party websites, that facilitates the consumer's purchase decision process (Mudambi & Schuff 2010, 186).

Considering its' special importance in the hospitality industry, this sub-chapter proposes to understand the types of online reviews that can be found on the Internet. Couzin & Grappone (2013, 22) distinguish 8 basic types of online reviews:

Product Reviews can be defined as customer-generated descriptions associated with a specific item (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 22), which can reveal consumers' deep thoughts and detailed experiences (Moon, Park & Kim 2014, 2179). Since the hospitality industry is not typically focused on providing basic human needs, but on providing services, services in this context can be defined as products. This type of reviews is offered by the popular source TripAdvisor. Since the hotels offer many different services, this web platform allows to make reviews of business as a solid entity, package of services or any specific service.



The image shows a screenshot of a TripAdvisor review. On the left is a circular profile picture of Muriel B. Below it, her name and location are listed: "Muriel B, Lelystad, Flevoland, Netherlands". To the right of the profile picture are icons for 225 photos and 36 likes. The review itself is titled "Nice" and is dated "Reviewed 4 weeks ago" with a "via mobile" icon. The text of the review reads: "I stayed here a couple of nights, during a conference. Room with a great view, nice breakfast and good food during lunch and dinner. One thing: it was way too hot in the hotel. I think that this place could save on energy-expenses in a big way... Facilities like swimmingpool and sauna where good. The nearby beach is not big, but very nice." Below the text, it says "Stayed: November 2017, traveled on business" and shows three small thumbnail images: a sunset over water, a hotel room with a bed, and a view of a building at night. At the bottom, there is a link to "Ask Muriel B about Lauasmaa Spa And Conference Hotel" and a "Thank Muriel B" button. A disclaimer at the very bottom states: "This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC."

Figure 2 Product review example, TripAdvisor, 9 November 2017

In this particular case, the client reviews a package of conference services as whole product. However, breakfast could be evaluated separately and treated as an independent product. At the same time, this review can be considered as a company review.

Company Reviews provide feedback about a business, organization, service provider or brand. Although these reviews are not about a specific product, they can be triggered by a specific purchase or experience with the company. (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 22) This type, as well as the previous one, can be defined as recommendation, which purpose is to provide information about products or services in order to assist consumers in making on-line buying decisions. (Knotzer 2008, 7)






 Reviewed September 4, 2017
enjoyable place to relax
 We have been to a number of SPAs and hotels in Estonia with our 2 year old, and were recommended this place by Spa regulars as being one of the best. We arrived early on a Friday as I had read parking can be an issue with the two car parks a distance apart. The place is in a nice setting, beach and forest on its doorstep - however even in early September the weather only suited the kite surfers - but the water park and spa are good - there is a variety of pools so our two year old could enjoy them - none are big and the four play ones aren't large and all connected, so in the afternoons it can get very crowded - morning's were better. Pays to book ahead for treatments on the weekends - we arrive early Friday and they only had a few places left. We went of the package with diners included and the diners come from the nice restaurant Wicca - won a few awards and very nice - we had lunch there and very tasty and reasonably priced - service very good too. the rooms are dated but so have been all the spa hotels - beds ok but the sofa bed our wee one slept on really couldn't have a supported an adult but for kids its ok - there are plenty of pleasure options around - probably overall the best spa hotel in Estonia though the one at Haapsula is good too.
[Show less](#)
 Room Tip: a very nice local restaurant is walking distance called Ott and Matilda
[See more room tips](#)
Stayed: September 2017, traveled with family
 Value
 Cleanliness
 Service
[See all 3 reviews by mcguinmj888 for Laulasmaa](#)
[Ask mcguinmj888 about Laulasmaa Spa And Conference Hotel](#)

Figure 3 Company review example, TripAdvisor, 9 November 2017

This review covers a huge number of services of Hestia Hotel Laulasmaa SPA, namely: location, accommodation, restaurant, SPA, parking facilities and outdoor activities, that's why this particular review can be attributed to company reviews.

A special niche among online reviews is occupied by **social media commentary** expressed in Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or any other social network (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 23), which covers user's social circles. The importance of this type of C2C interaction is obvious. For example, Chu & Kim (2011, 47) state that word-of-mouth in social networks possesses have a higher credibility compared to other online media. Social network sites also contribute to making the diffusion of online information quicker and easier. (Lis & Korchmar 2013, 15)

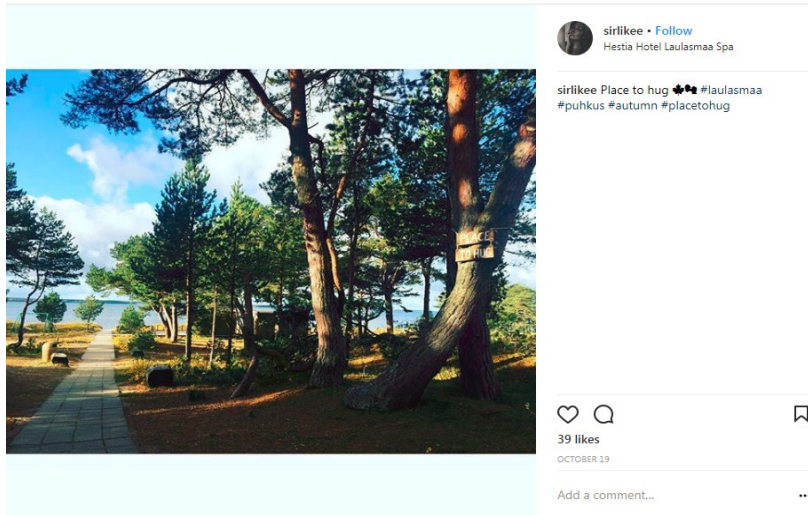


Figure 4 Social media commentary review example, Instagram, 9 November 2017

This short and capacious comment published on the personal Instagram account can be safely attributed to the **social media commentary** category. In this case, the customer recommends the hotel her friends as a place for relaxation, the visual background speaks of a beautiful location and picturesque nature around.

Customer Q&R features allow customers to ask questions and receive answers from the best possible source: people who own the product. (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 24) In hospitality industry this type of communication between customer and business more often takes place offline. OTA have special settings that allow their users to ask questions directly to the hotel through personal messages.



Figure 5 Customer Q&A review example, Facebook, 9 November 2017

This example shows that customers actively use Facebook as a communication channel to get answers to their questions. The company does not use a specific module or online platform to obtain such kind of feedback.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Some businesses collect customer feedback for internal use, either via email, at kiosks on-site, or at the point of sale. This feedback is usually collected just for the company's own learning process (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 24) This type of interaction is regarded as an attempt to measure customer satisfaction, before he uses eWOM to leave a feedback. According to Harrison and Shaw (2004, 23), satisfied customers affect the long-term viability of companies through repeat purchase, brand loyalty and word-of-mouth communication.

Kommentit / Комментарии: Beds ~~.....~~ (extra bed particularly) were a bit uncomfortable

Ravintola Wicca and Lobby baari / Питание				
Lobby baari / Lobby бар	4	3	2	1
Buffet / Шведский стол	5	4	3	2
Ravintola Wicca / ресторан Wicca	5	4	3	2

Комментарии: Breakfast was good. Trainee at the breakfast buffet was very kind and gave good service.

Vesi- ja saunasto / Банно-водный центр				
Palvelu / Сервис	5	4	3	2
Altaat ja saunat / Бассейны и бани	5	4	3	2
Kuntoilu / Тренировки	5	4	3	2

Комментарии:

Figure 6 Customer satisfaction survey example, Hestia Hotel Laulasmaa SPA

This is a classic example of customer satisfaction survey taken from Hestia Hotel Laulasmaa SPA's achieve. Usually this type of questionnaires clients used to fill on paper in the room. However, recently more often guests prefer to do it online via different online booking systems (BOOKING.com, Hotelliweb, Guestjoy). The figure 8 shows how the alternative option sent through Guestjoy system directly to customer's e-mail:



Goodbye

It was a pleasure having you as a guest! If you're willing, we kindly request for some feedback about your stay. For our best offers, please see www.laulasmaa.ee. You are always warmly welcome back to us!

How was your stay?

dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 satisfied

tripadvisor

Figure 7 Customer satisfaction online survey example

Complaint/Scam Reports. Some websites are built just for those consumers whose pastime of choice is unfettered venting about poor customer experiences. (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 25). In the hospitality industry, hotels often face with negative feedback. From the Estonian perspective, there's no any specialized platforms. Customers share negative reviews along with the positive ones in Social media, OTA websites and review sites.

Peer-to-Peer Buyer and Seller Ratings. According to Lackermair, Kailer & Kanmaz (2013, 1), product rating can be defined as customer's opinion on a specified scale, where more stars indicate better ratings. These types of communications are typical for marketplaces and peer-to-peer platforms and may be associated with the user profile and are a crucial factor in gaining trust for future transactions. (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 25)

Professional Reviews and Press Coverage can be defined as professionals-generated-content, including journalists, bloggers, product testers, industry experts, or other social influencers (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 25). This type of customer interaction may be referred as influencer marketing - a process of identifying and activating individuals who have an influence over a specific target audience of a brand's campaign to increase reach, sales, or engagement (Sudha & Sheena 2017, 16)

2.2.2 Negative reviews

In previous chapters, it has been established that customers are increasingly using electronic word of mouth, while potential customers use it as a source of exclusive information before making a purchase. According to Royo-Vela and Casamassima (2001, 522), customers use positive eWOM to express loyalty and satisfaction with the service, which can expand the range of competitive advantages for businesses, especially smaller ones (Huete-Alcocer 2017, 2).

Previous studies have shown that customers pay more attention to negative information than to positive one. The study of Lee & Koo (2012, 1974) revealed that while searching for information shared on online review sites tended to believe negative comments about products and services more than positive ones, because both sides make possible to get the most balanced point of view about the product. The study of Reevoo (2012, 2) also founded that customers who read negative reviews are more likely to make a purchase.

This is exactly why Baer proposes to increase the competitive advantages with the help of negative reviews and competent work with them. Pricing and the product itself can be easily copied, but customer service, including competent work with negative feedback, remains the most promising area to beat the competition. (Baer 2016, 11).

Moreover, according to Anderson & Han (2016, 1), actual hotel revenue and sales performance are in great correlation with UGC posted via review sites and OTA. Their study based on TripAdvisor reviews has established that revenue levels increase as the number responses and hotel ratings increase. One of the most interesting facts founded during the study was the fact that costumers more appreciate responses to negative reviews, rather than positive ones. Hotel ratings improve more substantially in connection with constructive responses to negative reviews than simple acknowledgment of positive comments. (Anderson & Han 2016, 1)

It's necessary to accept the fact that bad reviews may happen, even to exemplary businesses. Baer (2016, 14) sees in the negative feedback an extremely positive side: complaining customers waste their time to report how the products didn't meet their expectations, which allows to identify the weaknesses of the business and eliminate them. (Baer 2016, 14)

Couzin & Grappone (2013, 213) suggest to minimize damage by adopting a calm, thoughtful attitude and employing the strategies managing the online-reviews. Possible strategies and tools for managing negative reviews will be discussed in subsequent sub-chapter devoted to online review management.

2.2.3 Fake reviews

One of the concerns regarding guest online-reviews in the era of Big Data is the authenticity. Different studies suggest that hoteliers have incentives to manipulate their ratings, posting fictitious positive reviews of their own hotels, and negative ones about competing properties. (UNWTO 2014, 14). Couzin & Grappone (2013, 54) acknowledge fake reviews as a critical challenge. However, despite the presence of fake reviews, a PhoCusWright study based on TripAdvisor's data has shown that 98% of respondents believe that online-reviews reflect the actual experience of the other guests. (UNWTO 2014, 14).

Mayzlin, Dover & Chevalier (2014, 2428) analysed 350,485 TripAdvisor reviews and 123,569 Expedia reviews, attempting to exploit the organizational differences between those two channels. Since the Expedia's review should be supported by real booking and cost of manipulation on Expedia is much higher than the cost of manipulation on TripAdvisor, the authors expected to find less review fraud on Expedia. The study has confirmed the hypothesis: hotels with a high incentive to fake have a greater share positive reviews on TripAdvisor than on Expedia, and their competitors have more negative reviews on TripAdvisor relative to Expedia. (Mayzlin, Dover & Chevalier 2014, 2421)

Findings also have shown that hotels that are more likely to engage in review manipulation are those that owned by non-chain or small owners, have neighbour hotels in the same area, are independent and managed by a smaller management company (Mayzlin, Dover & Chevalier 2014, 2432)

According to Lappas, Sabnis & Valkanas (2016, 3), fake positive reviews are more common than fake negative reviews. After all, manipulating your own ratings by injecting fake positive reviews is less risky and more legal than negative manipulation of competitor's ratings, which can entail administrative responsibility.

Nowadays, online channels pay close attention to the authentication of online reviews. OTAs' special feedback features allow to determine the guest's identity in a minute. Even TripAdvisor constantly optimizes filters by filtering out fake reviews. In addition, this process of screening guided by the accommodation service providers themselves.

Recognizing fake reviews is a challenge. There are no simple linguistic giveaways that signify a fake review. Research shows that many people think reviews are fake when they are overly negative or outrageously positive, but neither of these is a reliable marker of a fake review (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 57). The topic of interaction and working with fake reviews will be discussed in the sub-chapter devoted to Online review management.

2.2.4 The online-reviews environment

In the era of big data, the volumes of user-generated content have grown from terabytes to petabytes (Gandomi & Haider 2015, 138), which provide a huge quantity of information about guests's experiences and thoughts (Marine-Roig & Clave, 2015, 1). Different types of reviews are often collected and displayed on special platforms (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 27). Marine-Roig & Clave (2015, 1) and Gandomi & Haider (2015, 140) classify them into customer review sites, blogs, media sharing websites, social bookmarking, social networking, social news, and wikis. In addition to the above UGC sources, Lu and Stepchenkova (2015, 120) distinguish virtual communities, including forums, virtual discussion boards, closed communities in social media, etc. Many researches emphasize OTA's sites as the source of the most transparent information regarding guest reviews. For example, Marine-Roig & Clave (2015, 2) argue that OTA nowadays took leading positions, putting classic travel blogs to the background.

All the above UGC sources can be interpreted as eWom. The information obtained from these sources is especially important in hospitality industry. Every day, the Internet generates new eWOM channels: review websites, blogs, social networks and virtual communities, which allow users from over the world communicate with each other. This sub-chapter looks at the most popular channels of travel related user-generated content may be found in the network.

Review sites

Lee, Law, & Murphy (2011, 675) define customer review sites as common platforms for travellers to share their travel experiences. Filieri, Alguezaui & McLeay (2014, 174) refers to Google statistics, which shows that 80% of people plan their holidays on the Internet doing various researches on prices and quality of services. On average, they visit 26 sites before making a purchase, bypassing tour operators and relying on user-generated content. Such content can be found on customer review sites as TripAdvisor, Yelp and Four-square. Unlike OTA and social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.), review sites have a very clear function - they are designed to make customers leave feedback about their experiences. TripAdvisor revolutionized the travel market: with 730 million reviews covers approximately 8.1 million accommodations, airlines, experiences, and restaurants.

Recent trends indicate that the credibility of the comments posted on TripAdvisor is questionable. Moreover, their unreliability has been proven. Thus, Filieri, Alguezaui & McLeay (2014, 175) refers to the case happened in UK, when Advertising Standards Authority forced to remove all 'misleading' slogans referring to the trustworthy and honest nature of all the reviews. The reaction of the public followed immediately.

However, TripAdvisor did a lot of work to improve the quality of reviews, and nowadays it remains one of the most extensive travel related UGC sites.

Blogs

Kotler & Keller define blogs as "regularly updated online journals or diaries that have become an important outlet for word of mouth." (Kotler & Keller 2016, 643). Blogs cover wide gamut of topics, including hobbies, legal matters, personal issues etc., and consist of brief entries arranged in reverse chronological order that may be updated frequently and regularly. Blog audience is allowed to leave commentaries as well, that's why interaction between author and readers looks informal and lively. Wenger (2008, 171) characterizes blogs as a free from external censorship form of expression, where people can present a fair story about real experience.

Puhringer & Taylor define travel blogs as “individual entries which relate to planned, current or past travel...are the equivalent of personal online diaries...commonly written by tourists to report back to friends and families about their activities and experiences during trips” (Puhringer & Taylor 2008, 179). According to Litvin (2008, 464) and Wenger (2008, 171), travel blog content is actively used by travel service providers to manage marketing strategies. By tracking the audience’s reaction, companies identify tourists' expectations and adjust competitive strategies. Moreover, travel blogs offer a deeper understanding of consumption of tourist products (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008, 309). Akehurst (2009, 2) emphasizes the clear advantage of blogs over traditional advertising tools, as blogs can cover hard-to-reach market segments. Banyai defines travel blogs as “important source of information for potential tourists, but also for destination marketers and managers looking to learn about visitors and their experiences. “(Banyai, 2016, 2).

OTA

According to Browning (2013, 24), online reviews allow travellers to make more effective pre-purchase evaluations of hotels and tourist destinations. OTAs allow customers to evaluate their level of satisfaction using online text reviews and star rating, which is not related to the official star level of the hotel. Users are welcomed to rank different features of the hotel based on their actual experience, providing an additional rating system for hotels on OTA platforms.

By online reviews guests express complaints and frustration, as well as satisfaction and brand loyalty. Original reviews are available to whole travel community on the OTA platform in any time it's needed. Users eagerly communicate about any inconveniences. Based on the findings described by the sub-chapter about negative reviews, the presence of negative feedback indicates the reliability of the source.

Among the most prominent arguments in favour of OTA is the fact that major OTAs allow to post reviews only verified guests who did an actual booking. The author has previously referred to the study of Mayzlin, Dover & Chevalier (2014, 2423), which showed that rating manipulation is less possible on OTA platforms than on TripAdvisor.

Based on the above arguments, OTA sites can be safely attributed to the most important eWOM channels. Moreover, in 2016 experts from Amadeus predicted the further dynamic development of the online segment, where there will be a place for mega online travel retailers as result of consolidation between OTA and metasearch business models; digital

tour operators as a "hybrid" of traditional tour operators and OTAs; mobile travel retailers, and new travel marketplace. (Amadeus 2016, 4)

Social networks

Social media and Web 2.0 have revolutionized communication landscape. (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre 2011, 241). They reshaped the Internet from a broadcasting medium to a participatory platform which allows people to collaborate and share information. The "user democracy" culture have made substantial changes gaining the power of customers As the other eWom tools, social networks help travel and hotel providers to attract potential guests, increase online presence and thereby increase revenue. (Leung, Law, Hoof & Buhalis 2013, 4).

Leung, Law, Hoof & Buhalis (2013, 4) divide social networks into blogs and microblogs (Blogger, Twitter), online communities (Facebook, RenRen), media sharing sites (Flickr and YouTube), social bookmarking sites (Delicious), social knowledge sharing sites (Wiki-travel), and other tools in a collaborative way. According to Shibly & Mahadin (2017, 68), the following online platforms can be assigned to social networking sites: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, snapchat or LinkedIn. Some researchers also consider TripAdvisor as social networking site (Leung, Law, Hoof & Buhalis 2013, 12). There are many different definitions and classifications of social media, however, those definitions are mostly similar. (Kaplan and Heinlein 2010, 60)

Bronner and de Hoog identify booking of a holiday or accommodation as high involvement product, that's why before purchase decision making a lot of sources of information used, including social networking sites. Authors state that travellers often refer to Facebook and Twitter when they're looking for non-commercial information about the products and services, which reflects real guest experience. (Bronner and de Hoog 2014, 51)

Recently, social networking sites have gained tremendous influence on tourism and hospitality industry, equally affecting providers and customers of the tourist services (Leung, Law, Hoof & Buhalis 2013, 16).

Virtual communities

Gupta & Kim (2004, 2679) define virtual communities as „places on the web where people can find and then electronically “talk” to others with similar interests”. What can bind people belonging to the same virtual community? Whittaker, Issacs and O'Day (1997, 27) found the following common attributes of virtual communities to belong: a shared goal, interest or need; active participation and interaction between members, common activities;

access to shared resources, common rules and policies to access; reciprocity of information, support, and services among members; shared context of social conventions, language, and protocols.

According to Abubakar (2016, 598), virtual community membership has a strong impact on a tourist's buying behaviour and the way information is transmitted. The members of these communities communicate through postings called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and share the information on a topic (Arsal 2008, 68)

eWOM messages are shared not only through posted reviews, but also in mailings, discussion boards, forums, chatrooms, closed groups etc. Virtual communities become very influential in hospitality industry, because customers trust the peers rather than traditional marketing messages. Virtual travel communities make easier to obtain information and make buying decisions (Dixit 2016, 266).

2.3 Online review management

In the era of «user democracy», online reputation is especially important. Past chapters have offered to figure out: why it's so important, what is a concept of eWom and how does it work in the hospitality industry. Various types of electronic word-of-mouth were discussed, including the most challenging types - negative and fake ones. The chapter about online-review environment classified the most popular travel related UGC channels into the different categories, giving a brief overview about the differences and common features. Moreover, a tight connection was established between online reviews and customer buying behaviour. Several evidences were provided to the favour of eWom, which has a direct or indirect impact on each phase of the purchase decision. Since two previous two chapters offered an answer to the question "why online reviews are so important today", the current one focuses on online review management, tools and processes.

Word-of-mouth is always about reputation. Hutton (2001, 248) defines reputation management as a business function, which is based on public relations and corporate affairs. Internet has transformed the traditional approach to maintain and control organization's reputation (Ajanovic & Cizel 2015, 182). Online reputation management combines marketing, public relations and search engines, allows organizations to protect and manage their online reputation by actively participating in search engine results (Vartiak 2015, 271).

Online reviews became a driving force in hospitality and travel planning sectors. However, many business owners are still wary of guest feedback, especially negative one. Many researchers of eWOM call to view online reviews as an opportunity, not a burden (Couzin &

Grappone 2013, 214; Anderson & Han 2016, 9; Baer 2016, 10). As a conclusion of PWC's study (2015, 7), the following key points for managing online reviews can be derived: hotels should monitor reviews systematically, respond to them rapidly and honestly, but also improve on the root causes of the negative reviews, and then they will come out winners in the long run.

Couzin & Grappone (2013, 270) identify the following mandatory elements for developing a review management plan: completing and optimizing the business's profiles, monitoring reviews, learning from reviews and making changes, seeking reviews, responding to reviews, advertising, measuring results, encouraging new reviews.

The following sub-chapter focuses on five main actions in the following sequence: monitoring, filtering, using feedback to improve, responding, encouraging new reviews. Modern technologies allow optimize each of these processes significantly. Along with strategic and tactical issues, professional tools are also discussed in this sub-chapter - in terms of theory, as well as in practice, i.e. directly with study participants. ORM framework is presented as a result of theoretical part of the study.

2.3.1 Monitor

According to „The Voice of Travellers – 2018” report, UGC provides valuable real-time information on consumer behaviour, allowing accommodation service providers and travel destinations to measure and improve their performance. This information usually used for product development, benchmarking and marketing analysis. Organizations audit UGC using tracking tools and aggregators to see what kinds of experiences travellers already got and would be interested to get. (Salem & Twining-Ward 2018, 28)

Couzin & Grappone (2013, 16) state that monitoring and learning from reviews allow to avoid unpleasant surprises, discover new opportunities, fix problems and communicate with the guests. Authors recommend identify actionable feedback by systematic checking in the right places, which provide highest volumes of reviews, which a more visible for the customers, which are used by the most desirable prospective customers.

Hotels need to establish a systematic process for monitoring new reviews in the right rhythm for watching and sane process for reacting. Since nowadays accommodation service providers deal with high volumes of reviews, “it's important to put the right people or tools on this job (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 81) “to monitor online review sites and to be accountable for following up on all reviews” (Barsky & Frame 2009, 1).

Couzin & Grappone (2013, 85) highlight the following functions for monitoring online reviews, ranging from basic to advanced:

- sending alerts when new reviews come in,
- providing measurement and analysis tools,
- providing a platform for following up and taking action on reviews,
- finding and aggregating reviews from multiple sources,
- providing views of the data that are tailored for different roles within the company,
- benchmarking the status of organization among competitors,
- comparing between multiple locations of the business or retailers who sell the product.

Since the volumes of online bookings continue to rise, the volumes of digital feedback rise with it. Reviews can be found in different venues. In the era of big data, managing this process manually can be quite challenging and time consuming. Modern professional ORM tools allow to centralize all reviews in one place. Products offered by Revinatate, Reviewpro, ReviewTrackers etc, gather information from numerous online review venues, providing easy viewing dashboards, reports and metrics. The software classifies guests according to geographical and demographic characteristics, shows the most popular feedback channels, as well as measures the quality of services and changes over time.

The following table provides a list of popular online reputation management programs in the hotel industry with a short overview of each. One of the objectives of this study is to find out from the participants which software (if any) is used, thus this list will be useful in the empirical part

Table 2 Online review monitoring tools for hospitality industry (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 87)

Site name	URL	Description
ReviewPro	www.reviewpro.com	For the hospitality industry; European-based company serving hotels worldwide offers review aggregation, alerts, dashboard, and analytics
Revinatate	www.revinatate.com	For the hospitality industry; official partner to TripAdvisor compiles reviews from TripAdvisor and many other sources with a user-friendly dashboard and workflow tools
TrustYou	www.trusty.com	For the hospitality industry; headquartered in Germany; known for expertise in semantic a

		analysis of review content
Olery	www.olery.com	Olery aims to provide the hospitality industry with insights and data generated from the millions of guests reviews published across the internet. With its applications, reports and APIs Olery is an valuable partner for hotels, restaurants, destination marketing organizations, travel agencies and hospitality software companies
Review Trackers	www.reviewtrackers.com	Online review management solution and the software to measure the customer experience. Covers Google, Facebook, TripAdvisor and over 80 other review sources.

2.3.2 Filter

Having received a large amount of information through monitoring, the next step is processing and filtering. Before beginning to analyse online reviews and respond to them, it's necessary to understand which of those reviews are valuable for business and contain useful information.

Nowadays businesses use rating manipulation and opinion spamming to promote or demote some targeted products. Since businesses are interested in credible feedback that reflect real user experience, fake reviews should be detected. (Mukherjee, Liu & Glance 2012, 16)

OTA can be considered the most reliable source of user experience information, since only verified users who have made a real purchase are allowed to review the services. Mayzlin (2014, 2422) defines verified users' reviews as one of the most popular defence mechanisms against fake reviews adopted by multiple platforms. However, even OTA cannot be 100% protected. Motivated scammers or a professional reviewer companies can buy a competitor's product or service to become a verified user while continuing to produce fake reviews. (Lappas, Sabnis & Valkanas 2016, 4). It's pretty clear that this is the costliest type of opinion manipulation, which means the less accessible.

Being social influencers, bloggers have the power to shape and manipulate public opinion, but they value their reputation too much to spread obviously fake information. Due to the huge volumes of data, the following UGC sources deserve the most attention in terms of filtering: review sites, social networking sites and virtual communities.

The success of review sites used by potential customers to collect product information before making a purchase decision is in as strong correlation of the quantity and quality of the reviews, that's why review sites have a strong incentive to root out and fight against fake reviews to downplay the scale of the fake reviews problem. (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 58)

Nowadays, review sites use and upgrade various security mechanisms and filtering algorithms. For example, reviews posted on TripAdvisor are subject of verification by site moderators (TripAdvisor, 2015). Suspicious content may be placed on hold pending examination or even be rejected if the website's filtering process provides enough evidence.

Couzin & Grappone (2013, 58-59) cite the following standard ways for review sites to filter fake content out and improve the process of filtering in general:

- filtering out or deleting reviews via filtering algorithms, which help to cut off a huge percentage of fakes;
- posting alerts about opinion fraud;
- launching special campaigns to detect paid reviews (Yelp's case, operation „Sting“, 2012);
- verifying reviewers' real names, which helps to increase the credibility of the content (linking to social network accounts);
- purchase authentication (the ability to leave a review after the purchase);
- allowing other users to flag suspicious reviews.

In the fight against fake reviews, TripAdvisor also implies a punishment system for those companies that have been found in rating manipulation. Those companies are excluded from the TOP-10 lists and press releases, as well as can also be marked with a special badge that indicates unfair play. Even though these actions are conceived as deterrent actions, some companies use them to defame their competitors in a creative manner (Lappas, Sabnis & Valkanas 2016, 4). Filtration mechanisms recognize maliciously published fake reviews addressed to a competitor and, as a result, an innocent company is punished.

Review spam algorithms allow to remove false negative reviews and, more commonly, false positive ones from those businesses that do not deserve them. However, many companies (for example, Yelp and Google) recognize that their filtering mechanisms are far from perfect and sometimes recognize genuine reviews as fake. (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 26)

Moreover, researchers from the University of Chicago (Yao, Viswanath, Cryan, Zheng & Zhao 2017, 1143) announced a system capable of writing online reviews in automatic mode. This is a fully automatic neural network operation, which is capable to generate yet realistic looking reviews. From their point of view, an integrated approach should be used in the fight against fakes, namely the modernization of filtration systems, which are quickly adapted to the tricks of fraudsters, and the human touch.

Review sites and online platforms regularly update their filtering mechanisms, with the same frequency as scammers update their «crawling paths» against those mechanisms. No matter how digitalized processes nowadays are, a manual approach to managing online reputation is nevertheless relevant.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (2013) claims that there're no clear instructions to detect fake reviews, but suggests pay attention to the following key points that may indicate suspected fake material, managing online reputation in manual manner:

- which is part of a significant 'spike' in reviews about a business over a limited period,
- written from the same email or IP address as each other or as the business reviewed,
- written about the same business, good or service where the accounts of those who wrote,
- reviews demonstrate abnormal similarities, e.g. similar email addresses, usernames, passwords or IP addresses,
- which use overly positive or 'marketing-speak' writing styles,
- which do not make sense,
- which use the same exact language as other reviews of the same business or product.

(Australian Competition and Consumer Commission 2013, 7)

According to Mukherjee, Liu & Glance (2012, 16), spammer groups are the most difficult in terms of detecting opinion fraud. Those are «groups of reviewers writing fake reviews together to promote or to demote some target products». They can highly damage online reputation or take total control of the sentiment on a product because they act as a group and have a quantitative advantage. Behind the spammer group can stand different people, as well as one person with multiple IDs.

As part of Amazon based research, Mukherjee & co-authors analysed 109,518 reviews of 39,392 products written by 53,469 reviewers, taking into account the following attributes: title, content, star rating, posting date, and number of helpful feedbacks. According to this research, authors highlight to the following suspicious patterns that are characteristic for spammer groups:

- the same number of products reviewed,
- the same star rating marked,
- postings within a small-time window (within 0-4 days),
- the same number of reviews per user,
- fake reviewers are among the early reviewers for the products.

The authors note that each of those patterns separately may look credible, only occurring together it may indicate suspicious activity.

Facing with suspicious activity that cannot be deleted by the business owner, review sites and other online review venues suggest report about the case immediately. According to Couzin & Grappone (2013, 237), businesses need to learn site policies and report on those reviews, which contain discrimination, offensive expressions and other issues that violate the online platform policies. Only cooperation and constant interaction between businesses and review sites can solve the problem of fake reviews or minimize its scale, at least.

Social networking sites might be called the dark side of the moon, since user content generated in meta volumes is not filtered by any algorithms. However, there are also positive sides: since businesses are most interested in the flawless online reputation of their business accounts, the coverage area becomes much narrower. Page managers are allowed to remove questionable content comments. Guided by the above recommendations, fake reviews can be identified quite simply.

Social networking sites based virtual communities imply a certain belonging to social circles, thus, access to the content might be significantly restricted. In the case of opened access, the guidelines listed above can also be used.

As it was mentioned in the subsection about the nature of fake reviews, most dubious content is more often produced in a positive context than a negative one. The malicious defaming of a competitor threatens with administrative responsibility, while artificially ove-

restituting of a business is not that risky. However, if the business owner deals with unwanted comments, it is always about the negative. Nowadays, the research community and hospitality industry experts call to work with negative feedback and accept it as a challenge, to improve the situation. Public proof that a hotel is dealing with a fake or undesired negative review can have a more effective impact on the audience than an undesirable comment would be simply be deleted by account manager. The topic of dealing with negative reviews, and answer to the question why they are so useful for business, is outlined in the sections “Learn from the reviews” and “Respond”.

2.3.3 Respond

Since online review management is about guest experience and customer care, hotels should conduct a dialogue with the customer and respond to online reviews accordingly. Many experts agree that responses to reviews should be prompt and professional, as well as to be designed in a positive and personalized manner to show that business cares about every customer's opinions and satisfaction (Barsky 2009, 3; Levy, 2013, 58; Couzin & Grappone 2013, 221). The hotels should develop a policy for responding to reviews, including time limits, writing style, checklists, recommendations, etc., to make ORM procedures work on regular and systematic basis (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 275), as well as to hire right people with strong writing skills for this position (Levy 2013, 58). The employees responsible for ORM should cover all feedback, responding to positive and negative comments, however Barsky (2009, 2) emphasizes that negative reviews should be answered first. Promptness is a key issue in ORM. (ReviewPro, 19 October 2019, 15).

Unfortunately, many hoteliers do not respond to negative feedback, as they believe that a customer who had a negative experience will no longer return to the hotel. All materials devoted to ORM urge to communicate with the guest and treat negative reviews as an opportunity to improve the business. According to Baer (2016, 34), responding to complaints can not only return customers, but encourage other customers to enter into a dispute with dissatisfied customers. In any case, through the complaint the business gets valuable information to improve some processes.

Responding to negative reviews is a very important part of the online management review and direct proof that the hotel takes care of the guests and takes responsibility. (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 221) These actions are highly appreciated by potential hotel guests who see that the management is listening to customer's opinion and working on improvements (Litvin & Hoffman, 2012, 142).

Summarizing the recommendations of various authors, a professional response to a negative review should contain: gratitude for the time spent on feedback, reassurance, apologies for negative experience, an explanation of the incorrect operation, explanation the steps that will be taken to prevent it from happening again, suggestions for improvement, allowance the guest to contact offline if follow up discussion is needed, invitation back (Barsky 2009, 2; Couzin & Grappone, 2013, 226-227)

Responding to a review containing negative and positive aspects, hotel management should emphasize the positive side, not stopping entirely on the negative experience. Responding to positive feedback should be the easiest way: thanking reviewer for the feedback, reinforcing the positive aspects of guest experience, using the opportunity to congratulate hotel staff on providing good service or quality (personalizing, if possible), inviting guest back. All the answers should be personalized, focused on key issues, imbued with empathy and "humanized". The guest must be sure that the real person is behind the answer. (ReviewPro, 19 October 2019, 1-33)

According to Levy, Duan & Boo (2013, 58), the tasks of an online management review cannot be outsourced. Responding to reviews should be carried out by in-house staff, who's involved into the daily hotel life, operations and service, and pretty familiar with the hotel property.

2.3.4 Learn

„Learning from reviews and taking action is a crucial element of any review management plan” (Couzin & Grappone 2013, 99). Information obtained through monitoring should be carefully analyzed and used for business improvement. Early research has shown that customer feedback analysis helps to evaluate business performance, to facilitate organizational learning (Babbar and Koufteros 2008, 822), improve service quality and create a competitive advantage (Lusch, 2007). Thus, after monitoring, filtering, responding, the next steps in the online review management process should be analysis and taking an action.

Modern ORM tools (ReviewPro, Revinate) process metadata based on guest feedback and offer hotels a semantic analysis of the work of each department. The results are presented in convenient metrics that clearly show the strengths and weaknesses of the hotel, indicators of such areas as services, amenities, room cleanliness, service, location, price-quality ratio, etc., as well as the dynamics of changes in those indicators.

Specialized software significantly simplifies the process of collecting and analysis of meta-data, but unfortunately, the user license is not available for all businesses. Alternatively, data obtained from priority communication and sales channels (OTA, review sites, Facebook business-accounts) can be processed and analysed.

Findings should be discussed with hotel staff responsible for operations on regular basis, that's why the hotels should organize meetings to discuss guest feedback (Barsky 2009, 3; Couzin & Grappone 2013, 102). Such actions allow the hotel management and department heads to keep abreast of the current problems, as well as quickly take measures to improve the quality of services and maintenance. Regular staff also should be well informed. The importance of online feedback should be understood in the training process (ReviewPro, 19 October 2019, 6). Since the most important part of online reputation management takes place on property, employees should understand the risks of mistreating guests. Staff should be trained and empowered to exceed guest expectations and prevent in-house issues from escalating to negative online reviews. (ReviewPro, 19 October 2019, 26). Positive feedback should also be taken into account, recognizing the good work of employees and motivating them.

Baer (2016, 5) proposes a positive attitude to any type of feedback, since dissatisfied customers provide valuable information that can help eliminate problems which are harmful for business. People writing negative reviews represent a small fraction of the customer base, while the circumstances that caused dissatisfaction can be significant for the entire customer base. Implementing service improvement actions, hotels may influence the volumes of positive reviews in the future, which undoubtedly leads to business growth (Murphy 2011, 677).

2.3.5 Improve

Nowadays in tourism, where services, emotions and relationships are crucially important elements, service delivery competition is becoming increasingly significant to create remarkable customer experience. Hotels should focus on customer satisfaction and set it up as a main goal, since it drives the revenues of the company. Satisfied customers contribute to the growth of the business, increase its market share and willingly make repeat purchases. (Chen & Tabari 2017, 55).

Guest feedback is directly proportional to the guest experience. The provision of quality service entails positive emotions that guests share online. Negative feedback is caused by operational failures that must be immediately addressed. According to Bell and Zemke (1987, 32), the service providers should resolve the failure as soon as possible to avoid

further damage. A failure in service delivery is an issue, since the probability of reaching zero errors within service process is extremely minimal. (Hess 2008, 385). However, Chen and Tabari (2017, 55) state that operational failure does not always mean loss of customers. A timely response to a complaint is a way to return their loyalty.

According to ReviewPro, hotels should be “open-minded” and show willingness to help guests solve their problems. Moreover, on-site communication with the guest is strongly recommended to prevent negative emotions before the check-out will be done. (ReviewPro 2016, 15)

Among the reasons of disappointment, the imbalance between expectations and experience is most often mentioned. “If the expectation exceeds the actual experience, the service quality is perceived as unsatisfactory, resulting in a disappointed customer” (Chen & Tabari 2017, 55). Thus, relevant corporate information via official channels greatly narrows the distance between guest expectations and experience, minimizing the risk to get negative experience from the very beginning. This applies to both property and the list of available services.

Customers’ satisfaction generates revenues, employees drive the guest experience. PwC’s study 2018 revealed, that 46% of all customers will abandon a brand if the employees are not knowledgeable. Moreover, according to the study, front-line employees should not only be involved into the improvement process, they should be empowered to influence the improvement process. Ritz-Carlton Hotels allowed the employees use up to \$2000 to rescue a bad guest experience. Thus, PwC’s researches suggest to give employees more freedom to solve customer problems without the permission of the manager. According to study, policies that reduce friction for customers and empower employees bring higher customer satisfaction. (PwC 2018, 14)

Many studies indicate that an extremely bad or extremely good experience encourages guests to write reviews (Hennig-Thurau 2004, 44; Litvin 2008, 460). Nowadays, when customers have become too demanding, accommodation service providers should be more creative to win the service delivery battle. Remarkable experience is definitely about positive emotions. Unfortunately, today quality products and excellent services are no longer levers to write a review. Hotels should offer the guests unique solutions to be noticed and remembered. Therefore, hotels should be inventive to create value and cultivate the “wow” factor.

2.3.6 Encourage new reviews

Since tourism and hospitality industry nowadays is highly involved in online sales and online reviews became increasingly important, hotels can influence their online reputation by encouraging guest reviews. According to Cornell University study, a larger number of positive reviews correlated with increased bookings and the ability to raise rates.

(Anderson 2012, 11). The volumes of guest feedback can be considered an indicator of the hotel's popularity, the fewest amount of online-reviews mean that the hotel is less popular. Gaining a higher volume of guest feedback leads to improvement of competitive online position and visibility for potential guests. Vermeulen & Seegers (2009, 2) established, that different types of online reviews, positive and negative ones, increase guests' awareness and improve attitude toward hotels, including the less-known hotels.

Customers value objective opinions delivered through trusted feedback platforms (OTA) and online review sites, because of their independence from official content (Forman, Ghose, & Wiesenfeld 2008, 294). Many ORM researchers (Litvin 2008, 463; Levy 2013, 58) urge hotels to collect reviews from satisfied guests. However, Couzin and Grappone (2013, 101) note that the task of the online management review is not only to collect positive reviews, but also to understand what aspects can be improved to increase the volume of positive feedback in the future. Hotels should enable customers to think about what kind of feedback they could leave without indicating in which direction the feedback should be. Baer (2016, 3) also advises to encourage more reviews, but doesn't recommend do this in an assertive manner.

There are two ways to ask for feedback: personal request on-site at the hotel, which can be described as a way with "human touch"; notification by email after check out, when the guest left the hotel. Couzin & Grappone (2013, 106) outline the following actions can be performed to increase the number of objective reviews:

- the way of writing review should be easy for the guest,
- the process of encouraging new reviews should be clear for the staff,
- a wide audience should be targeted, not only happy customers,
- guests should not feel any pressure, they should be aware that their honest review would be much appreciated,
- guests should be contacted quickly so that guest experience is fresh on their minds,
- the way of asking for reviews should be brand-personalized and keep going with company's image,

- the encouraging new reviews should be ongoing task, since guest are looking for fresh information about the services,
- the process of encouraging should be measurable, to follow whether it works and adjust accordingly.

Encourage new reviews is necessary in order to guarantee the flow of relevant information, which identifies the current situation with the hotel property and service. Outdated reviews have no value in terms of purchase decision making (Browning 2013, 29).

Along with time relevance, objectivity was also indicated as critical trigger for deciding making by many users. Gretzel (2007, 7) recommends to encourage new reviews by decreasing the barriers to writing, which seems like more effective strategy than rewarding the guests. Guests should be motivated by the fact that they contribute to the process of improving the quality of hotel services, support good accommodation service provider, help other users to have remarkable experience or, conversely, to prevent negative one. Stimulation of reviewers can be regarded as one of the actions of rating manipulation, since stimulated reviews cannot be objective. The goal of ORM is to get feedback about real customer experience, that's why hotels should encourage reviews without indicating the any direction.

Since online reviews drive guest purchase decisions, they are crucial to the success of businesses: positive comments and high ratings can yield financial gains, negative reviews can damage reputation and cause monetary loss, online review systems became attractive targets for opinion fraud. Opinion manipulators create paid reviews, spreading slanderous spam or falsely promote target product (Akoglu, Chandy & Faloutsos 2013, 2). According to policy of review sites, falsification of reviews entails serious consequences. Misleading and fake reviews are carefully monitored by review sites and its filter algorithms, that's why it's not recommended.

2.3.7 ORM framework

The circle framework presented on Figure 8, focuses on online reviews and online review management actions that can be applied to create remarkable experience and drive revenues.

The core divided into five main sections illustrates user generated content. 5 sections epitomize the types of UCG channels. Those are the most popular hotel-related channels used by guests to leave feedback: OTA, review sites, social networks, blogs and virtual

communities. According to literature overview, hotels should focus on all types of channels, since information obtained from different independent sources makes the picture complete. A clear and objective vision of online reputation gives a competitive advantage.

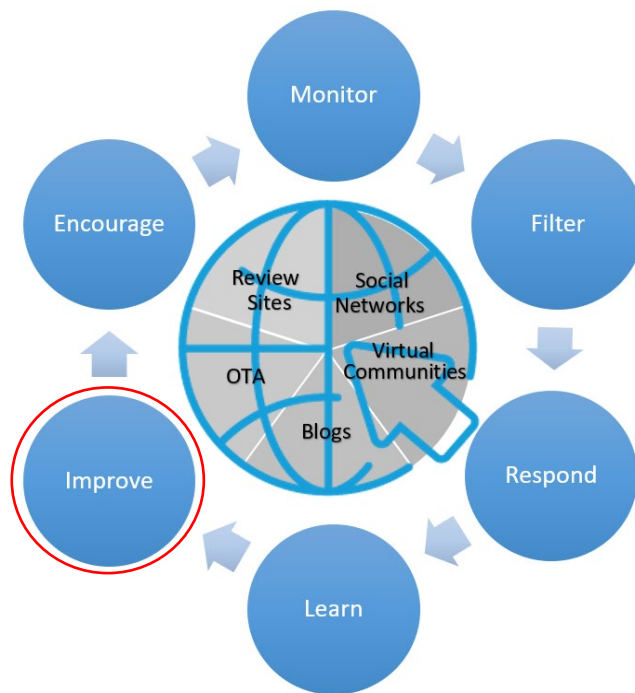


Figure 8 Online review management framework

The smaller circles rotated around the core represent 6 basic actions that must be taken by hotels to carry out effective online review management: monitor, filter, respond, learn, improve, encourage. The figure shows that this circle is continuous as well as the process of working with online reviews.

The monitoring should be an ongoing task entrusted to a competent person and focused on priority feedback channels. One of the tasks is benchmarking - tracking the status of competitors is the part of the game. The next step is filtering: the goal is to identify information useful to the business and delegate to the appropriate department, bypassing misleading and fake reviews. Opinion fraud cases should be reported to partner sites. The response stage implies promptness and professionalism. All reviews that have passed the filtering process should be answered, including positive and negative ones. Many ORM studies have shown that in-house staff familiar with the system and property should take over the task of responding online reviews. Responses to guest reviews should be personalized and focused on key issues.

Analysis of guest reviews should be reported and discussed at staff meetings. Special software (ReviewPro, Revinat etc) significantly saves time and human resources at the

stages of analysis and monitoring, centralizing data and providing semantic analysis. Front-line staff should be aware of problematic issues and importance of online reviews. The work that entailed positive reviews should be awarded, negative cases investigated and analysed. Guest reviews provide valuable insights for the business, identifying strengths to be proud of and weaknesses to improve.

Improvement (highlighted on the figure) is a crucial objective of online review management. Having received signalling information, hotels should take an action immediately to eliminate problematic issues. Guest feedback is directly proportional to the guest experience. A positive experience generates favourable emotions that guests share online. Working on the service quality, front-line staff should be empowered to influence this process, thereby increasing the number of positive reviews. To prevent any negativity before it becomes online, in-house communication with the guest is strongly recommended. Simultaneously, relevant corporate information via official channels greatly narrows the distance between guest expectations and reality, minimizing the risk to get negative experience from the very beginning.

In addition to providing excellent service, hotels should take active position to increase the number of online reviews. Encouraging is the final stage of the online management review cycle. Since the number of reviews affects the volumes of the bookings, this thesis offers 2 ways to encourage new reviews: electronic notification sent offline and in-house involvement accomplished by the human touch. The way to leave feedback should be as convenient as possible for the guest and understandable to staff who should be 100% involved in the encouraging process. Reviews from independent sources integrated into the home page will make this procedure more honest and transparent. It's strictly prohibited to stimulate guests commercially and pay for reviews to increase their volumes, since those actions are fraught with loss of confidence in the business.

Having drawn conclusions, taking actions for improvement and encouraging new reviews, the cycle repeats: new online reviews appear on the web, hotels are working on improvements to create a remarkable experience, positive moods grow, which leads to increased revenues.

3 Methodological part

In this chapter a case study is presented as a research methodology that has commonly used in social sciences. It looks at data collection and sampling methods and analysis techniques. Further, various forms of validity and reliability tests are discussed.

3.1 Multiple case study

Qualitative case study explores contemporary phenomena and processes through a detailed contextual analysis of events or conditions and their relationships. According to Yin (1984, 23) case study research method can be defined “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.”

Yin (2014, 4) argues, a case study as a research approach can be applied when: questions of “how” and “why” should be answered; the interviewer cannot influence the behaviour of respondents; contextual conditions should be covered; the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are blurred.

According to Yin, case studies can be classified as explanatory, research or descriptive (Yin 2014, 7), as well as single, holistic and multiple case studies (Yin 2014, 5). Since this thesis explores the situations, in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear single set of outcomes, and the goal is to replicate findings and predict similar results across cases, based on a theory, it can be defined as exploratory multiple-case study.

Case studies are applicable to theory developing and testing. Case studies examine individuals, groups, organizations, and situations that might be referred as “cases”. The purpose of the case study is to obtain information to explain the unique features of each case and find a relationship between them (Ghauri & Firth 2009, 30). Case study may analyse one or several cases (Gerring 2007, 20)

According to Beeton (2005, 37), case studies are widely used in tourism research, including the works of Rapoport and Rapoport (1975), Craik (1991), Murphy (1991), Harris and Leiper (1995), Singh and Singh (1999) etc. «Case studies have the advantage of being suitable for both the more quantitative hypothetico-deductive and the holistic-inductive paradigms of tourism research, demonstrating a flexibility not evident in many alternative research modes, that’s why they are used extensively in tourism research» (Beeton 2005, 37).

The following aspects were triggers when the case study was chosen as the research methodology for this thesis:

- online review management is not sufficiently studied tourism discipline to apply traditional research methods, that's the reason why alternative ones are chosen;
- online review management is about tourism, which can be referred as social science, where case studies are widely used as a research methodology;
- since this thesis proposes to improve the knowledge of Baltic hoteliers about online review management and offers framework and guidelines as a summary of theoretical part, it might be considered as a theory developing that hoteliers should follow to;
- since all research participants are practicing ORM tools and techniques, this thesis proposes to test the theory, answering to the questions "how" and "why" Baltic hoteliers apply their ORM strategies;
- and finally, this thesis proposes to draw conclusions that explain the unique features of each case and establish the relationship between them.

3.2 Data collection

Patton (1990, 468) urges the use of multiple data sources, thereby increasing the reliability of the data. Potential data sources may include, but are not limited to: documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artefacts, observations.

Rubin & Rubin (1995, 145) defines interview as guided conversation that is usually one of the most important sources of case study evidence. Silverman (1997, 113) determines interview as "pipeline for transmitting knowledge", which "should only be used to obtain information that cannot be obtained in any other way" (Darke 1998, 283). This refers to information that is publicly unavailable.

Case study allow three types of interviews: structured interviews, which involve pre-defined questions, with a limited set of response categories; semi-structured interviews, that allow the researcher to refocus the questions, or ask more information (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 120); and unstructured interviews, which utilize open-ended questions and allow generate rich data and uncover unexpected evidence.

In this study, semi-structured interviews are used as the primary method of data collection. An interview guide used as an aid to conducting interviews, includes various types of

questions focused on research objectives. Closed questions with different answer options help respondents to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of the study and become more relaxed, open questions suggest to discuss on the topic of online management review and gain more additional information.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face with executive employees involved into the ORM processes. With the permission of the respondents, the interview was recorded on a voice recorder, the interview guide was used as an auxiliary tool for making notes. All the appointments with study participants were planned and agreed in advance. Some of them preferred to delve into the essence of the interview before it was conducted, thus having an interview guide was very reasonable. Three languages, including Estonian, English and Russian, were used depending on the language preferences of the respondents. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable environment for respondents - directly at their workplaces. Average interview duration was 40 minutes.

3.3 Case selection

The selection of suitable cases is crucial for any case study. Since the goal of theoretical sampling is not to undertake representative capture of all possible variations, but to gain a deeper understanding of the cases in order to facilitate the development of theories (Glaser & Strauss 1967, 71).

This study was conducted in favour of Hestia Hotel Group, an Estonian-Finnish capital-based hotel chain which operates 10 hotels in Baltics. The chain offers three- and four-star accommodation solutions for guests with various preferences. The service portfolio includes 2 comfort class hotels - Hestia Hotel Seaport, Hestia Hotel Susi; 4 superior class hotels - Hestia Hotel Europa, Hestia Hotel Ilmarine, Hestia Hotel Jugend, and Hestia Hotel Kentmanni; 3 old town class hotels - Hestia Hotel Barons, Hestia Hotel Maestro, Hestia Hotel Radi un Draugi; and 1 SPA hotel - Hestia Hotel Laulasmaa SPA. (Hestia Hotel Group, 2019)

In the context of this study, 15 hotels were explored, 11 four-star hotels and 4 three-star hotels, 3 of them located in Riga and all the rest based in Estonia (7 hotels in Tallinn and 5 outside the city). One of the objectives was to compare different approaches to ORM processes according to location, star category, type, targeting, organizational structure and corporate values.

Table 3 The list of case study hotels

		No of stars	No of rooms	Location	Type	Targets / Segmentation	Classification	Interviewee's position
1	Hestia Hotel Jugend	4*	88	Riga, Latvia	Business hotel	BIT, FIT, LGR	Local chain hotel	Sales manager
2	Hestia Hotel Europa	4*	185	Tallinn, Estonia	Business hotel	BIT, BGR, FIT	Local chain hotel	Front office manager
3	Hestia Hotel Laulasmaa SPA	4*	147	Harjumaa, Estonia	SPA hotel	FIT, FAM, BGR	Local chain hotel	Front office manager
4	Hestia Hotel Ilmarine	4*	105	Tallinn, Estonia	Business hotel	FIT, BIT, LGR	Local chain hotel	Hotel manager
5	Hestia Hotel Barons	4*	33	Tallinn, Estonia	Boutique hotel	FIT	Local chain hotel	Hotel manager
6	Opera SPA & Hotel	4*	108	Riga, Latvia	SPA hotel	FIT, BIT	Independent hotel	Front office manager
7	Monika by Centrum Hotels	4*	80	Riga, Latvia	Business hotel	FIT, BIT, LGR	Local chain hotel	Front office manager
8	Narva-Jõesuu SPA & Sanatoorium	3*	79	Narva-Jõesuu, Estonia	SPA hotel	FIT, FAM	Independent hotel	General manager
9	Lavendel SPA	3*	50	Viimsi, Estonia	SPA hotel	FIT, FAM	Independent hotel	Sales & Marketing manager
10	Viking SPA Hotell	3*	154	Pärnu, Estonia	SPA hotel	FIT, FAM, LGR	Independent hotel	General manager
11	Tallinn Viimsi SPA	4*	112	Viimsi, Estonia	SPA hotel	FIT, FAM, LGR	Local chain hotel	Sales manager
12	Tallink Conference & SPA Hotel	4*	300	Tallinn, Estonia	SPA hotel	FIT, FAM, BGR, LGR	Local chain hotel	Head of sales department
13	Hotel Santa-Barbara	3*	53	Tallinn, Estonia	Boutique hotel	FIT, LGR	Independent hotel	General manager
14	Hotel Palace by TallinnHotels	4*	79	Tallinn, Estonia	Business hotel	BIT, BGR, FIT	Local chain hotel	Sales manager
15	Radisson Blu Olümpia	4*	390	Tallinn, Estonia	Business hotel	BIT, BGR, FIT, LGR	International chain	Marketing manager + Guest relations manager

*BIT - business individual travelers, FIT - free individual travelers, FAM – families, LGR - leisure groups, BGR - business groups

Local chains were represented as the majority, namely 9 hotels, including 5 Hestia hotels joined the group in different times. 5 hotels operate on the market as single independent hotels. The large international chains are represented quite minimally in Estonia, and only one representative of the international market players agreed to participate in the study. 6 of 15 hotels position themselves as SPA hotels, 7 categorize themselves as superior business hotels, 4 hotels have strong conference & event background, and only two have classify themselves as boutique hotels - both located in Old Town of Tallinn.

All the cases should meet at least one criterion, in this particular case it means, that hotel should practice online review management. Since practical objective of the study argues to analyse the ORM processes within the Hestia Hotel Group and outside of it, and the methodological commitment requires to explore the cases and find the connections between them, 5 Hestia hotels and 10 of their competitors were analysed as the part of this

study. The list of the case study hotels offers a more detailed look at the common points of competition between these hotels, such as type, segmentation, and location.

This study examined independent hotels in the market, local chain-branded hotels, as well as huge representatives of the international hotel business (unfortunately, represented in the minority) of Estonia and Latvia. One of the most interesting aspects of the study was to compare the approach of managing online reviews according to these criteria. The number of rooms of the respondent hotels varies from 33 to 390.

The most challenging was to get confirmation for the interview from international chain-branded hotels. Unfortunately, Accor hotels and Sokos hotels, widely represented in the Baltics, have not expressed their willingness to be interviewed.

3.4 Analysis methods

The process of analysing data in case study is challenging: each single case should follow one analysing strategy. Yin (2014, 143-168) suggests five types of analysing data implied for case studies: pattern matching, linking data to propositions, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis.

Since in this thesis examines 15 different cases, cross-case synthesis strategy with the pattern matching is applied. The conceptual ORM framework, presented as the logical conclusion of the theoretical part, acts as a pattern that identifies who will and will not be included in the study and provides the researcher with the opportunity to gather general constructs. (Baxter & Jack 2008, 553) Methodological task of the researcher is to find relationships between cases and match them with a conceptual ORM framework based on theory. Therefore, all individual cases will be combined into a common analysis.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

Each researcher should take into account that reliability and validity are the two criteria that ultimately determine the quality of a study. Altheide & Johnson (1994, 588) point out the difference between reliability and validity: reliability is associated with stability of findings, and validity determines the truthfulness. Validity and reliability enhance transparency, and reduce any bias in qualitative research. Since reliability and validity are used to improve the accuracy of research evaluation, these are crucial concepts in qualitative research (Tavakol & Dennick 2011, 53). Without those two concepts, it will be challenging to define the effects of measurement errors on theoretical relationships that have been mea-

sured (Forza 2002, 156). In addition to data and data sources, Saunders (2009, 194) recommends to assess reliability and validity of the methods used for data collection collect data.

Testing data, data sources and methods for reliability, triangulation is a primary strategy that allows the research to analyse data of multiple sources and understand the experience of a common phenomenon (Denzin 2009, 82). The collection and comparison of the data increases data quality based on the principles of approximation and the evidence of findings and enables the researcher to saturate the data (Fusch & Ness 2015, 1411). Following this strategy, it's highly recommended: to specify the research question and provide propositions; to design case study in accordance to research question; to apply purposive sampling strategies; to collect data systematically; and to analyse data in a correct way. (Baxter & Jack 2008, 556)

To ensure validity, 15 case interviews were planned to obtain sufficient information for the study. In order to provide valid sampling, the author targeted the hotels with various organizational structures: independent hotels, local chain-branded hotels and international chain-branded hotels. To achieve these goals, 20 accommodation service providers of Estonia and Latvia were contacted. 5 of target hotels haven't expressed the willingness to be interviewed. The most challenging was to get confirmation from international chain-branded hotels, such as Accor hotels and Sokos hotels, widely represented in the Baltics. However, 15 case interviews were conducted, thus planned number of the interviews to obtain sufficient evidence for the study was achieved and sampling regulations followed.

The interview guide was designed in accordance with the conceptual ORM framework, based on theory and presented in the first part of this thesis. Since this study analyses ORM cases, competent employees responsible for ORM procedures in the target hotels were selected as interviewees. All respondents were asked to answer to the same questions, and all interviews were conducted for a short period - from February to March 2019, which also indicates the reliability and validity of the data source. Moreover, the anonymity of the publication of research results is guaranteed to all respondents: serial numbers that can be seen in the list of case hotels are intentionally shuffled, therefore, the data collected through the interviews can be considered as unbiased data. Thus, 15 target hotels provided reliable and valid information for analysis and conclusions.

4 Empirical part

The theoretical part covered two main directions of this thesis - the impact of online reviews on consumer behaviour and buying intentions in the hotel industry, as well as online review management tools and practices. Current chapter suggests the findings obtained through the interviews with the Baltic hotel representatives. Respondents were asked to discuss the importance of online reviews and its impact on business performance and share their ORM experiences.

4.1 ORM importance

According to interviews, all case hotels keep tracking their online reputation and guest reviews about their businesses posted on the web. They believe in the power of word of mouth, especially in online space, as the Internet has significantly reshaped the hospitality industry:

„Today, people are quite indifferent to beautiful furniture in your rooms or delicious food in your restaurant, they are looking on Internet for the general opinion about your brand. As Estonians say, no one is smart alone, as all together“. (Hotel 13)

Some of case hotels (Hotels 5, 11, 14) consider eWom as a marketing tool that hotels use to attract potential guests, since “strong rating position creates a competitive advantage” (Hotel 11). 2 out of 15 hotels (Hotels 7, 9) also mentioned that positive eWom cannot be regulated by good marketing, but by good service. Hotel 10 points to the tight relationship between word of mouth and customer loyalty, since the loyalty is key to a heart of their target audience – a domestic tourist who makes repeat purchases:

„ We're very oriented to local customer, we fight for his loyalty every day, and our country is too small to ignore such an important power as word of mouth “. (Hotel 10)

Further, the study participants were invited to discuss the impact of online reviews on the hospitality industry in general and their business in particular, as well as determine the relationship between online reviews and financial performance.

All case hotels agree that online reviews have an impact on their businesses, since nowadays potential guests read the reviews before making a reservation. According to 12 out of 15 respondents, there's indirect connection between online reviews and financial performance. However, 3 hotels (Hotels 1, 4, 13) state that online reviews affect their pricing:

„The connection between online reviews and financial performance is significant: low scores entail low prices and low revenues, while advertising costs are increasing to attract new customers.” (Hotel 1)

“Any deviation for 0.1 points in Booking.com ranking changes room revenue up to 4 euros, thus, there’s a strong connection between online reviews and financial performance.” (Hotel 13)

5 case hotels (Hotels 3, 6, 8, 12 and 14) note that relationship between online reviews and financial performance is driven by segmentation. Online reviews are crucial for those hotels, who have FIT segment (individual travellers) in focus. Usually, those are boutique hotels with smaller amount of guest rooms and other accommodation service providers who use OTA as primary sales channel. According to interviewees, for leisure groups who book the hotels through travel agencies, online ratings don’t play significant role:

„Online reviews are very important for online solo travellers. Before they go somewhere, they’re looking for reviews. Online FIT client as a segment is not primary for our hotel, the most of our revenues we get through the travel agencies. So, I would say it doesn’t affect us much. The connection between online reviews and financial performance does exist. Positive reviews attract guests, the number of guests increase and revenues increase too.” (Hotel 8)

„In the case of our hotel, the connection is super strong, since 70% of sales go through OTA channels and directly. If a guest reads negative feedback about us, obviously, he will not choose us. In case of positive feedback, with a high probability he will give preference to our hotel.” (Hotel 14)

5 case hotels (Hotels 4, 5, 11, 13, 15) point out, that online reviews matter in terms of competition: the winner will be that who has better guest review score. According to Hotel 13 and Hotel 15, the competition is rising dramatically in low season and crisis situations, when the demand clearly exceeds the supply. Thus, the relationship between online reviews and financial performance definitely exists, and affect the sales.

All respondents unanimously agreed that today, in the era of big data, online review management as part of the hotel business is crucially important and cannot be ignored, however, most of them found their knowledge about ORM superficial (except hotels 9, 12), however, all of them perform ORM functions since Internet conquered the travel market.

Further respondents were asked to discuss the role of online reviews in the purchasing decision process and Kotler's 5-stage model. According to interviewees, user generated content has become a trigger in a purchase decision making process. The vast majority of respondents, namely 14 out of 15, consider that online reviews are crucial at the Evaluation of Alternatives stage:

“A high guest review score shows the level of service quality. This figure is especially important at the stage of evaluation alternatives. A combo of needs, opportunities and online feedback is a trigger in the purchasing decision process.” (Hotel 13)

12 hotels note that it also matters at the information search stage. In many cases, both stages were mentioned as a combo. According to respondents, online reviews are less important at post-purchase (11 votes) and need recognition (6 votes) stages.

4.2 Nature of online reviews

According to interview results, today in Baltic states, online reviews prevail over offline reviews. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – rarely, 5 – often) different types of guest feedback in terms of frequency of receipt online and offline. Online is presented as a virtual space with open access for all potential customers. Offline assumes a private manner of communication between the client and the business, including on the Internet (personal message, e-mail, call, chat etc).

Table 4 shows the results of each individual case hotel, and also summarizes the average coefficients by a scale of 1 to 5 for each type of feedback and its affiliation with the online or offline environment. According to interviews, in the online environment, the most popular types of reviews are: seller ratings (4.8 vs. 1.2), company reviews (4.2 vs. 3.0), complaint/compliment reports (4.1 vs. 3.3), product/service reviews (3.9 vs. 2.9). Professional reviews happen rarely in case hotels. Their presence in the online and offline environment is pretty equable with a slight margin in favour of online (2.7 vs. 2.0).

In the offline environment, the leading positions are occupied by Customer satisfaction surveys (3.5 vs. 1.6). that cannot be publicly available in their original form, and Customer Q&A (4.2 vs. 2.1). According to the respondents, if the guest cannot find official information, he will prefer a private manner of communication in order to get an answer to the question. A significant difference between the coefficients indicates that these types of feedback have been digitalized. The remaining types of feedback are in relative balance in terms of online and offline, since the difference between the coefficients is not very significant.

Table 4 Guest reviews by type Online vs. Offline

	Product service review		Company review		Customer Q&A		Customer satisfaction survey		Complaint / Compliment reports		Seller ratings		Professional review	
	Online	Offline	Online	Offline	Online	Offline	Online	Offline	Online	Offline	Online	Offline	Online	Offline
Hotel 1	3	5	2	4	3	5	5	0	5	3	5	0	4	0
Hotel 2	4	2	5	3	1	5	1	5	5	4	5	2	1	2
Hotel 3	5	2	5	2	1	5	1	5	3	2	5	1	1	1
Hotel 4	3	2	3	2	1	4	1	3	3	3	3	1	2	1
Hotel 5	4	3	3	2	2	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Hotel 6	5	1	5	5	1	5	1	5	4	4	5	1	1	1
Hotel 7	5	4	5	4	2	4	0	2	3	5	5	0	3	1
Hotel 8	3	5	3	5	3	5	5	2	5	3	5	1	5	2
Hotel 9	5	3	5	3	2	3	1	4	5	4	5	1	1	4
Hotel 10	2	3	5	3	1	4	1	5	5	4	5	1	5	2
Hotel 11	5	5	5	4	2	4	1	2	5	3	5	1	4	4
Hotel 12	5	3	3	1	5	5	1	5	3	3	5	2	3	3
Hotel 13	2	1	4	2	5	2	2	5	4	3	5	1	1	1
Hotel 14	5	2	5	2	2	4	1	1	4	2	5	1	2	3
Hotel 15	3	2	5	3	1	5	1	5	4	3	5	1	3	1
Coefficient	3.9	2.9	4.2	3.0	2.1	4.3	1.6	3.5	4.1	3.3	4.8	1.2	2.7	2.0

4.3 Positive and negative reviews

Further, study participants were asked to rate positive and negative feedback as a percentage and share their experiences in terms of speed of responding. The topic of ignoring negative feedback was also touched upon. In addition, respondents were invited to discuss the usefulness of negative feedback in the sense of customer care and service quality. Table 5 shows the results of each individual hotel and the average coefficient. According to interviews, case hotels receive more positive feedback than negative, average among all respondents was 70% versus 30%.

Table 5 Online reviews the hotels used to get: Positive vs. Negative

Hotel ID	Positive	Negative
Hotel 1	70	30
Hotel 2	52	48
Hotel 3	80	20
Hotel 4	70	30
Hotel 5	85	15
Hotel 6	70	30
Hotel 7	60	40
Hotel 8	85	15
Hotel 9	80	20
Hotel 10	75	25
Hotel 11	80	20
Hotel 12	60	40
Hotel 13	55	45
Hotel 14	90	10
Hotel 15	50	50
AVG	70,8	29,2

All case hotels without exception focus attention on negative reviews, demonstrating a wise and positive attitude. All participants of the study outlined the importance of negative feedback in terms of creating a good service and remarkable experience:

The optimistic trend of having prevailing positive feedback has been overshadowed by the fact that most respondents don't work properly with positive reviews. According to interviewees, responding to positive online reviews allows the use of standard phrases, such as "thank you" and "welcome back", and even templates. Some case hotels do not respond to positive reviews at all. All respondents point out that responding to positive online reviews takes significantly less time than negative ones, since negative cases need to be investigated.

„Negative feedback is our engine that moves us forward. We receive negative feedback, establish the causes of negativity, eliminate shortcomings and improve services, which makes our business more successful.“(Hotel 1)

„Negative feedback is a beacon on the path to excellence. Guests tell you about your flaws. You work on flaws - you get a competitive advantage.“(Hotel 8)

Processing negative reviews is the most time-consuming action, which takes about 1-3 working days and whole process looks as follows: first, the ORM specialist identifies the upset guest's identity, then an investigation of the negative case follows; after the situation is discussed with all the involved departments and problem's solution found, the ORM specialist contacts the guest, providing apologies and compensation. Many respondents also noted, that negative feedback should be used to analyse and improve the service, and if possible, be prevented before the guest leaves the hotel.

The study also showed that 11 out of 15 hotels had to leave guest feedback unanswered. Besides positive reviews, various reasons were given to justify ignoring negative online-reviews: 3 hotels ignore fake or misleading reviews, 4 hotels leave a feedback unanswered if it's about things that cannot be changed (location, architectural features, pool size etc). 4 hotels prefer not to enter into a discussion with those guests who write their reviews under the influence of strong emotions. And only 4 hotels respond to all reviews without any exceptions.

“Yes, there were several cases we ignored, as we dealt with misleading comments. That's sort of the case, when guest wants to gain some profit by manipulation. The best solution is to suspend this ping-pong game at the initial stage.” (Hotel 7)

„There have been times when we ignored misleading reviews. Moreover, we have repeatedly been convinced that we cannot rely on guest feedback only, since there are always two sides to every story and the truth usually lies somewhere in the middle. That's why we involve the

front-line employees in the analysis of negative cases before to reply, trying to listen to their version of the story too. "(Hotel 13)

4.4 Fake reviews

One of the goals of the study was to find out how often do hotels experience such reviews and how do they fight with them? 9 hotels declared that they had never dealt with fake reviews, and misleading reviews are not the same thing. 6 hotels, however, confirmed that fake reviews had been presented in their lifetime, and in 100% of cases those reviews were negative ones.

According to interviews, all incoming online reviews pass through the verification process. Identification of the guest via hotel data system is one of the ways to detect deceptive content actively used by all case hotels:

"All incoming negative feedback should be carefully checked – who's the person that stands behind this, and each negative case should be investigated before you'll start to reply to guest." (Hotel 6)

The topic of rating manipulation was further discussed. All respondents never accepted commercial offers for paid reviews or denigrating their competitors, but 4 hotels (Hotels 2, 11, 13 and 14) received such offers:

"Yes, once we got offer to pay for positive fake reviews about our business. It was marked as spam, actually. We see no any reason to pay for reviews, online reputation is built on the quality of service." (Hotel 2)

"Once we received a proposal for manipulating ratings. My attitude to such proposals is zero tolerance. Such methods distort the meaning of guest feedback, which is the basis of service improvement. A good guest experience is what encourages people to write positive reviews. The problem of bad service cannot be solved with the help of fake reviews." (Hotel 13)

Many hotels, in addition to those that received commercial offers for rating manipulation, also expressed their intolerant attitude to opinion fraud, since a good service cannot be faked, it can only be provided. (Hotels 0 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12).

All respondents also agreed that authenticity of a review is directly dependent on the channel it was posted.

4.5 Online review environment

Further, respondents were asked to evaluate guest feedback channels according to three criteria: volumes, reliability, importance for business by a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – less, 5 – more), then average coefficients were derived summing up the overall results for each channel. The following numbers were obtained:

Table 6 Online review channels

	Volumes	Reliability	Importance
1.	OTA (4.8)	OTA (4.8)	OTA (5)
2.	Review sites (3.4)	Review sites (4.1)	Review sites (4.1)
3.	Social Media (2.9)	Social Media (3.3)	Social Media (3.9)
4.	Blogs (1.9)	Blogs (2.9)	Blogs (3.2)
5.	Virtual Communities (1.3)	Virtual Communities (1.7)	Virtual Communities (1.8)

Most volumes of online reviews the hotels get through OTA (volumes: 4.8; reliability: 4.8; importance: 5), as OTA nowadays are ones of the main sales channels in hospitality industry. For the same reason, online reviews obtained from OTA are the most valuable for the business. Many hotels also noted that OTA guest review scores affect their sales. All respondents unanimously believe that OTA is the most reliable source of feedback, since only those guests who made an actual purchase can write a review about the services. In addition to OTA, in descending order, according to three criteria “volumes - reliability - value for business”, TOP-5 was formed by: review sites (TripAdvisor, etc.), social networking (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), blogs, and virtual communities.

“OTA is the most reliable source of information, since only verified users who did actual purchase can leave feedback there. Nowadays, travellers quite often use OTA and review sites to get information about accommodation service providers. They can book the hotel any other way.” (Hotel 12)

The second place according to all parameters is occupied by review sites. All respondents recognize the importance of TripAdvisor as a popular USG site among travellers:

“Today, people very carefully filter online channels in terms of trust. TripAdvisor is really trustworthy source. The goal of any business is to surpass competitors and maintain a leadership position. It's critical for us to be number one TripAdvisor. Moreover, we built our marketing campaigns, according to our strong TripAdvisor positions. Customers check many online channels before making a reservation and a

high guest review score means that hotel can offer the best service in town.” (Hotel 11)

Facebook takes the middle, since most of the hotels use this source as corporate channel to share the official information and make marketing campaigns. And on the other hand, this is a perfect environment to attract new guests, since they can be easily targeted by location, age, interests etc. However, Facebook doesn't exclude the presence of fake accounts. For example, one of the respondents considers Facebook more important than a TripAdvisor:

„Facebook is also important, since we use it as marketing and sales channel. Moreover, that's the place we maintain friendly and easy-going communication with our guests. So, we use it as communication channel as well. “(Hotel 1)

According to interviews, the most controversial were blogs. The volumes of online reviews from bloggers are minimal. Almost all respondents consider this type of content biased, since blogging is a source of income. However, all hoteliers agree that blogs are important for their business, as bloggers have an impact on large audience.

“Online reviews written by bloggers do not inspire confidence, since blogging is a commercial activity. A much more honest way to influence the blogger's audience is to order ads on his channel. But in the long run, these reviews are important for the business, as each blogger has leverage to influence his audience.” (Hotel 9)

“Bloggers reviews are very important for our business, as they have their own readership. The reliability of such reviews is questionable, as they often write reviews in return for a service or money”. (Hotel 12)

Virtual communities were the most unpopular according to all three criteria. Anonymity is one of the key points, which doesn't make the content reliable. Some hotels also explain it by the fact that virtual communities are the most unexplored user content environment. Many hotels do not have access to this information:

“It's hard to say anything about virtual communities, since we don't have access there.” (Hotel 15)

“Virtual communities are quite popular in Russia, so this channel is important for us as we are Russian market-oriented hotel. Actually, travellers exchange exclusive information via forums and virtual communities.” (Hotel 13)

4.6 Online review management: practices, tools and human resources

Online review management like any other part of the hotel business (such as marketing, sales, accounting, etc.) implies the presence of a strategy, a set of guidelines and recommendations, technical tools, operational staff, and budget. Therefore, this section summarizes information about respondents according to the mentioned criteria.

The study found that the vast majority of case hotels have no strategy and guidelines to manage online reviews. Only 5 hotels (5, 9, 11, 12, 15) have guidelines that help their employees to manage online reviews, and only 2 out of 15 hotels have a strategy (Hotels 9, 11). Many of them mentioned that strategy is essential for an organization in any matter to meet goals and objectives. 8 hotels (Hotels 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15) notified, that they are currently working on strategic planning of their online reputation performance:

„The strategy is our everything. If there is a strategy, each team member knows the direction we are going and what actions should be taken to operate successfully with online reviews. In addition to responding, it is also important to be able to analyse the situation and make efforts to improve the service. All these things are the parts of one strategy.” (Hotel 1)

People responsible for ORM functions are mainly hotel-based employees from the marketing and sales department, as well as front office and hotel managers. In general, ORM tasks performed by one or two persons. If the hotel manager is involved, then the ORM tasks are distributed among other employees. None of the cases hotels have outsourcing ORM specialists. Some respondents emphasized that: “outsourcing ORM specialist is not acceptable, it should be person who knows the property and faces with hotel daily life.” (Hotel 8)

In most hotels, the employees responsible for ORM are front office managers (5 hotels), specialists from marketing department (2 hotels), and tandem of marketing specialists and front office managers (5 hotels). Only one hotel has a special job position to manage online reviews from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m. every business day. In one of the hotels, a sales manager performs ORM functions, since she has strong personal motivation and interest to ORM. There's also once case, when general manager is personally dealing with online reviews. 3 hotels noted that their general managers are also involved in ORM, although other employees are responsible for the operations. Three respondents noted that special job position would be appropriate in their organization:

“Recently, when online review management is developing rapidly as part of the hotel industry, a special job position to deal closely with online reviews can ease our work and guest experience significantly.” (Hotel 2)

“I think, we need a special job position to manage online reputation. Personal touch in everything is crucial for us, since we’re domestic traveller-oriented company.” (Hotel 10)

“We grew up comparing with previous years and now we have a vision how it should work. Online review manager’s job position could appear in our hotel, since ORM is important and time-consuming. That’s the future I see for myself and dream of.” (Hotel 15)

Some respondents agreed that ORM is important for their business, but they do not need a special job position, since ORM responsibilities could be fulfilled by one of the existing employees:

„There’s no need for a special job position if you’re small hotel, but someone definitely should take care about ORM: check the guest reviews, respond and analyse what’re problematic points. “(Hotel 4)

12 out of 15 hotels carry out their ORM operations manually. They use metrics obtained through OTA and TripAdvisor and 8 hotels use auxiliary tools such as Guestjoy. 3 hotels are happy about their investment to 1 special ORM software. ReviewPro is used by 1 hotel and Revinate by 2 hotels. 5 accommodation service providers which are currently carry out ORM operations manually, stated that they also plan to invest to Revinate. Most of respondents stated, that professional software (could) simplify operational processes in terms of time and human resources significantly.

4.7 ORM actions according to framework

This section reviews the specific actions of hotels and their relationship with the ORM framework presented as a result of the theoretical part of this thesis.

Monitoring

According to the interviews, all respondents track guest reviews posted online. 7 out of 15 hotels do it every day, some of them check reviews out as soon as they get notifications. 5 hotels monitor new online reviews 2-3 times per week, 2 hotels do their follow up on weekly basis, and only one hotel looking for new reviews less than 1 time per week.

3 hotels have automated the monitoring process through special software and do not experience any difficulties to cover a large amount of data in a short time. 4 hotels revealed that monitoring is handicraft work in their organizations: they check every channel for new guest feedback manually (OTA, review sites etc) and track social media by hashtags, key words and location. on average, collecting information takes 1 to 3 hours a day. Automatic notifications sent by TripAdvisor and Booking.com simplify the process, but sometimes with large volumes of emails there's a chance to miss something important. (Hotels 1, 2, 4, 10, 15). 8 hotels have a semi-automatic approach to manage their online reviews using Guestjoy, which aggregates OTA and TripAdvisor data in one place, however, social media and other online resources are still a subject for manual monitoring. (Hotels 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15). According to software licensees, software significantly saves time at this stage.

Filtering

As mentioned above, 9 out of 15 case hotels have never dealt with fake reviews. However, all respondents noted that the filtering process is not limited by detection of fake and misleading reviews. The main purpose of filtering is to highlight the most valuable information for the business:

“Filtering process is crucial, since ORM specialist should identify those reviews that have real value for the business.” (Hotel 12)

According to interview results, the filtering process in case hotels organized as follows: ORM specialist sorts all incoming feedback in terms of reliability and importance by topic; and delegates information to the operational departments. All respondents outlined that business-valuable reviews work as signals to take an action, including positive ones. For example, Hotel 1 actively uses positive feedback for SWOT analysis: “Our guests themselves tell us about our strengths, which means competitive advantages.” (Hotel 1). Negative feedback is filtered first and action to address problematic issues is taken immediately.

“The filtering process is organized as follows: noteworthy comments are delegated to supervisors. We classify all incoming information into 3 types: actions that must be taken immediately, actions that can be taken later, actions that cannot be taken due to circumstances (for example, expand the pool). This is also a part of filtering.” (Hotel 1)

Most case hotels filter and delegate information manually, and this is organized in different ways. Some respondents (Hotels 5, 15) keep a “Reviews Diaries”, collecting all recording in Excel tables and charts. In other hotels (Hotels 9, 11, 12), those who own ORM

software licence, this process is optimized through special ORM software. However, the most common way is classification of negative reviews by topic and delegation of information to supervisors on case-by-case basis. ReviewPro and Revinatensees (Hotels 9, 11, 12) also noted that the software filters incoming online reviews and summarizes them into visual metrics that are convenient for further analysis.

None of the hotels removes fake and misleading reviews, since these actions are prohibited by OTA and review sites, as well it's contrary to the principles of transparent and qualitative communication between the hotel and the guest. Only 1 hotel admitted that their ORM specialist removed fake reviews from the corporate Facebook account. Hotels are struggling with misleading reviews in collaboration with partner sites. Respondents unanimously stated that they report the site administration about the cases of violation of the site policies. Upon finding a misleading review, the hotel should provide evidence - in this case, the misleading review will be removed by moderator.

Responding

This section discusses the time limits set by hotels to respond to online reviews, the manner of communication with guests in online space, the automation of the response processes (the use of bots and templates).

9 out of 15 hotels have rules and time limits to respond guest online reviews. 6 hotels do it on a case-by-case basis. Some of them noted that speed of responding is a key in terms of successful online review management. All respondents consider responding stage most weighty in terms of customer care, especially in negative cases, since "the guest who spent a time on writing wants to be heard and definitely deserves an answer from hotel management's side." (Hotel 10).

According to respondents, negative feedback occupies a special niche in the response policy and deserves more attention, since every negative case is unique and requires quick action to be answered an improved:

"People write positive reviews if they are experiencing something really exciting. If their stay was ok, then most likely they won't write anything. If it was a negative experience, they will let you know about that immediately. That's why it should be answered immediately" (Hotel 12)

7 hotels respond to positive feedback more massively, using standard phrases like "thank you", "welcome back", etc and allow the use of templates, especially in busy periods. None of them allows a mass approach to respond to negative online reviews. The main

reasons: each negative case is individual, each upset guest deserves a personal answer in terms of customer care, a standardized response or ignoring negative online reviews may provoke dissatisfied guest.

„Negative cases should be responded in a personal manner, since all the case are unique. Moreover, the use of templates is very visible... and it escalates the situation.“(Hotel 2)

„Personalized, positive and polite response to negative feedback is the best way to show customer care.“(Hotel 13)

At the same time, hoteliers noted that strong writing skills of ORM specialist can turn a situation from negative to positive side and gain more customers in future:

„The way how you respond to negative feedback also matters: if you show your interest, care and positive attitude, it mitigates the negative mood of an upset guest and attracts potential customers.“(Hotel 7)

„We never ignore guest feedback. Good response quality can attract potential customers. Online is good place to show communication process between the hotel and the frustrated guest from the beginning till the end - how the hotel takes care of the client.“(Hotel 12)

ORM specialists in all case hotels accept the use of templates to respond only to positive reviews, while negative feedback requires a careful and extremely personalized approach.

Learning and improvement

As mentioned above, all case hotels consider negative reviews as useful information that can be used to improve business operational processes. Learning from reviews considered as a key point of ORM by all respondents, since that's the path to better service and more positive reviews in future:

“Our strategy is based on creating remarkable experience, so with the help of a good service we try to attract as many positive reviews as possible. We try to avoid negative reviews, however it's good to know what are your weaknesses. Any type of feedback is important to the development of the company. The analysis process is very dynamic: we permanently solve different issues based on guest reviews, since our guests let us know about our weaknesses.” (Hotel 11)

9 out of 15 hotels organize staff meetings on regular basis to analyse and discuss problematic issues. 6 hotels do it case-by-case. Just only one hotel (Hotel 2) uses CRM system to report about negative cases. According to the study, each hotel attracts supervisors to analytical and correctional activities. And only 7 hotels out of 8 inform front-line staff about problematic cases. After analysing and discussing corrective actions, hotels take action. 3 hotels using ReviewPro and Revinate noted that the software greatly simplifies the analysis process, as convenient visual metrics clearly show the weak points. Some hotels also mentioned that the awareness of front-line employees about the goals and objectives of the ORM matters:

“We regularly explain our front-line staff why online reviews are so important and how it drives our financial incomes.” (Hotel 2)

“Healthy and objective criticism from the outside contributes to improvement. Ignoring behaviour is totally wrong way. If the hotel wants to decide for the client what he should like or dislike, such a hotel should not exist on the market. Investing in staff training is the number one task for ORM, as the front-line employees are those who form the image of the hotel. Your guest review scores depend on quality of their work.” (Hotel 13)

Hotel 9 was the only one who proudly announced that they award front-line employees in case if their names appear in online and offline guest reviews. Moreover, Hotel 9 organizes recognition days to honor the best employees of the month mentioned by guests in online environment.

Encouraging

All respondents stated that they are interested in new online reviews. Therefore, this section describes the ways and actions to encourage new online reviews. 3 hotels reported that their receptionists politely asked guests to leave an online review in any convenient way during checking-out time. 7 hotels run advertising campaigns by in-house television with an unobtrusive suggestion to leave a review on TripAdvisor. None of the hotels pay for reviews and never reward their guests in exchange for writing a review, since they consider such reviews to be useless in terms of improving quality and the final result:

“The main challenge is to improve the quality of services, which encourages people to write positive reviews without any external stimuli.” (Hotel 14)

“We are interested in any guest feedback posted online. However, we never conduct aggressive campaigns to attract new reviews, we prefer the organic process, when guests voluntarily leave us positive feedback, having received remarkable experience.” (Hotel 11)

8 hotels use Guestjoy, a software that works as electronic concierge and sends friendly reminders to leave online-reviews after stay. Guestjoy also allows to be in contact with guest during his stay and makes possible to prevent potential nasty review, being solved problem at property. However, Guestjoy aggregates OTA and TripAdvisor data, while the rest of the guests remain uncovered.

3 hotels (Hotel 2, 4, 9) proudly stated that they use the “wow effect” technique to provoke as many positive reviews as possible. According to their experience, an incomplete occupancy in the low season creates favorable conditions for working on quality - hotels have all features to surprise their guests positively. As a rule, positive surprises find their place in the online environment in the form of adoring online reviews:

“We quite active using the „wow effect” technique. We randomly select one room from all reservations and surprise the guest with room upgrade, gift card to our SPA or any other nice compliment. It works well! Almost all surprised guests mention their “wow experience” in online reviews.” (Hotel 2)

“In low season, when we have availability, we try to apply wow effect techniques by upgrading the rooms for free. It works well and guests mention about that in online reviews.” (Hotel 4)

4.8 ORM challenges

Further, the respondents were asked to answer which of the actions in the circular ORM framework deserve the most attention. According to 13 case hotels, learning was a key point of online review management, since the elimination of problematic issues leads to a better quality of service, and increases the number of positive reviews. Monitoring was noted as a challenging action, as 2 of the 15 hotels (Hotels 3, 10) cannot cover a large amount of meta data. As an explanation, the following thoughts were expressed: it’s impossible to eliminate a problematic issue and to respond to guest without detecting it. For the Hotels 1 and 7, encouraging new reviews was a weak point, and according to 7 out of 15 case hotels (Hotels 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15), stage of responding deserves most attention and efforts in terms of challenges. Respondents noted that a detailed and personalized response from the hotel is what the customer expects and deserves, that’s why guest reviews cannot be ignored. Since responding to online reviews is a time-consuming action,

a lack of time has been cited as the reason why the response stage is the most challenging. Hotel 15 has also noticed that responding to negative reviews during a guest's stay eliminates the possibility of negative reviews appearing online, so front-line staff should pay more attention to guests' needs and problems while their stay.

The following issues were listed by case hotels while managing their online reputation: 1) irreversibility of the situation: when location, architectural features, size of pool etc. cannot be changed (Hotels 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 13, 14); 2) lack of time to perform online review management functions well enough (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15); 3) front line staff unawareness regarding online reviews importance (1, 7, 14); 4) communication problems: when it's hard to understand from the guest review what exactly was wrong from the hotel's side (Hotels 9) ; 5) presence of negative reviews online after a successful attempt to improve the situation - when guest got compensation and his second experience was positive, and previous negative review is still on the web (Hotels 8, 10, 11, 12).

The following options have been proposed as solutions to the problems mentioned above. When the situation cannot be changed, transparent communication in the online space comes to the rescue: the task of the ORM specialist is to clearly and politely explain to the guest why some features cannot be changed, such a comment is likely to help get the support of potential guests or to get rid of high expectations (Hotels 9, 10, 13). The lack of time problem can be solved by automatization of ORM processes through software (Hotels 3, 4, 5, 6, 11) and competent time management (1, 2, 14, 15). Front line staff awareness about the importance of online reviews can be achieved through systematic communication between supervisors and employees (Hotel 1, 2, 12, 13, 14) and control actions from general manager's side (Hotel 1). The two remaining problems are connected with online communication, so as a solution, Hotels 9 and 10 suggest to keep dialogue with frustrated customer in the online to make potential guests see how the hotel cares about guests.

4.9 Evaluation of ORM processes and future plans

As a conclusion to the interview, the respondents were asked to measure the effectiveness of their work in terms of online management review, discuss the changes in operational processes, and talk about plans for the future to improve ORM practices.

All respondents unanimously noted that over the past few years, the volumes of user generated content have increased significantly, so they began to pay more attention to online reviews. The biggest change was that hotels started working on online reputation. 2 hotels from the very beginning adhered to the strategy (Hotels 9, 11), informing front-line staff

about the importance of guest reviews. Due to the growing volumes of UGC, Hotels 9, 11, 12 have purchased ORM software license (ReviewPro, Revinate) to centralize reviews in one place and focus on improving service quality.

Many of the respondents (Hotels 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) outlined a positive trend: as soon as they began to pay more attention to guest feedback and improve the quality of service, the number of positive reviews increased, as well as average rates and revenues. However, all case hotels, including those who have very strong positions in guest review scores, noted that their ORM functions could be performed even better.

Regarding plans for improving the ORM processes, the following actions that respondents intend to take in the near future were listed: 1) designing a strategy (Hotels 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15); 2) purchasing a software license (Hotels 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14); 3) front line staff trainings and informing about all incoming guest feedback (Hotels 2, 13)

5 Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to improve the knowledge about online review management among Baltic accommodation service providers through the investigation of ORM processes within case hotels and presenting a list of guidelines how to manage online reviews on general level as result of the study according to a theory and mutual experience.

The circle framework presented as a conclusion of theoretical part, focuses on online reviews' channels and online review management actions, such as: monitoring, filtering, responding, learning, improvement, and encouraging. According to the study, the data collected through the interviews supports the ORM framework (figure 8), since case hotels perform all of the above actions, however there're several aspects that can be improved.

At the beginning of the interviews, all respondents noted the ultimate importance of online reviews, as this is becoming a driving force on the travel market and drives purchase decision. This theory was confirmed by the results of the section "The nature of online reviews", where the number of all types of online reviews prevails over offline ones. Many hotels have noted that segmentation plays a major role in managing online reviews. Online reviews should be in the focus of attention of small hotels. However, according to the theory, all hotels without any exception, should work on an online reputation. Thus, some deviations from the theoretical framework can be observed.

The study has shown, all case-hotels care about online-reputation taking into account guest online reviews posted on such UGC channels as OTA, review sites, social networks, blogs and virtual communities. Conforming to interviews, hotels give ultimate priority to OTA and review sites (TripAdvisor). Blogs and social media have also been featured as important channels, however, all respondents noted that they don't have much volumes of feedback, and reliability of the content is questionable. Virtual communities regarded as the most underestimated channel, since Baltic accommodation service providers have no access to this content and can't evaluate it. Thus, hotels should continue to track reviews posted on OTA and review sites, however, more attention should be paid to social networking sites, blogs and virtual communities, since information obtained from different independent sources makes the picture complete.

The monitoring process in case-hotels follows the procedures described in ORM framework. It is ongoing task performed by competent in-house employees. Outsourcing is unacceptable and inapplicable, and this is confirmed by the results of the interviews. In three case hotels, general managers personally track guest reviews, which shows that the

most influential person in the company is interested in guest opinions. All hotels have identified priority feedback channels and regularly monitor them. The benchmarking remained an un-discussed topic in detail, but many respondents used words such as "competitive advantage", "guest review status", "leading position", etc., which determines a competitive spirit between the hotels and positive benchmarking tendencies. However, just two case hotels mentioned that they are tracking their competitors' status in terms of guest review score. In order to save the time and human sources, investment to professional ORM tools is strongly recommended. Unfortunately, this opportunity is underestimated by half of the respondents. However, 3 hotels use ORM software and 5 hotels intend to do this, which can be recognized as a positive tendency.

The filtering process used by case-hotels also corresponds to ORM framework: hotels identify information useful to the business and delegate it to the appropriate department, bypassing misleading and fake reviews. All incoming information is verified through the guest program. Since any reviews cannot be deleted, opinion fraud cases accompanied by evidence are commonly reported to partner sites. Moreover, none of the case hotels was involved in rating manipulation by purchasing reviews, since good quality service cannot be faked. So, it shows that Baltic hotels stand for fair and healthy competition. At this stage, the use of special software could also greatly simplify the ORM processes, however, the conclusions can be made the same as with monitoring.

According to theoretical framework, the responding stage implies promptness and professionalism: all the reviews should be answered promptly, in a polite and personal manner, including positive and negative ones. Unfortunately, the policies practiced in most case hotels regarding positive online reviews don't meet ORM framework. 7 hotels accept the use of templates in relation to positive reviews, and some of them sometimes do not respond to positive feedback at all. Hotels focus on negativity, which prevents them from using their strengths for the benefit of the business. Secondly, many hotels do not have a system for responding to online reviews. Nevertheless, all procedures mentioned in literature reviews are applied to negative reviews by all case hotels, what is positive tendency.

The data obtained through interviews regarding the analysis of guest reviews supports the structure of the ORM. Online reviews are presented and discussed at staff meetings. Some of the respondents organize meetings systematically, some on a case-by-case basis. The licensees of ReviewPro and Revinat, confirmed that special software significantly saves time and human resources at the stages of analysis, centralizing the data in a semantic way. This is another signal why hotels should think about buying a user license for special software. All respondents also confirmed the theory that guest reviews provide valuable information for business, identify strengths to be proud of and weaknesses to be improved.

All case hotels agreed that the improvement stage is key for the online management review. Having received the signal information, hotels take measures to eliminate problematic issues. All of them demonstrate a loyal attitude to negative reviews, as healthy criticism lets know about weaknesses and helps the business to grow and develop. According to literature reviews, front-line employees should be able to influence the process of improving the quality of service. In order to avoid any negativity before it becomes online, internal communication with the guest is highly recommended. Unfortunately, not all case hotels work in this direction, but some of them still mention the crucial role of front-line employees in terms of creating remarkable experience, which confirms the validity of this theory.

In addition to providing excellent service, hotels should take active position to increase the number of online reviews. Encouraging is the final stage of the online management review cycle. Since the number of reviews affects the volumes of the bookings, this thesis offers 2 ways to encourage new reviews: electronic notification sent offline and in-house involvement accomplished by the human touch. Both methods are practiced by hotels, which confirms the validity of theoretical materials. The way to leave feedback should be as convenient as possible for the guest and understandable to staff who should be 100% involved in the encouraging process. Reviews from independent sources integrated into the home page will make this procedure more honest and transparent. It's strictly prohibited to stimulate guests commercially and pay for reviews to increase their volumes, since those actions are fraught with loss of confidence in the business. Case hotels do not stimulate their guests with special treats in order to get a review, which is also a positive trend. Rating manipulation is unacceptable, which also receives support from the interviews. The "wow effect" technique can be used in order to get positive hotels. The technique involves choosing a random guest and positively surprising with a free room upgrade or any other pleasant treat from the hotel side. Three respondents admitted that this technique entails positive reviews on the Internet, so it perfectly complements the list of guidelines.

The points that should be taken into account as a guide to action immediately are: 1) strategy is the basis of any online review management plan, unfortunately, most case hotels do not have a strategy; 2) a response policy including deadlines and time limits should be applied, but 2/3 of respondents do not use this; 3) front-line employees should be well aware of the importance of online review reviews, unfortunately, this issue is not taken into account in many case hotels.

The main positive trends of the study are: hotels track their online reputation, performing all 6 functions dictated by the theoretical framework, as well they can measure the effectiveness of these functions according to following criteria: improving the quality of service, increasing positive reviews, increasing the average price, and increasing revenue.

The most promising results of the study are demonstrated by the only one international brand hotel chain, whose ORM practice meets the most correspondences with the theoretical framework. Single hotels face the most difficulties, since ORM, as any other part of hotel management, requires time and budget. Local brand chain hotels have shown intentions to invest in online review management practices and tools, striving for standards of international players.

5.1 Answer to research question

Based on literature overview and interview results, the final list of ORM guidelines that summarizes the main steps for performing online review management can be presented as follows:

Monitor:

- identify priority feedback channels, taking into account full set of platforms, such us: OTA, review sites, social networking sites, blogs and virtual communities,
- systematize the processes of online review tracking,
- make sure, you have a person responsible for review tracking reviews and remember: online reviews drive your revenues,
- in order to save your time and human sources, invest to professional ORM tools that centralize all reviews in one place,
- compare your status with competitors systematically.

Filter:

- learn to distinguish fake reviews from genuine ones,
- take into account those reviews which consist valuable information for your business,

- bring the information to the right people and departments,
- detecting opinion fraud, report about such cases and provide evidence to review sites,
- never manipulate your ratings and refuse paid reviews - such actions threaten a complete loss of confidence in the business.

Respond:

- design a response policy: all the reviews should be promptly and professionally answered,
- “professionally” means briefly, in intelligent manner, focused on key issues,
- personalize the responds to make guest feel special,
- leave the guest feeling that there’s a real person behind the response, leave your contacts if follow up is needed,
- do not hire outsourcing specialists; use in-house staff who’s familiar with the system and hotel property,
- in case of positive reviews: express your enthusiasm and gratitude,
- in case negative reviews: thank for the time spent on feedback, apologize for negative experience, explain the steps that will be taken to prevent it from happening in future, suggest actions for improvement, allow the guest to contact you offline, invite back,
- in case of mixed reviews: thank for the time spent on feedback, outline the positive aspects, then follow the same pattern as with the negative reviews,
- deleting reviews is regarded as misleading action – don’t delete reviews! (except those cases when the reviewer violates the site’s policy – do not hesitate to notify the site administration of such cases!).

Learn:

- analyse guest feedback with your team, organize staff meetings on regular basis, discuss what your hotel is doing right and what actions can be taken to improve the situation,
- invest in professional ORM tools and you’ll receive all the data in a convenient format,
- make sure your staff is aware of the problems and works towards creating remarkable experience,
- distribute positive feedback among staff, motivate your employees,
- take negative feedback positively - remember, unsatisfied customers provide you valuable information to improve your business.

Improve:

- create remarkable experience – it will bring you more positive reviews,
- communicate with the guests during whole stay, do your best to solve any problems before they leave,
- focus on the process of improvement,

- empower your employees to drive positive guest experience,
- make sure, you provide guests with relevant and truthful information about your hotel via all channels,
- be creative to provide authentic services, positively surprising your guests.

Encourage:

- ask the guests for a favour to leave objective review about your business, be polite, do not exert any pressure,
- do not stimulate guests commercially,
- provide guests with the most convenient way to leave feedback,
- make sure that your staff is well trained, aware of the importance of online reviews, and works with you in one direction,
- integrate reviews from independent sources into your website,
- do not pay for reviews to increase their volumes,
- surprise your guests positively with “wow effect” techniques at the property.

5.2 Suggestions for further studies

The findings of this study would be valuable for the commissioner of this thesis Hestia Hotel Group, as well as for other accommodation service providers, who are planning to design online review management strategy and perform ORM operational functions. Since the results of the study are presented as list of guidelines, future research could offer to investigate the processes within a company which apply listed recommendations in real business life.

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Appendices

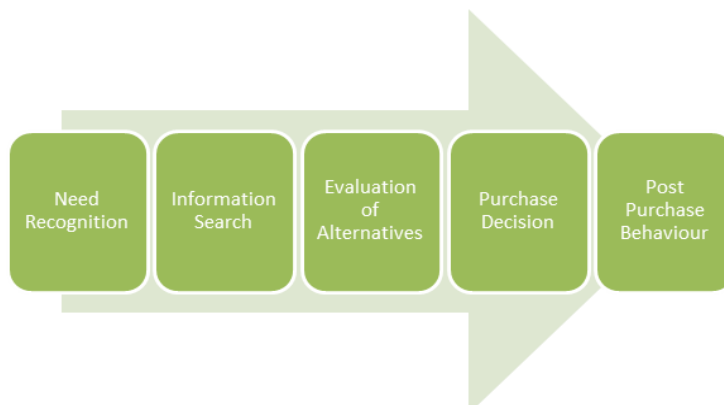
Appendix 1. Interview guide

General questions

1. How many years your hotel is on the market?
2. How many rooms it has?
3. How many stars it is?
4. № of staff in your hotel:
5. The type of the hotel *boutique, business/conference, SPA / family hotel, budget hotel
6. The type of organisational structure: single hotel, small family business, local chain, international chain
7. Annual turnover
8. Target audience of the hotel *business travellers, leisure groups, families, individuals etc
9. Respondent's position in the organization:

ORM importance

10. Do you keep an eye on your ratings / guest feedback left online or offline?
11. How you evaluate the role of WOM and eWOM in your business?
12. How you evaluate the role of online reviews in hospitality industry nowadays?
13. How strong you concern the connection between online reviews/ratings and financial performance of you your company? Do you have any examples how the online reviews increase or decrease your sales?
14. What do you know about online review management?
15. How important nowadays is it to manage online reviews? Why/ Why not?
16. Do online reviews have an impact on your business?
17. On which stage of buying decision process you concern online reviews important?



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- 1 - not important
- 2 - not so important
- 3 - more important than not
- 4 - important
- 5 - very important

Why?

Nature of reviews

18. What type of reviews your hotel is used to get, which way and how often?

*Online - opened for public

*Offline - you get it in a private manner (PM, e-mail, call, conversation etc)

*5-very often, 1-rarely

	Online	Offline
Product service review		
<i>How often?</i>	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	1.....2.....3.....4.....5
Company review		
<i>How often?</i>	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	1.....2.....3.....4.....5
Customer Q&A		
<i>How often?</i>	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	1.....2.....3.....4.....5
Customer satisfaction survey		
<i>How often?</i>	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	1.....2.....3.....4.....5
Complaint reports		
<i>How often?</i>	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	1.....2.....3.....4.....5
Seller ratings		
<i>How often?</i>	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	1.....2.....3.....4.....5
Professional review		
<i>How often?</i>	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Positive reviews and Negative reviews

19. What kind of feedback you are used to get more? estimate as a percentage

Positive	%	100%
Negative	%	

20. How do you respond to positive reviews?

21. How much time does it take? Why?

22. How do you respond to negative reviews?

23. How much time does it take? Why?

24. Have you ever ignored negative reviews? Why?

25. Do you agree with the following statement: negative reviews is a way to gain more customers? Why / Why not?

Fake reviews

26. Have you experienced with fake reviews?

27. How you recognize them?

28. What kind of fake feedback you are used to get more? estimate as a percentage

Positive	%	100%
Negative	%	

29. Have you got offers from review writing service or online reputation management companies for review and rating manipulation? How did you respond to that?

30. Do you agree with the following statement: The authenticity of a review is directly dependent on the channel on which it is posted. Why / Why not?

Online review environment

31. Where your quest reviews basically come from?

32. Which channels / sources of feedback are most important for your business? Why?

33. Which channels are more reliable and why?

34. Which channels are less reliable and why?

	Volumes	Reliability	Importance	Remarks
Customer review sites Tripadvisor, Yelp, Foursquare etc	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	
Blogs / Publics YouTube, Instagram, Li- vejournal, Blogspot, Per- sonal website, web co- lumn	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	
Social Media Facebook, Twitter, In- stagram, VK etc	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	
OTA Booking.com, Expedia	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	
Virtual communities Closed groups, forums etc	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	<i>1...2...3...4...5</i>	

5-more, 1-less

Online review management

35. Does your hotel have ORM strategy?

36. How long your hotel implements ORM strategy (in case if it has)?

Human resource

37. Who's responsible for ORM in your hotel?

38. Do you have a special job position in your hotel?

39. The number of staff responsible for ORM

Tools

40. Do you use any professional tools to manage your online reputation? (ReviewPro or any other online reputation management software) Why/Why not?

41. What could ease your ORM processes? (professional tools, additional staff etc)

Actions (ORM FRAMEWORK)

Monitor -> Filter -> Learn & Improve -> Respond -> Encourage

Monitor

- 42. How often you monitor your guest reviews? (times/per week)
- 43. How you collect data?
- 44. How much time does it take?

Filter

- 45. How you process and analyse the data?
- 46. How often you face with fake reviews? How you act with it?
- 47. Do you delete reviews? Which kind of reviews you delete?

Learn & Improve

- 48. How you apply the feedback to improve service? (analyzing, reporting, meetings)

Respond

- 49. How quickly the hotel responds to any feedback from client? Any specific time limits / rules?
- 50. Do you approach each answer personally? Why / Why not?
- 51. Do you use templates or robots to work with reviews?

Encourage

- 52. What tools and models you use to gain more guest reviews?
- 53. Do you encourage guest reviews? How you do that?

Challenges

- 54. What is the ORM effort that deserves your most attention?
- 55. What are the problems you face managing your online reputation?
- 56. How do you fight with these problems?

Final questions

- 57. Have there been any changes in ORM procedures since it was first started? Why?
- 58. How well do you evaluate your ORM work? (effectiveness, increase in positive feedback from guests, better service, increase sales etc.)
- 59. Do you have any plans to improve your ORM practice?
- 60. Is there a general statement or something you would like to add concerning ORM?