

Improving process of customer feedback collection at Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort

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<p>The main purpose of this thesis is to analyse current methods of collecting customer feedback and its value for the hotel, in purpose of proposing an improvement plan. This thesis is commissioned by a 5 star hotel Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort in Hurghada, Egypt.</p> <p>This report is divided into 6 parts: introduction, theoretical framework concerning customer feedback, satisfaction and loyalty, research methodology, empirical part, main result of the report - development plan - and research process evaluation. Information concerning commissioner as well as research aims and questions are provided in the introduction. In order to achieve research aims theory on customer satisfaction, loyalty and feedback were studied and applied during research planning process. Research methodology and instruments are being explained in third chapter.</p> <p>Qualitative research method was chosen to gather data regarding customer feedback collection process. Empirical part of the report consists of an in-depth interview with a manager of the hotel and social media analysis which allows specifying main advantages and disadvantages of social media channels used for online feedback collection.</p> <p>Key findings of the report demonstrate strengths and weaknesses of current methods of gathering customer`s feedback as well as its importance and influence on daily operations of the hotel. Key results of this thesis are presented in chapter 5 in form of strategy for future development. Evaluation on research process is given in the end of the report.</p>	
Keywords Customer feedback, hospitality business, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, social media, customer experience, qualitative research, individual interview	

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1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to introduce research objectives and research questions. Importance of conducting current research as well as review of expected results and their importance for the commissioning party is also explained. General overview of the commissioner is provided. Report structure is explained in the end of the chapter.

1.1 Research aims and research questions

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the current process of collecting customer feedback in the commissioning hotel, and offer ideas for further improvement. During internship in the company it was noticed that there were problems in handling, responding and utilizing customer feedback for service improvement. These issues could potentially create misunderstanding within the staff and led to decrease in overall customer satisfaction score. This report is following the aim to solve these problems and offer an improvement plan that will allow utilisation of customer's feedback in a more efficient way. As a result, the development of a strategy could help to rise up staff's performances, Moreover, it could also increase customer satisfaction.

The main research question for this thesis is the following one:

- How current methods of collecting customer feedback in Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort can be improved?

In order to support the research, a list of sub questions has been created – their main purpose is to analyse the subject into details and have a look at the problem from different angles:

- What are the current methods of gathering customer feedback in Hurghada Marriott?
- How customers' feedbacks influence daily operations in the hotel?
- In what measure this hotel's management take into consideration online feedbacks?

Data collected for the research are rather specific and contains information regarding concrete company's procedures. Indeed, qualitative research method was chosen to conduct the empirical part of the report.

Individual in-depth interview with a company's representative will give an opportunity to get more detailed information regarding the process of customer feedback collection in the hotel and find answers for the research questions. Moreover, observations based on personal experience will be included in the research part in the form of comments in the interview analysis. The second part of the research consists of a precise analysis of social media channels involved in the process of collecting customer's feedback. Social media research will allow focusing on advantages of this method and using them for further development. Conducting different kinds of research (triangulation) is used in terms of increasing validity of final results.

1.2 Marriott International and Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort

In order to get a better understanding of the research problem it is essential to provide information regarding the commissioner's company. Since the research is conducted for one specific hotel from the chain, basic information regarding Marriott International will be given at first, and then more detailed ones concerning Hurghada Marriott will be provided.

With almost 90 years of experience, more than 5700 properties under 30 brands which offer in total 1,1 million rooms worldwide, Marriott International has become a leading company in hospitality business, setting high-class standards of service. Starting from 1927, when by J. Willard and Alice Marriott established first Hot Shoppes restaurants in Washington, D.C. service quality remains one of the main strengths of the company.

2015 was a great year for Marriott International. Diluted earnings per share totalled \$3.15, an increase of 24 per cent over the prior year. Adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (Adjusted EBITDA) rose 13 per cent to \$1.7 billion. In 2015, adjusted operating income margin increased to 47 per cent, a 5 percentage point improvement over 2014, and return on invested capital reached a record 49 per cent (Marriott International Annual report, 2015).

In order to get a better view on Marriott's strategy it was decided to include a Mission and a Vision in the report. Nevertheless, instead of a mission and a vision statement, Core values can be found on official Marriott web-site. These values represent main ideas and motivations that characterize strategy of the hotel chain. Core values of Marriott International are given below with explanations of ideas behind them.

Core values	Meaning
<i>We Put People First</i>	Management believes that happy employees can make customers happy, that`s why this value applies not only to guests of the properties, but also to the staff members that take care of the quests.
<i>We Pursue Excellence</i>	Attention in details and excellent customer service have always been distinctive features of all Marriott Brands since the first hotel establishment in 1957.
<i>We Embrace Change</i>	Constant innovations with desire to create new customer experience and make an impact on worldwide hospitality industry have vital importance for the company.
<i>We Act with Integrity</i>	The company takes into consideration not only operations in properties, but also ethical and legal standards, employee policies, commitment to human rights and social responsibility.
<i>We Serve Our World</i>	Marriott is participating in projects concerning global social issues, such as poverty, environment, workforce and global diversity.

Table 1 Core Values of Marriott International (Marriott Core Values and Heritage, 2016)

Company's mission and vision are stated clearly in these core values. Moreover, the first one demonstrates the main feature of the brand – always putting people first, both clients and staff. Through long story and numerous achievements company has proved that this mission is being accomplished in every of their properties, stating new standards of hospitality business all around the world.

Although all Marriott brands have different brand images and fulfil different needs of travellers: long or short stay, apartments, classic or distinctive luxury, classic or distinctive premium, there is one thing that unites them all – exceptional service that exceeds customer expectations.



Figure 1 Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort view

Being established on July 1995 and renovated in 2014, Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort still remains one of the best hotels in Hurghada region due to the following reasons:

- Full sea view. All 283 rooms (including 25 luxurious suites) include private balconies with full or partial sea view or sea and pool view, that is valued by experiences travellers;
- Exceptional service. Hotel has received big amount of rewards for employees excellence, problem resolution and most engaged workforce;
- Private beach and island on the hotel territory, two swimming pools (one is heated during winter), diving centre.
- Close location to the city centre, to promenade area and to the airport – it takes 5-7 minutes by taxi to get to all main parts of the Hurghada city.
- Facilities for business: 3 meeting and banquet rooms with total area over 300 square meters, business centre with computers and printers available, wired high speed internet access in rooms.

The resort is suitable for different kind of travellers and can fulfil all types of needs: business trips (meeting rooms and business centre), families (kid`s pool and animation, mini club, beach playground) and guests with special needs (rooms with wheelchair access on the ground floor).

Due to the availability of several conference rooms this resort is quite popular for business meetings, group trips and as an accommodation during business events in the area. Hotel is often used for individual business trips (both short term and long stays), offering all essential amenities for work and leisure.

It is important to mention that the quality of service in the property that has been evaluated not only by guests, but also approved and authenticate with various rewards. The Front Office department (which consists of Reception, Guest Relation and At Your Service department) is operating 24/7 to make sure that flawless service is provided to every guest in the property.

1.3 Thesis structure

This report consists of 6 main parts. Basic information regarding research aim, questions and commissioning company (both chain and particular property) are given in the first part - introduction.

The second part of the thesis consists of a theoretical base of the research which contains information regarding customer feedback and its importance, customer satisfaction, loyalty and role of social media concerning purchasing behaviour. This part will explain connections between these terms and offer theories that can help to resolve research problem.

Research methodology will be explained in the third part and the actual research results are being analysed in the fourth part of the report as well as social media research. The fifth part of the thesis contains ideas for future development of customer feedback collection process in the property. Analysis and feedback on research process as well as personal evaluation on reliability and validity of the research will be provided in the sixth part. The main sources of information for theoretical framework will be given in the end of the report and include literature and internet sources.

After the research will be conducted and thesis will be finalized, results and findings will be forwarded to hotel management.

2 Customer satisfaction - customer loyalty and feedback

The main goal of this theoretical framework is not only to identify key terms linked to the research problem and create a strong theoretical base of the research, but also to try answering research questions before conducting the actual empirical research. For this purpose, key terms regarding research questions will be reviewed and connections between them will be analysed.

2.1 Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

Customer satisfaction is a term which indicates if customer expectations regarding particular products or services were met. It helps indicating if current strategy in an organisation is working in the right way and demonstrates what kind of adjustments should be applied.

Customer loyalty – an emotional and attitude-based preference resulting in the behaviour of spontaneous personal recommendation and/or purchase. (Robinson & Etherington 2006, 5)

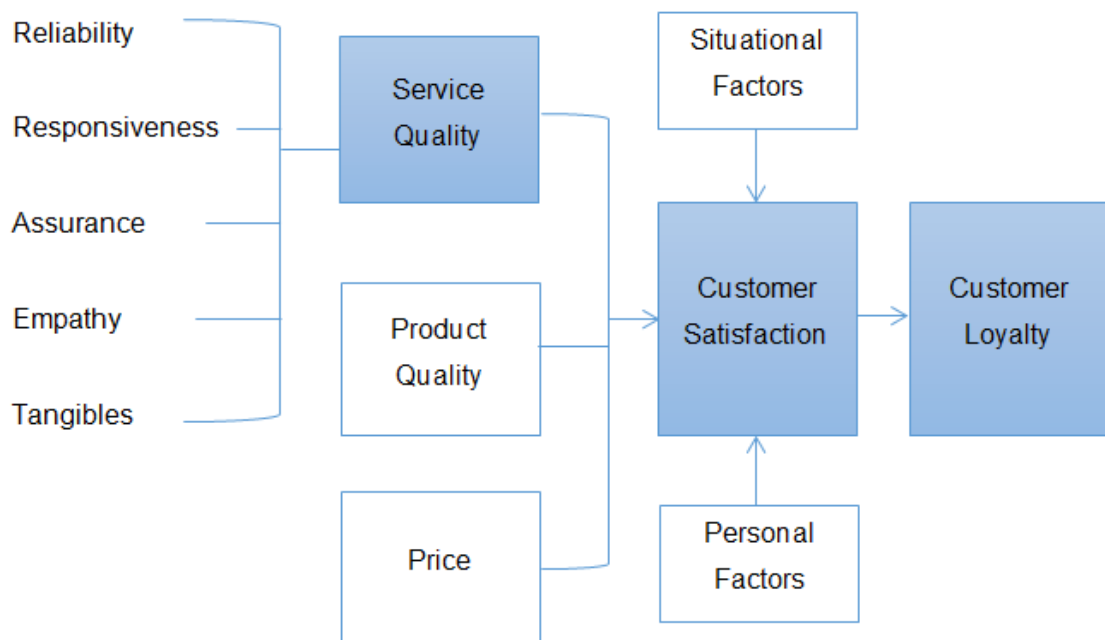


Figure 2 Customer Perceptions of Quality and Customer Satisfaction (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2006, 107)

On the figure above, connections between customer satisfaction, loyalty and services are demonstrated. Customer loyalty is affected by customer satisfaction, which is influenced by various factors, such as personal and situational factors, products/services quality and

price. In the same time service quality can be defined as combination of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles.

In order to get a better understanding of how customer' satisfaction and loyalty are linked between each other, connections between these two terms is explained further in Figure 3.

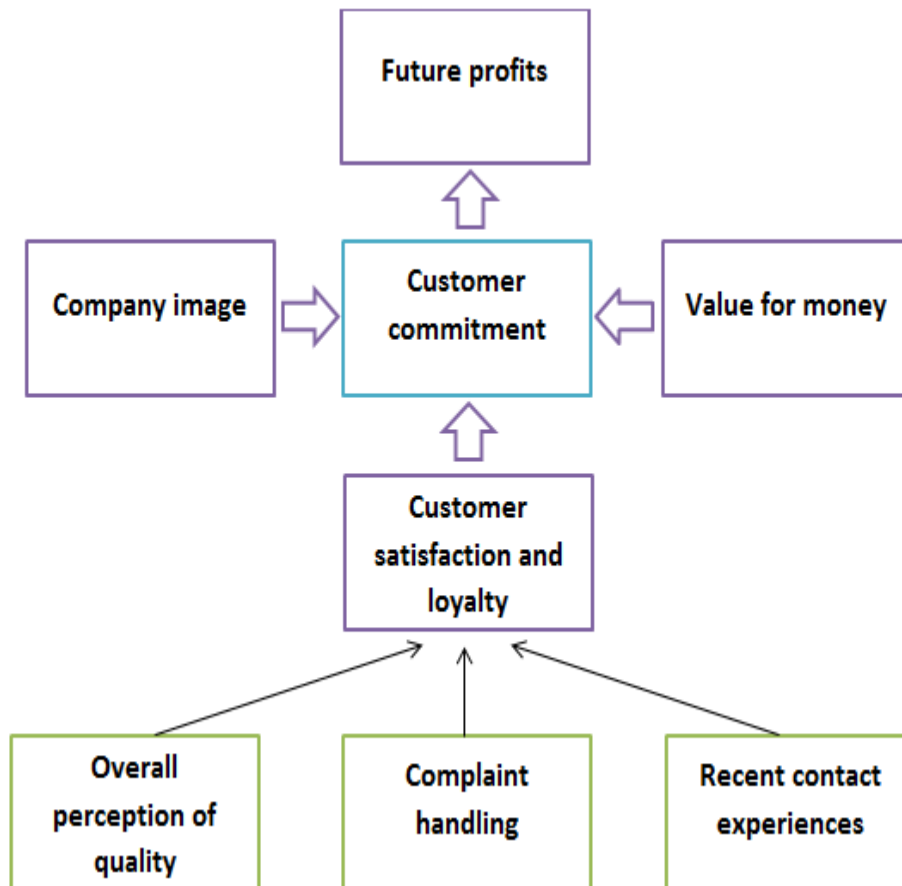


Figure 3 A simple customer satisfaction model (Szwark 2005, 28)

According to the figure above it is clear that customer satisfaction is one of the main factor that influence customer commitment alongside with company image and value for money. It is obvious that one will be making a buying decision based on previous experience that was brought by particular service and/or product.

When it comes to hospitality business most important factors that influence overall customer satisfaction and loyalty are perception of quality, complaint handling and recent contact experience. Perception of quality refers to customer`s opinion concerning services

that he received – as an example, if his problem was solved quickly, efficiently and what kind of attitude the employee demonstrated during the dialogue.

Complaint handling demonstrates ability of employees to react accordingly to any kinds of dissatisfaction caused to the client and also assure that customer disappointment will be compensated by additional services or products (examples in hospitality business – discounts, room's category upgrade, free dinner in property's restaurant, free internet in the room, fruit basket/pastries, etc.). In many cases the compensation allows not only to improve spoilt impression of the customer but even to increase customer loyalty in general.

Recent contact experience refers to previous encounters with the product, services or company representatives. It is important to keep in mind that even small disappointing details can decrease customer's satisfaction level and lead to decrease in loyalty, which will further result in preferring a competitor's product or service.

Customer feedback is directly linked with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. To have a better understanding of connection between them Figure 2 was created:

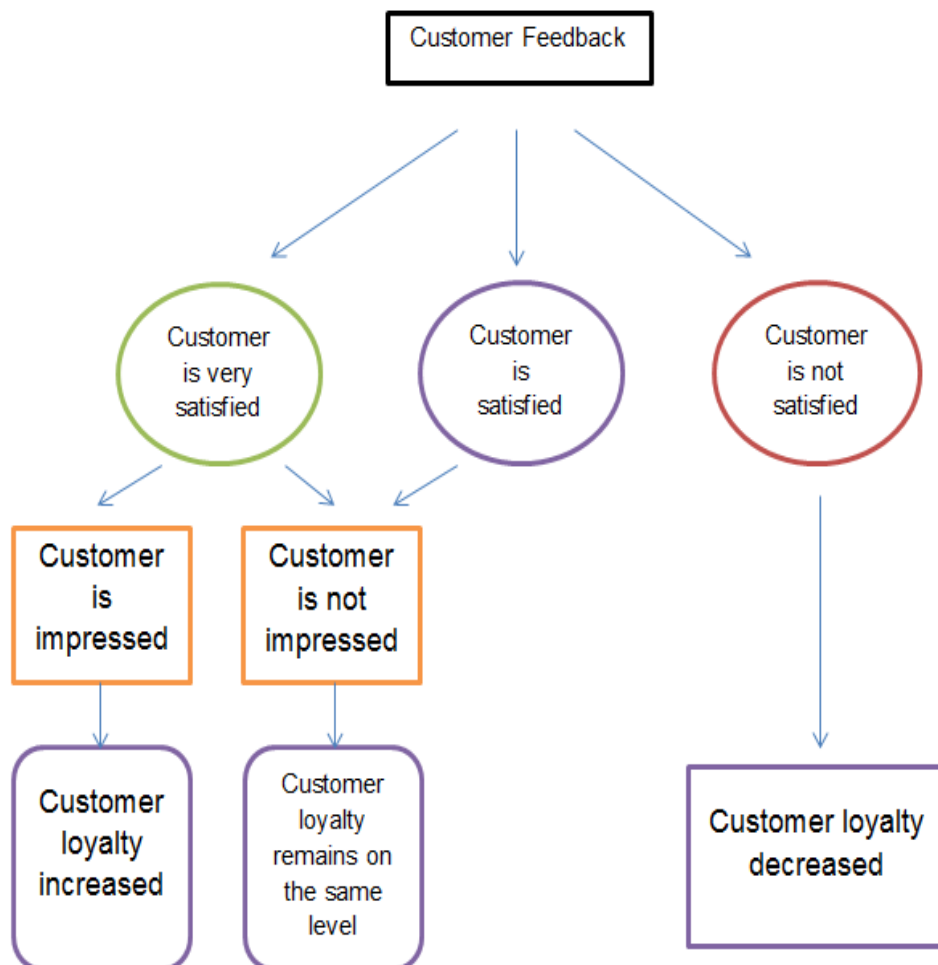


Figure 4 Connection between customer feedback, satisfaction and loyalty

From Figure 4 it is clear that the main role of customer feedback is to indicate the level of satisfaction of the customer. In general it can be divided into 3 categories: very satisfied, satisfied, not satisfied.

In case if the customer was not satisfied at all and his expectations were not met, his loyalty to the company will decrease - he won't be willing to recommend it to anyone or re-purchase. Moreover, in case if dissatisfaction was caused by a serious concern, his attitude may affect other people buying behaviour (see 2.3 Digital media influence on buying behaviour). If customer's expectations concerning product or service were met but his demand was quite high it is possible to say that he was satisfied, but not impressed. It may be quite challenging to impress customers, especially for luxurious hotels (such as Marriott brands) just because clients have very high expectations due to brand image. If organisations can manage customer's emotional responses to service encounters – they can impress, and impressed customers lead to loyalty (Robinson & Etherington 2006, 4). In the Figure 4 it is clear that if the customer was very satisfied and impressed on the same time it will most probably lead to loyalty increase. After having unforgettable experience one will be willing to share it with others and probability of repurchasing in this case will rise.

2.2 Customer feedback

In current competitive environment it is extremely important to pay attention to what customers think and say about company's services and products. The company which is managing customer feedback accordingly, ensures that all customer needs were satisfied and problems were solved, will always be a step ahead from competitors. Even if the service quality might be worse – in this case personal approach makes the difference.

When talking about hospitality business it is important to remember that a customer is influenced by services almost 24/7. It means that starting from meeting a bellman at the entrance, until the moment of check out, a customer is experiencing wide range of emotions and evaluates every single detail – especially if the customer expectations were increased by brand image and previous experiences in similar properties. Taking that into consideration, it is possible to say that any hotel is a typical example of a customer-centric organisation.

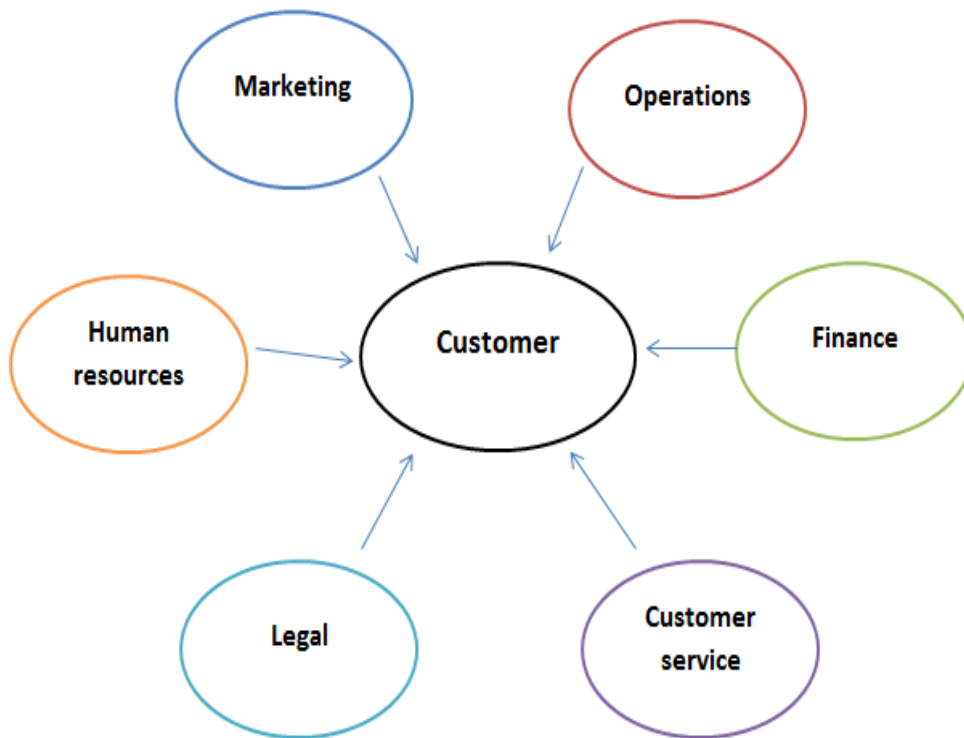


Figure 5 A customer-centric organisation (Szwarc 2005, 14)

On the figure above it is clearly demonstrated that in case of all departments in a company are working for one common goal – satisfying customer, this organisation may be called a customer-centric. In this kind of organisation customer feedback will have a vital importance because dissatisfaction (such as complaint) will become an important indicator of problems in the management, staff performance and attitude. For example, if the guest is not satisfied with quality of room cleaning it clearly indicates that housekeeping department needs to apply changes in current strategy, especially if this kind of complains happens several times.

Before deciding on ways to improve customer feedback collection process it is important to identify the term and reasons of its importance in hospitality business.

Customer feedback is an evaluation on whether the customer was satisfied by provided services and/or products, were his expectations met and if he is going to keep using this company`s services or not. Depending on the way that feedbacks were given it may also be influencing other people`s purchasing behaviour – for example, if the review was given on public sources, such as social media channels – this phenomena will be review later in a separate subchapter.

Feedbacks are crucial to any kind of improvement, it is important to think of it as a form of coaching. Open communication occurs best when people feel that their opinions are valued and that they will be rewarded (or at least not punished) for expressing them (Timm 2007, 126)

Taking the above mentioned into consideration it is possible to identify the following reasons of customer`s feedback importance:

- It allows to ensure that current strategy in satisfying customer`s needs is successful;
- It helps to get a critical view on performance of different departments;
- It motivates for further research and development;
- Complains are very valuable in terms of coaching;
- Positive feedback may affect personnel incentives;
- If received during the service (for example, complaint received during guest stay in hotel) it allows to fix customer`s impression and offer compensation;
- Allows to get a critical view on strengths of the company and use them as advantages;

The list of advantages of receiving customer feedback is endless as there are always possibilities of improvement – what is important in this case is that methods of collecting it are suitable and help to achieve certain goals.

In order to provide valuable information, methods of customer feedback collection should answer needs of the hotel management. In general quality of the chosen method can be evaluated on criteria listed in the following Table 2:

Criteria	Meaning
<i>Reliability</i>	Customers are sincere in sharing their personal experiences and opinions.
<i>Accuracy</i>	Correct questions are addressed to the customer, they are understood in correct way and there is no misunderstanding.
<i>Accessibility</i>	Feedback collection is not annoying customer but on the same time it is easily accessible and does not take too much time and effort.
<i>Structure</i>	Method allows both expressing personal opinion in open-ended questions and choosing between scores to evaluate performance.
<i>Neutrality</i>	Method and all of its components (questions, answers, structure) do not influence customer`s responses.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Feedback allows making strategy analysis and improving it for better future performance.

Table 2 Main qualities of successful customer feedback process

According to the table above, customer feedback should be a tool that works in both directions – allowing customers to share their opinion on products and services. Moreover, it should in the same time give opportunities to the management to analyse weaknesses in their strategy, and adapt it accordingly to succeed in the future.

However, how to make sure that current methods are actually completing above mentioned goals? Deep analysis might show strengths and weaknesses of feedback collection process. With the use of the simple framework provided in Table 2, it is possible to note what exactly can be improved by creating a comparison of current methods as it is shown in Table 3.

Criteria	Meaning of criteria	Customer feedback cards	Personal contact with customer
<i>Reliability</i>	Customers are sincere in sharing opinions;	+/-	-
<i>Accuracy</i>	The questions are accurate and precise;	+	-
<i>Accessibility</i>	Feedback collection process is not annoying for the customer;	+/-	+
<i>Structure</i>	Method allows both expressing personal opinion and choosing on a scale;	+	-
<i>Neutrality</i>	Method do not influence customer's replies;	+	-
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Feedback allows making strategy analysis;	+	+

Table 3 Example of customer feedback collection process analysis

In the Table 3 it is demonstrated that in comparison with personal contact with customers, feedback cards have much more advantages. This comparison is made just as an example and no additional details were considered (such as industry, brand or service type or product, sample size and person in charge of personal contact with client).

According to the analysis, receiving feedback through direct contact has weaknesses in reliability (for some people it may be hard or confusing to complain or leave negative feedback), accuracy (questions which were asked orally may be not as precise as written), structure and neutrality (personal approach may influence client in positive or negative way).

Apart from this kind of analysis management should also take into consideration all details regarding information that they want to receive from customers. Moreover, they should find the appropriate method depending on the goals and current strategies.

2.3 Digital media influence on buying behaviour

In case if feedback was provided straight to the representative of the hotel (in this particular case method – oral, written or both – does not make much difference) it affects only inner processes of the organisation, but what happens if feedback is in open access and anyone can refer to it? Nowadays with the omnipresence of modern technology's in daily life and especially in business, customer`s feedback becomes more than just a tool of measuring customer satisfaction – it may affect other people`s behaviour.

With a huge impact of the internet and increasing popularity of self-planned trips, reviewing guest responses on social media became an easy way of getting to know the real situation in any property, hotel or hostel. Lots of services were designed for this purpose (for example, TripAdvisor.com) and some web-sites that allow booking a room directly in the hotel. These websites include comments from guests (such as Booking.com). It means that nowadays purchasing behaviour is being affected by other people`s feedback, no matter how and if objective it is. Since two above mentioned services are visited by enormous amount of people every day, it can be useful to use them as tools of measuring customer`s satisfaction.

Nevertheless apart from collecting and monitoring customer feedback these services might also be used as an advertisement tool – for example, Booking.com, being world leader service in online accommodation is considered as a reliable source of reviews concerning properties, which means that there is a high probability that positive reviews will influence purchasing behaviour and motivate new customers to book room in this particular property. In the same time it might work in the opposite direction – negative reviews might influence purchasing decision and motivate potential customers to choose competitor`s hotel.

In order to get a better understanding of how social media handles customer`s feedback to the hotel and what kind of advantages this method can provide. A research on social media will be performed in fourth part of the report. Analysis will review shortly all social media channels used by the property and contain a deep research on 3 of them, comparing them and evaluating their efficiency as methods of customer feedback collection.

3 Research approach and method

Process of planning and conducting the research is explained in this part, including information on interview questions design, role of personal experience in the empirical part and reasons for conducting social media research.

3.1 Qualitative research

In order to collect information concerning current methods of gathering customer feedback, it was decided to conduct an individual in-depth interview with a company employee, Guest Relation manager Ms. Angelika Artamonova.

The reasons of conducting qualitative research were described by Paul and Nick Hague in *Market Research and Practice* (2004):

- The aim of the research is to collect individual case stories from an individual;
- A significant comment is required from an individual;
- Where individual's responses and behaviour need to be tracked;

In this report qualitative research method will allow receiving relevant information during a short period of time (in comparison to quantitative method) and collecting data relevant to a particular department in a hotel. Moreover, an interview allows to receive personal opinion of a person with years of experience in the field, especially when this employee's profession has for one of his major task to collect and analyse customer's feedback.

3.1.1 Individual interview structure

Structured in-depth interview was chosen for this empirical research. Questions for the interview are divided in 4 parts which are the following ones:

1. Personal questions
2. General questions about hotel
3. Questions concerning personal duties
4. Questions concerning research topic

The person who was chosen to be an interviewee is in charge of Guest Relations department in Hurghada Marriott, this interview is relevant because she has many years of experience in the field and other hotels in the region.

After the interview was appointed and confirmed with the interviewer, list of questions was designed according to goals and research problem.

3.1.2 Research instrument

Questions for the interview were designed in terms of getting data concerning general hotel operations as well as getting to know the interviewee's opinion on the research problem.

Personal questions (first part of the interview) are allowing interviewee to share her personal background, previous experience and introduce herself. Questions in this part are open-ended and motivate interviewee to tell more about her personality, aims and motivations as well as previous experience and educational background.

General questions regarding hotel are designed in a way to motivate sharing big amounts of information. This data will allow making a proper background for the research by adding details of processes that take place in hotel. This information will enrich and make findings more appealing for the reader. General questions will also allow getting data regarding target markets and importance of Guest Relation department.

Questions concerning personal duties are empowering the interviewee to give a better understanding of her own role in the hotel organisation and explain how her position is linked to other departments. Moreover answering these questions will explain main daily duties of all Guest Relation agents.

The research topic will be discussed in the end of the interview. Questions in this part are designed with the purpose to create a conversation between interviewer and the interviewee, engaging both in sharing opinions and commenting on research questions.

Due to the fact that author has professional background in the commissioner company, it would be useful to include personal opinion on the matter by commenting on issues discussed during the interview. It will allow explaining to the reader some processes and details that were discussed during the in-depth interview.

3.2 Social media research

Since one of the main feedback channels in the property is social media, it was decided to include it in the report as an important example of feedback collection method. Moreover

in terms of triangulation it would be important to include analysis in order of increasing validity of the research.

Analysis of comments, guest responses quality and efficiency of the method will be done with use of three main services – Tripadvisor.com, Booking.com and Facebook.com, which are the online platforms on which the property receives most feedback from guests. A comparison of these three services as well as analysis of their strengths and weaknesses will also be provided in the empirical part.

Reasons of conducting social media research are listed below:

- Analysis will help identifying general customer satisfaction level without conducting quantitative research;
- It will provide data regarding main strengths and weaknesses of the resort and demonstrate which amenities and services are more important to customers;
- The research will provide enough information to ensure reliability and validity;
- It will demonstrate methods of responding to guests comments, analyse how they influence general image of the company and how responses can be improved;

4 Empirical part

Empirical part of the research consists of 2 main parts: in-depth interview and social media research. The interview part includes information about the structure, main points and data which were received during the research, as well as precise analysis of this data in terms of answering research questions. Social media research is conducted in terms of checking efficiency of three main social media channels as a method for customer feedback collection. Moreover the triangulation allows increasing validity of the research.

4.1 Individual interview

An in-depth interview as one of two main sources of information for this research had been conducted on 29.10.2016 through Skype with usage of a voice recorder. Interviewee, Ms Angelika Artamonova, who has been working in position of a Guest Relation manager for 1.5 years in Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort and for 4 years in total in Egypt in similar positions, has agreed on sharing her opinion on research problem and provided general information regarding her position and the hotel structure.

4.1.1 Process and structure

The in-depth interview started from introduction which allowed explaining main aims of the interview and the research. After introduction short presentation on the research questions and problem were given. First two questions regarding personal background motivated the interview to share information regarding education and its importance for guest relation manager.

Interviewer: What is your educational background?

Interviewee: I graduated from National research University Higher School of Economics in Saint Petersburg, so I have degree in Economics with Major in Law. Basically I can call myself a finance and economic lawyer.

Interviewer: Does your education help you now in position of Guest Relation?

Interviewee: Sure it does. Knowledge of economics and finances helps to answer accordingly and explain matters for the guests, for example if guest is wondering why he did not receive complimentary bathrobe and slippers in his room it is important to mention that he has a standard room with low cost purchase and according to It, such amenities can't be provided. Sometimes my education and ability to explain someone's rights helped when

guests had issues during the check in. For example, the person is checking in at 9 am but there is no room of his category available and he is already not satisfied by it. It is essential to explain that according to the hotel rules check out is performed on 12 pm and check in takes place starting from 3 pm. By using personal approach it is possible to explain that the room is not ready yet, but as soon as it will be ready, the keys will be provided to the guest and until that time he can feel free to use all facilities of the hotel.

After personal background was given, the following questions concerned employment in Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort, its advantages and disadvantages as well as importance of Guest Relation position:

Interviewee: "This position has a vital importance for the hotel. Since almost 65-80% of revenue is performed due to loyal customers, it is important to have a person in the hotel that will be responsible for taking care of VIP and repeating guests. In general all customer feedback and problems, issues and complains are going through our department – front desk (reception) is handling only check in, check out and payments. It is important to know your loyal customers and keep all the traces of their needs and preferences in order to deliver exceptional service which is main feature of all Marriott Hotels."

In order to get a better understanding of how customer`s feedback is collected, a question regarding amount of guest relation agents and their shift coverage was addressed to the interviewee. According to information received from the interviewee, currently there are 3 guest relation agents, who cover shift from 8 am to 10 pm. Shift coverage is demonstrated on figure below.

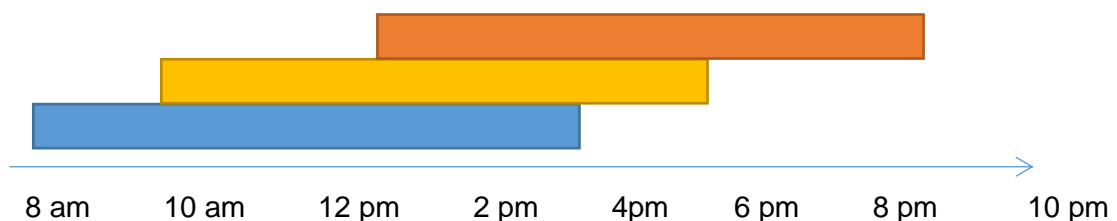


Figure 6 Guest relation shift coverage

It is demonstrated that from 12.00 to 15.00 all agents are present on the shift. Attendance of each agent during this time is important in terms of collecting customer feedback during check out which is performed at 12-12.30. Having several agents on the shift allows gathering more feedback from departing guests.

Next question allowed finding out about main issues and complains that guest relation agents face when dealing with guests as well as ways of resolving these problems. According to Ms. Angelika, who was speaking on behalf of the whole department, five biggest problems that guests encounter with in the property are the following:

1. Food;

Majority of complains concerning the food in the hotel refer to its quality and personal preferences (too salty or too sweet, no taste or the taste is too strong; choice is not variable, etc.). In case if guests have serious issues concerning their meal plan and if it affects their satisfaction level, personal approach is used to solve the problem: representative of food and beverage department contacts guest and offers personal meal plan based on one`s preferences.

2. Design;

Since the hotel was established more than 20 years ago, it is clearly visible that design and furniture of the property is out-dated. Even though all rooms were fully renovated on 2014, some guests express their dissatisfaction by the style of the lobby, restaurants and gym center. Unfortunately resolving this issue totally is not possible, but personal approach allows improving customer`s impression and loyalty.

3. Cleaning;

Even though Marriott maintains high standards of service in all properties, it is impossible to avoid personal mistakes of the staff (missed a spot on the floor, forgot to clean dust on the mirror, etc.). In case if customer has noticed this kind of mistakes and forwarded information to the management, a verbal apology is given as well as compensation (depending on the matter). It is important to note that the follow-up call or meeting is performed in the following days to ensure that the problem is solved and the customer is satisfied.

4. Customer service in the restaurants;

As soon as any feedback concerning not appropriate service (waiter was rude, ignorant or not polite) is received, investigation with the food and beverage department is performed and additional trainings are settled in order to improve the situation. Verbal apology and compensation is offered to the guest, and follow-up communication ensures that the accident did not repeat again in the following days.

5. English skills;

Several guests complained that some members of the staff struggled to express themselves in English and as a result misunderstanding appeared. Currently constant language skills trainings are provided to the employees.

Last part of the interview allowed discussing research questions and answering them. Outcome of the discussion is presented in the next subchapter “Main findings”.

4.1.2 Main findings

The main aim of the interview was to collect enough data to be able to answer research questions and to offer ideas for improvement. Main findings of this interview can be divided into two categories: answers to research questions and additional information to support research and improve methods of feedback collection in future.

Currently there are 3 main methods of collecting customer`s feedback in Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort: personal contact with guests, guest satisfaction survey and social media channels.

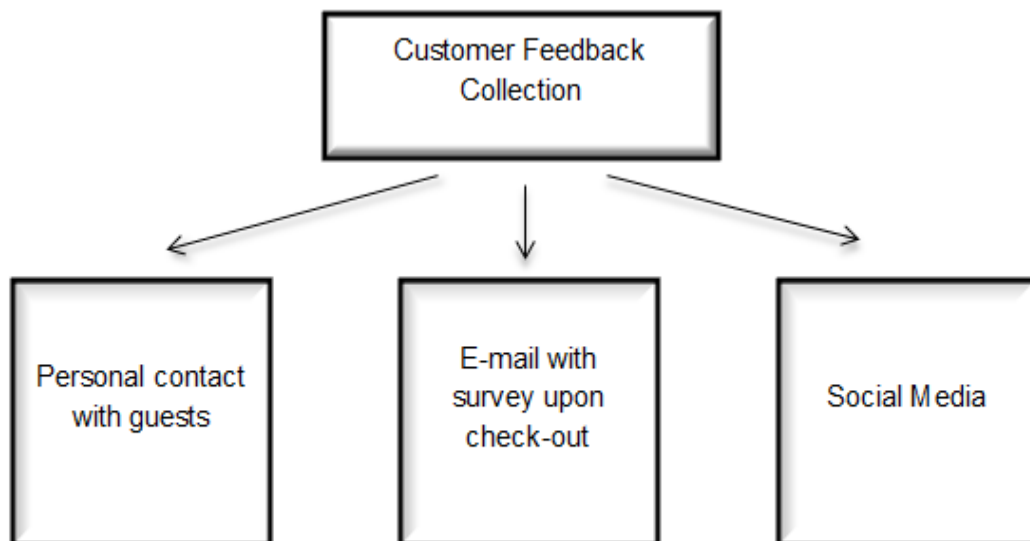


Figure 7 Current methods of customer feedback collection in the company

Personal contact is established between hotel staff and customers during the stay and ensures that an exceptional service is provided by all departments. It also helps ensuring that the guest has no complains or issues to be solved. Previously the dialogue with customers was one of the main responsibilities of Guest relation department, but recently

management encourages all employees to be more attentive towards customer`s needs at all stages of service.

The guest satisfaction survey is forwarded to the guests via email upon check out and contains evaluation form that allows giving score on overall satisfaction. Structure of the survey was provided by the interviewee as an addition to the research. Precise analysis of the survey structure is provided in the fifth part of the report.

Guest Satisfaction

Overall Metrics										
GSS: Overall Satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Intent to Recommend Property	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Intent to Consider Brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Arrival										
Check-In Experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Hotel										
Property (Exterior and Interior) Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stylish and Up-to-date Design/Décor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Maintenance and Upkeep	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Lobby Area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Staff										
Staff Service Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Room/Suite/Apartment										
Room Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Room Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Bathroom Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Comfort of Bed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Figure 8 Guest Satisfaction Survey

Social media channels that are used to receive online customer feedback are the following ones: TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Holidaycheck.de, tophotels.com, Facebook. Analysis of their advantages and disadvantages is presented in following subchapter.

The next research question which was discussed with the company representative was concerning importance of collection and analysis of feedback from customers. The interviewee mentioned three main reasons of why customer`s feedback has vital importance for the hotel:

1. Feedback is used as an indicator of employee`s performance in human resource department;

All records of written feedback that includes names of employees are kept in HR, including thanks letters and complaints. In case of the employee receives many complaints and warnings, he can be punished or even fired.

2. Feedback motivates employees to perform better;

All hotel employees are aware that customer`s feedbacks are monitored by management and it encourages staff to improve their performances. Positive reviews from customers may also become a good motivation for improvements.

3. It allows controlling efficiency of all departments;

Without receiving and analyzing customer feedback it would be challenging for managers to make sure that their departments are working correctly. Reviews from clients (both positive and negative) allow adjusting strategy with the aim of providing a better customer service.

In order to get a better view on the research problem, it was important to receive interviewee`s opinion concerning influence of customer`s feedback on daily operations in the hotel. According to her answer customer feedback is discussed by management during two meetings that take place daily at 9 am and 4 pm.

The first meeting requires presence of heads of all departments and general manager. Apart from the main issues that are being discussed such as the report of the night manager on duty, marketing strategy and competitor analysis, customer reviews collected by personal contact during previous day and social media reviews and guest satisfaction survey score are being reviewed. Based on the scores and general satisfaction of customers decisions on next actions for each department are assigned.

During the second meeting at 4 pm heads of operations are present and discuss issues that appeared during morning and afternoon shifts as well as latest customer reviews collected both online and on property via personal contact. It is important to note that after 5 pm majority of department managers are leaving and only emergency services continue working 24/7, so it means that meeting of head of operations is the last opportunity to solve issues and make sure that no problems will be left behind.

After research questions have been discussed in terms of supporting current research, some extra information were also provided by the interviewee. According to information received during the interview, nationalities of the guests in the hotel during summer season are divided in the following proportions:

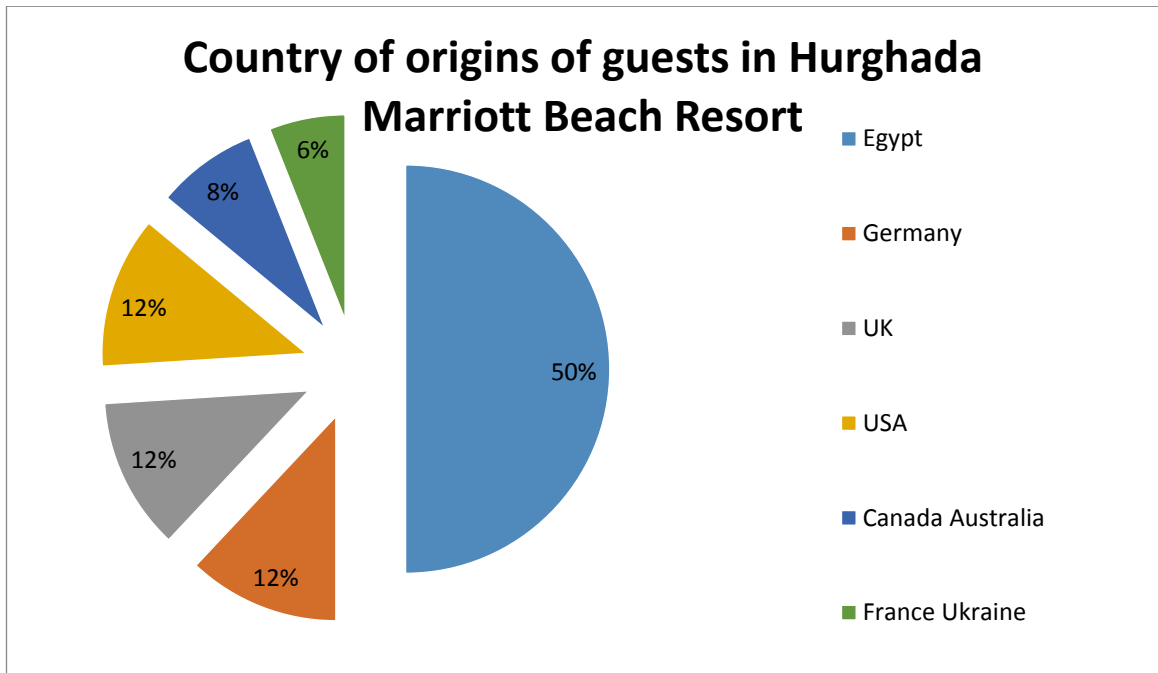


Figure 9 Country of origins of guests in Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort

According to the Figure 8 it is clear that there is wide variety of target markets. In terms of collecting feedback from customers it means that employing guest relation agents with variable language skills may become an opportunity for establishing better contact with customers and as a result – receive more information concerning customer satisfaction.

4.2 Social media research

In order to get a better understanding of customer feedback collection process in the hotel it is essential to have a look at one of the main methods – social media. Importance of this channel and it`s influence was already explained in theoretical framework (see 2.3 Digital media influence on buying behavior).

As it was mentioned during the in-depth interview with company representative main social media channels used for customer feedback collection are the following:

Web-site	Description of the service
Booking.com	The world leader in booking accommodation online. Each day, over 1,100,000 room nights are reserved on Booking.com. The website and apps attract visitors from both the leisure and business sectors worldwide. (About Booking.com, 2016)
Tripadvisor.com	TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel site, enabling travellers to unleash the full potential of every trip. It offers advice from millions of travellers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features with seamless links to booking tools that check hundreds of websites to find the best hotel prices. (About Tripadvisor, 2016)
Holidaycheck.com	German service which allows checking best options of accommodations and trips. Unfortunately, currently it is not available in English. There is no possibility to book directly from this web-site, but service compares prices from other booking services and allows finding best offers.
Tophotels.com	A unique platform and directory with all five-star luxury hotels in 208 countries all over the world displayed in four languages. This exclusive portal has been created to be the information centre for the high-quality traveller and luxury hotels sector. (About Tophotels.com, 2016)
Facebook.com	Founded in 2004, Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them. (Company info, 2016)

Table 4 Social media services description

As we can see from the table above all these services have different missions and follow different aims. In this chapter, a precise analysis of information available on these services will be given, such as:

- Overall rating

It refers to overall rating or score of Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort on the service web-page and it demonstrates of how satisfied guests were by services provided by the property.

- Quantity of reviews

Amount of people who tend to comment on their experience in the property indicates several factors, such as level of impression made their stay, accessibility of the web-service, people`s desire to demonstrate their opinion, etc.

- Nationalities of commentators (if available)

Since some of above listed services provide such function it will be valuable to pay attention to what nationalities tend to be more or less demanding, how high are their expectations and what kind of additional services and amenities do they expect, how easy or hard it is to satisfy their needs and what kind of patterns can be noted through different services.

- Response quality

During the in-depth interview it was stated that responses to online feedback is one of duties of Guest Relation department and its importance for daily operations was explained (see 4.1.2 Main Findings). Analysing current responses will allow improving it for future references and as a result improve not only customer loyalty to the brand, but also affect the online image of the brand.

Services which are going to be analysed are the following: Booking.com, Tripadvisor.com and Facebook.com. Main reason of choosing these channels is that they contain largest amount of reviews and are considered as main sources of online customer feedback in this hotel. These methods will be analysed, compared and their efficiency will be evaluated in the following sub-chapters, after which conclusion will be provided in order to summarize the analysis.

4.2.1 Booking.com

Being the world leader service in online accommodation booking this service provides all necessary information on property, and allows both direct booking and reviewing comments from previous guests of hotels all around the world. Service is available in 40 languages and offers over 1 million of properties from 227 countries.

Currently Hurghada Marriott Beach resort has a review score of 8.4/10 based on 1649 customer reviews. According to the information provided on the hotel web-page main reasons of why customers like this property are the following:

- Staff service
- Pool area
- Quality of food
- Top location
- Free parking
- Free Wi-Fi in public areas

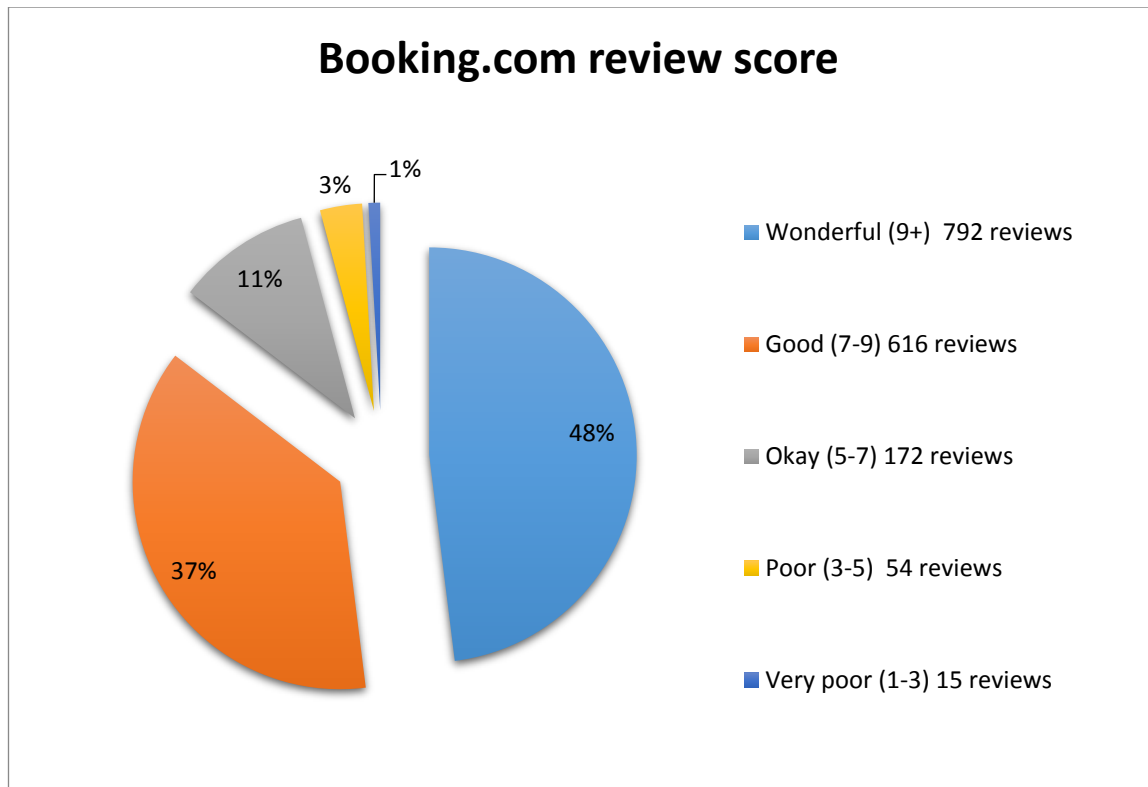


Figure 10 Booking.com review score (Booking.com Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort Review, 2016)

As it is demonstrated on the figure above, in general customers tend to give quite positive reviews on their stay in commissioner hotel. However, small difference between “Wonderful” and “Good” (48% and 37%) indicates that there is still some room for improvement. In order to get a better understanding of what are disadvantages of this resort, service provides data regarding average review score for each of the following metrics:

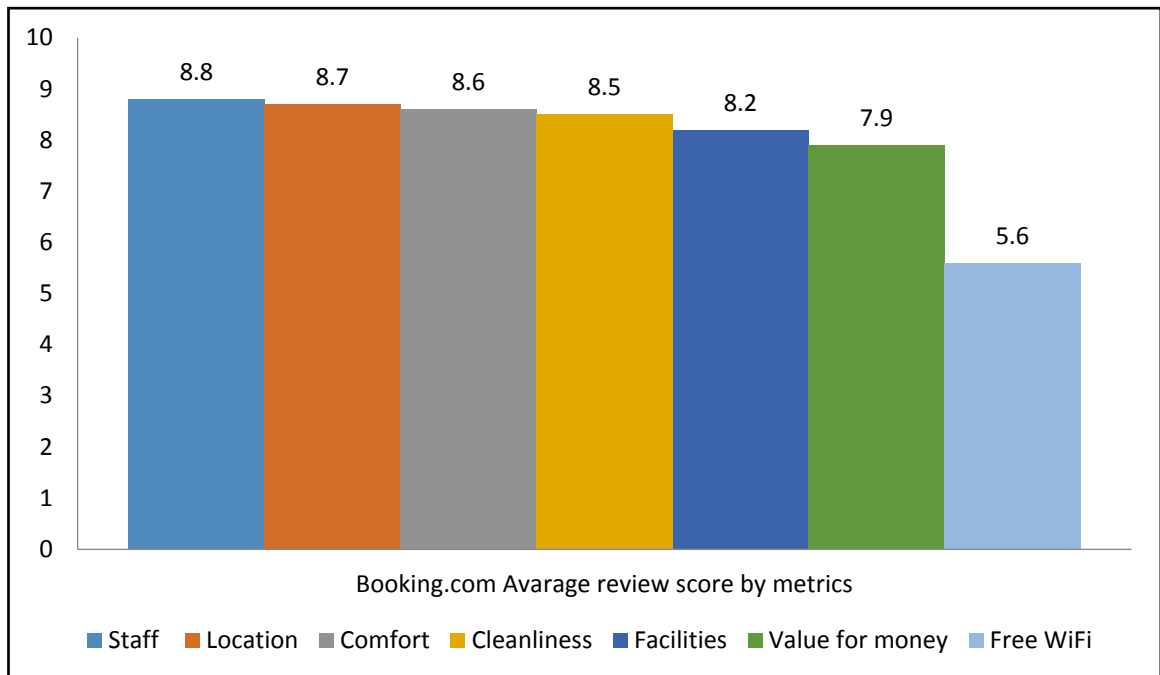


Figure 11 Booking.com average review score by metrics (Booking.com Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort Review, 2016)

It is shown on the figure above that the main disadvantage of the property – quality and speed of free Wi-Fi internet access. Other categories score quite close to each other and staff service has the highest one, so it is possible to note that main Core Value of Marriott International (see Table 1. Core values of Marriott International) – Put people first - is fulfilled in this property.

After analysing reviews with the lowest review score it was found out that unfortunately no responses to comments are visible online. During the interview it was clearly stated that all comments received from guests online are monitored and responded, but unfortunately Booking.com does not provide this possibility. Apart from that the service provides lots of options to filter comments (by date and review score, language, main topics, traveller types – single, couple, family, groups, business travellers, etc.) so one can easily get opinion of people of different needs and background before booking room online.

Overall it is clear that Booking.com provides lots of possibilities for collecting, monitoring and analysing customer feedback. Taking into consideration everything mentioned in previous paragraphs list of advantages and disadvantages of the service can be created. They will be listed in the following model – starting from advantages of using this service for customers and finishing by benefits of this customer feedback collection method for the hotel management.

Advantages:

- Accessibility;

Notification email after the visitor's stay is over encourages to access the property's page on the web-site and write a detailed review. Booking.com provides opportunity to write truly detailed review, and comment not only on advantages and disadvantages of the property, but also score separately each feature of the hotel.

- Reviews filter;

Ability to check reviews based on such filters as travellers type, reviews score and language is useful when hotel management is interested in conducting precise market research. Apart from presenting most recent comments during operations meeting with management, useful idea might be to use information available in the service web-page, and include monthly/weekly statistic of social media review score on each of target markets or target customers groups.

- Reviews score by categories;

Based on the information and scores given in the reviews system automatically demonstrates not only the average score of the property, but also scores on each of seven categories that evaluate total performance of the company (Cleanliness, Comfort, Location, Facilities, Staff, Value for money, Free Wi-Fi). Including this information in weekly/monthly/quarter reports that are forwarded to the management will allow evaluating performance of corresponding departments.

- Reliability;

The main feature of reviews on Booking.com that they are 100% trustworthy since possibility to comment on the stay is given only to registered guests of the web-site who used it for booking rooms and only after the stay is over and the booking was confirmed and purchased. It allows assuming that there are no fake comments that can influence hotel's image or reputation.

- Ability to check reviews based on topics;

Possibility to filter comments based on the main topics mentioned in it allows monitoring general customer satisfaction by each department (Food and Beverage, Front Office,

Housekeeping, etc.), keeping track of weak points in current strategy and allowing working on them.

Disadvantages:

- Limitations of reviewing;

As it was already mentioned above, only those customers who have used the service for booking rooms in the property are able to comment on it. Apart from being an advantage in terms of reliability of reviews it might also be a disadvantage in case if one has booked a stay in the property through other sources (directly from hotel, from official web-site, other booking services) and wants to share opinions, web-site won't be able to provide this possibility.

- No possibility to comment on reviews

In comparison to other services Booking.com does not provide possibility for the hotel management to reply to reviews straight on the web-page. Nevertheless, as it was mentioned during in-depth interview with company representative all reviews are being monitored and one of the duties of Guest relation manager is to contact the reviewer in case of negative review. Depending on the level of dissatisfaction of the customer an apology and/or compensation is offered.

Taking in consideration all conclusions listed above it is possible to say that Booking.com is a useful tool for gathering customer's feedback – it is easy to use, reliable, inspiring clients to share their opinions and on the same time generates lots of information based on reviews that can be useful for the hotel management.

4.2.2 TripAdvisor.com

When talking about online services that allow providing feedback to hotels, restaurants and bars, TripAdvisor is among the first ones that come to mind. TripAdvisor branded sites make up the largest travel community in the world, reaching 350 million average monthly unique visitors, and 385 million reviews and opinions covering 6.6 million accommodations, restaurants, and attractions. The sites operate in 48 markets worldwide. (About Tripadvisor, 2016)

Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort has rating #41 from 223 properties of Hurghada and also gained a Certificate of Excellence sign on the page. TripAdvisor gives a Certificate of Excellence to accommodations, attractions and restaurants that consistently earn great re-

views from travellers. (Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort Review - TripAdvisor, 2016) With 1721 reviews written in 19 languages this property is currently rating 4,5/5. Proportions of languages of the reviews are demonstrated on the figure below.

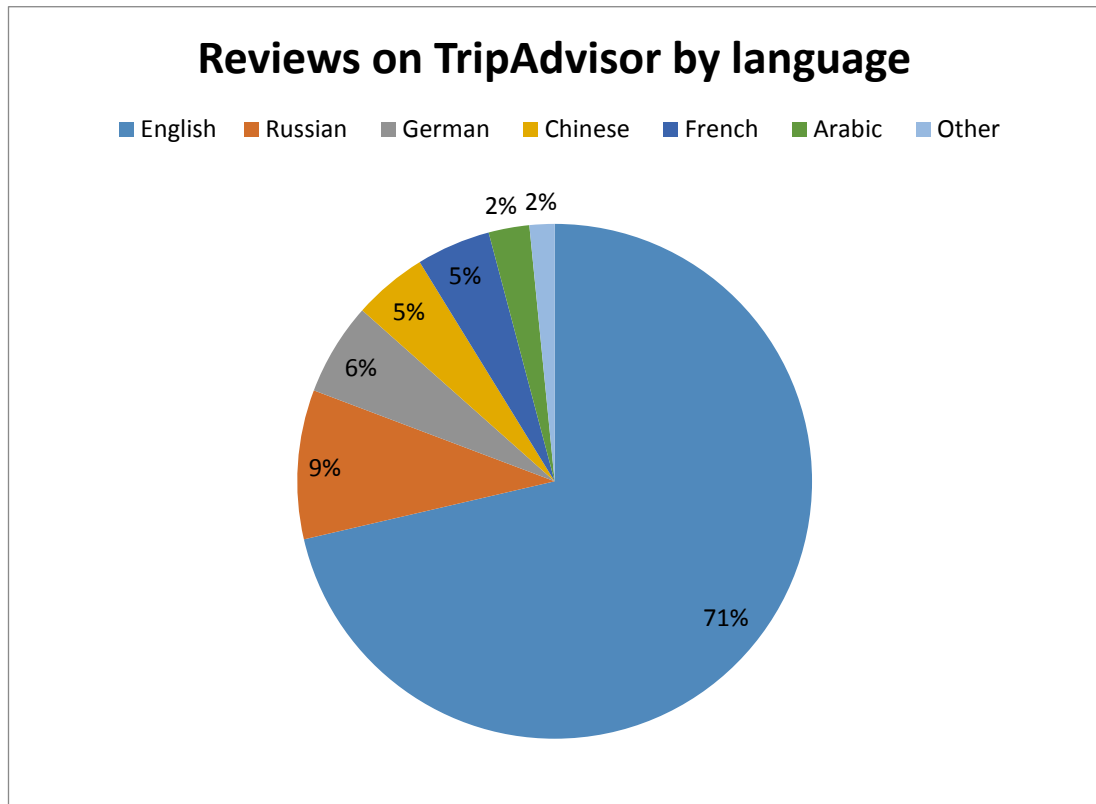


Figure 12 Reviews on TripAdvisor by language

As it is shown on the figure above absolute majority of reviews is written in English, which makes this resource truly international. However since in total there are 19 other languages that are being used in reviews it means that availability of reviews to people of different origin is quite high.

Just as Booking.com, this service also allows to filter reviews by score (Excellent, Very good, Average, Poor, Terrible), traveller types (Families, Couple, Solo, Business, Friends), time of the year (March-May, June-August, September-November, December-February) and language. Division of comments based on traveller rating score is demonstrated in the figure below.

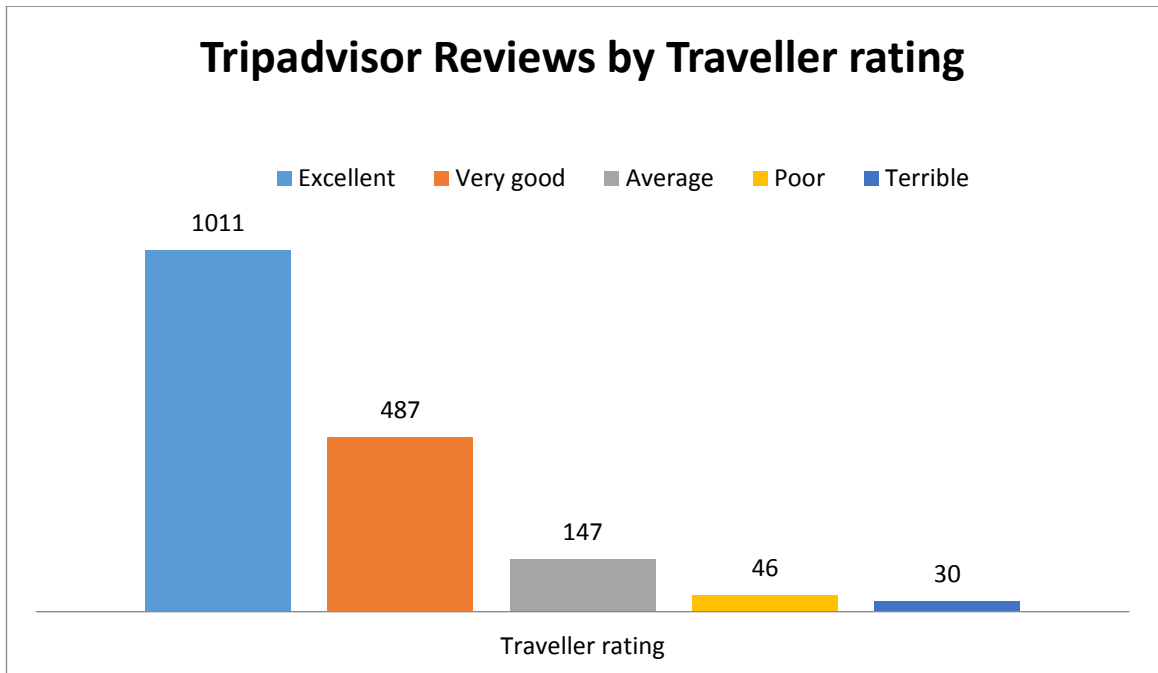


Figure 13 TripAdvisor Reviews by traveller rating score

In comparison to the same data on Booking.com (see Figure 6) difference is noticeable: in case of Booking.com gap between scores “Wonderful” and “Very good” was only 11% whereas on TripAdvisor scores “Excellent” and “Very good” differs almost twice (51,83%). It demonstrates that in general reviewers doubt less when scoring services and tend to give more positive reviews. Nevertheless, it is also noticeable that gap between “Poor” and “Terrible” scores is quite small (1,6%). Possible reasons of difference in scores of two services (TripAdvisor and Booking) are the following:

- Different approach due to service purpose

While Booking provides opportunity to book accommodation directly, TripAdvisor has another aim – being a platform for sharing opinions concerning properties without direct booking (although links to booking services are available on the web page as well as prices comparison).

- Accessibility and validity

When it comes to reliability and validity of the reviews first thing that comes to mind is that Booking has a limitation of reviewers and allows only direct customers of the service to leave reviews on their stay, whereas any registered user can create a review on TripAdvisor, which might affect reliability of the data and the review score.

One of the outstanding features of TripAdvisor is the possibility to reply to reviews on behalf of the hotel management. As it was stated during in-depth interview with the hotel representative all online feedback is noted and responded. In order to get a better view on handling customer feedback online analysis of recent responses was conducted. Some examples of replies on positive reviews on TripAdvisor are given below.

“Management response:

Dear Tamer E,

Thank you very much for your feedback regarding our resort.

We are very happy to know you enjoyed your stay with us.

We hope to see you again very soon!

Kind regards”

“Management response:

Dear Monalisa777,

Thank you very much for your feedback regarding our resort. We are very happy to know you enjoyed your stay with us. All your comments will be taken into consideration and are very appreciated as the opinion of each guest is valuable to us. We hope to welcome you again in our resort,

Kind regards”

“Management response:

Dear Gante10

Thank you for such positive review and we hope to welcome you again in our hotel,

Best regards”

“Management response:

Dear daliafahmy,

Thank you very much for your feedback regarding our resort. It is our pleasure to know that we have made your stay a memorable one. We hope to welcome you again in our resort!

Kind regards” (Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort Review - TripAdvisor, 2016)

It is noticeable that all responses are well-structured, share same ideas but written in different manners that proves that several people are participating in reviews responding process. It also visible, that there is no general template which is applied to all responses. It demonstrates that every opinion of customers matters and is valued.

Nevertheless it is important also to take a look at responses which are given to negative reviews in terms of analysing how hotel management deals with complains. Several examples of responses to negative feedback are provided below.

“Dear Sandra S,

We do appreciate you taking time and writing such detailed review regarding your recent stay in our hotel.

I do apologize for the services experience you had faced and want to assure you that we took all needed actions to prevent such fail again, as well we will proceed with extra trainings and will amend the system of supervision to be sure that it was isolated issue.

We pride ourselves in delivering exceptional and memorable services unfortunately we failed this time.

I sincerely hope you travels will bring you back to our hotel and you will enjoy our beach and facilities.

In case you will decide to stay here one more time please let us know in advance to prepare everything for you.

Best regards”

It is clear that this management response follows the aim to apologize for inconveniences caused during stay. Based on the information received during the interview information regarding poor performance of particular department will be forwarded to corresponding manager and an additional training will be conducted with staff.

“Dear Mr. Kevin296

We are very disappointed your stay with us was not up to your expectations and we do apologize for all uncomfortable situations that you had faced.

We crave for Guest Satisfactions, we do appreciate you taking the time to send us a detailed feedback.

As we can't identify you profile under the name you had used, please email us on : mhrs.hrgeg.guest.relation@marriotthotels.com and we will investigate all your good-self concerns and corrective actions will be made where applicable.

We do really wish if you could give us the chance to hosting you again as we sure you'll enjoy our service next time.

Best Regards”

Since in some cases it is not possible to identify the guest based on information from his profile on TripAdvisor, sometimes it is required to request additional information from the customer and contact him directly. Further investigation is performed after guest has con-

tacted Guest Relation officer via email. Depending on the level of dissatisfaction and issues that were arising during the stay additional compensation may be offered – for example, discount on rate for the next stay (time of the offer may be limited or unlimited – decision is made by the department management).

To sum up, TripAdvisor can be considered as practical and useful tool for receiving and handling customer feedback online. The main advantages of this method are the following:

- Accessibility and popularity;

Being one of the most popular services for travellers Tripadvisor ensures that process of leaving feedback is easily accessible, convenient and fast. In the same time positive replies may become valuable marketing material for future guests and motivate them to prefer particular property.

- Additional services;

Such features as Room tips (that allows to have valuable tips concerning particular room types which are preferred by travellers) and Questions and Answers (allows asking questions concerning property and receiving replies from other users) increases customer`s involvement in the process of providing feedback – they can actually feel importance of their opinion and their influence on other people.

- Possibility to respond on reviews;

Important feature provided by this service is the possibility to reply to customer`s feedback from behalf of the hotel management. It improves the hotel image in terms of demonstrating that the management cares about guests` opinions and values each and every one of them.

Apart from those advantages there are some weak points that can decrease the value of this service as a method of collecting customer feedback:

- Reliability and validity;

Since there is no need to confirm reservation or prove at any mean that the reviewer had a stay in the hotel, possibility that some reviews might be fake, exaggerated or not objective increases and it might affect overall reliability and validity of the reviews.

- Generated data

In comparison to Booking.com which generates useful charts and diagrams automatically based on reviews score, TripAdvisor is only capable of providing overall review score without additional details or services.

Taking into consideration all above mentioned advantages and disadvantages of the service it is still possible to say that TripAdvisor provides a lot of opportunities both for customers and for the hotel management.

4.2.3 Facebook.com

Facebook, being one of most well-known social media channels nowadays. It does not only provides opportunities for personal communication, but also for social media marketing due to its worldwide presence and popularity. Worldwide there are over 1.79 billion monthly active Facebook users (Facebook MAUs) which is a 16 per cent increase year over year. (Valuable Facebook statistics, 2016)

Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort currently has overall rating of 4.6 stars out of 5 on base of 756 reviews. Rather small amount of reviews in comparison to such travel services as Booking and TripAdvisor can be explained in the following way: Facebook is more often considered as platform for personal communications than for purpose of evaluating services and products. Indeed, Facebook is considered as a personal social media, in general people share with their friends what they want to be private, and not what they want to be public.

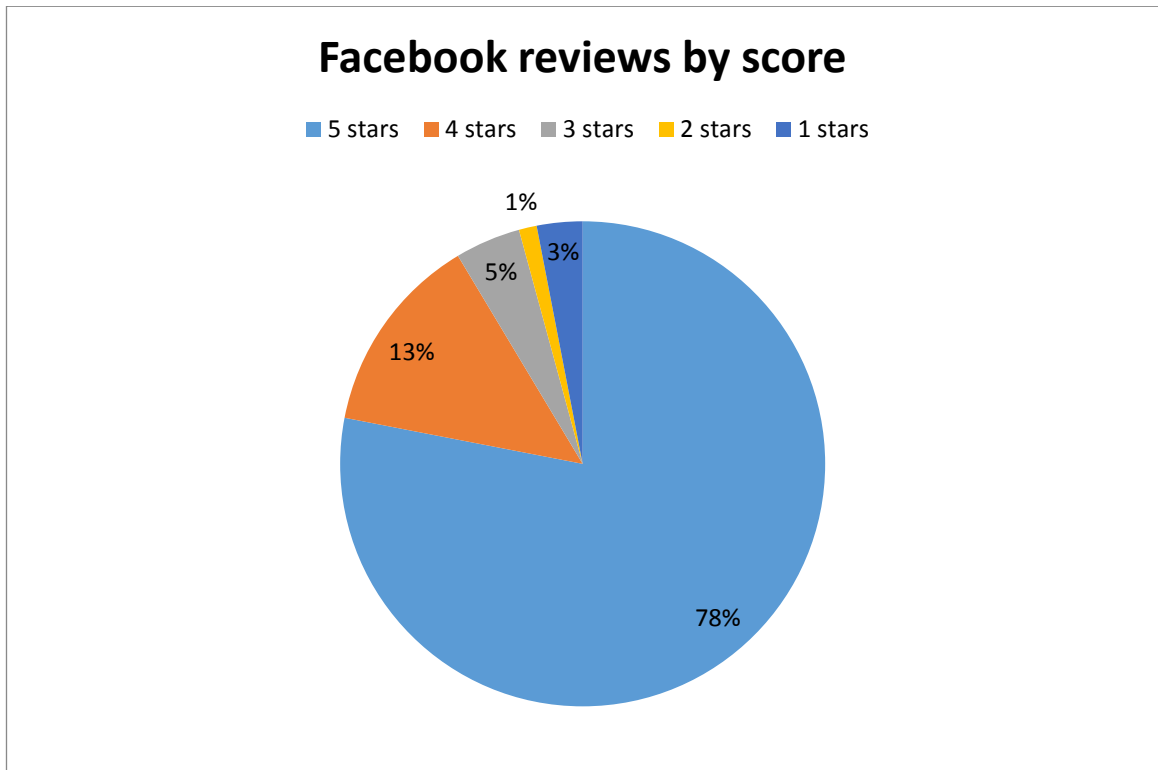


Figure 14 Facebook reviews by score

On the figure above difference between scores is clearly noticeable – Facebook users appeal to give excellent grades to commissioner hotel in 78% of all reviews and the lowest grade only in 3%. Statistics demonstrate quite high level of satisfaction in comparison to other web-services - it may be the result of difference in services aims and objectives. Facebook, providing possibility for reviewing to all registered users decreases reliability of reviews, and specializes mainly on promotional events that company provides to the customers.

Facebook does not provide many opportunities to filter comments (it is possible to choose the most recent ones or reviews from highest to lowest score), but has a noticeable feature – ability to contact hotel representative right away from the web-page. Service also provides links for booking rooms through official Marriott web-page and to write review on the stay via TripAdvisor.

In general the following advantages of this service might be noted:

- Variety of features

Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort page on Facebook provides many features that can be interesting for future and potential customers of the property such as reviews, links to booking services, information of current promotional events and offers.

- Possibility to contact hotel representative

Direct contact with hotel employees might be useful when future or potential guests have special needs and requests and want to ensure extra services before booking a room.

Unfortunately in comparison with previously described services, Facebook has some disadvantages that decrease its value in terms of collecting customer feedback. These weak points are listed below.

- Amount of reviews

Considering amount of people who liked the page (almost 15 thousand) amount of reviews is just 756. It may be affected by the fact that originally the service is not used to write comments, but rather subscribe to the page in order to get updates regarding promotional events and offers.

- Possibilities to filter reviews

In comparison with main competitors possibility to filter reviews on Facebook is less convenient and does not contain much data which can be useful for hotel management.

By taking into consideration all advantages and disadvantages of the service, it is possible to state the following conclusion: it is a useful tool for promotion, Facebook is less adapted for customer feedback collection and handling.

4.2.4 Conclusions

After analysing three major social media channels that are used for online customer feedback collection, final conclusions can be stated.

Firstly, all analysed services are completely different in their approaches and goals, and it results in different kind of data that they provide to the commissioner.

Secondly, wise usage of all advantages that are provided by these methods can improve customer feedback collection, make it easier and make usage of collected data more efficient.

Criteria	Booking.com	TripAdvisor	Facebook
Amount of reviews	1649	1721	756
Possibility to comment on reviews	No	Yes	No
Variable review filters	Yes	Yes	No
Automatically generated data	Yes	No	No
Extra features	Yes	No	Yes
Convenience for customers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reliability of reviews	Yes	No	No

Table 5 Comparison on Booking, TripAdvisor and Facebook

In the Table 5, a comparison between 3 social media channels is demonstrated, revealing strengths of each of them. It is clearly visible that Booking.com provides more opportunities for customer feedback collection and monitoring, but according to analysis of other channels TripAdvisor has features that Booking.com is lacking (for example – filtering reviews by months and possibility to reply to reviews on behalf of the hotel management). It means that efficient usage of both channels allows getting best possible results.

While TripAdvisor and Booking.com are services designed for needs of travellers. Facebook, which original idea was to unite people all over the world and provide easy, comfortable and efficient tool to communicate still can be considered as an important additional method for customer feedback collection. With its availability and amount of users this platform becomes a useful tool for hotel management in terms of demonstrating brand image of the company.

5 Development plan

Since the main aim of this thesis was not only to analyse current methods of collecting customer feedback, but also offer ideas for improvement, this chapter may be considered as main value for the whole report. It contains propositions made on the base of both parts of research – in-depth interview and social media research. Recommendations for improvement for each of customer feedback collection methods are presented in this chapter, as well as explanations and short analysis of each of them.

Main objectives of these recommendations are the following:

1. Increasing quantity of information received from customers;

Gathering more feedback from guests will allow making more detailed analysis of weaknesses in current strategies and adjusting them in order to increase customer satisfaction.



Figure 15 Benefits of increasing amount of received customer feedback

As it is demonstrated on the figure above, increasing amount of received feedback will positively influence performances of all departments and increase overall satisfaction level of guests.

2. Receiving more relevant and detailed feedback from customers;

Apart from increasing overall amount of feedback it is also important to improve its quality in terms of getting more detailed and relevant reviews. Especially these improvements are needed in Guest Satisfaction Survey, where possibility to comment on performances of various departments is quite limited.

3. Offering new methods of using customer feedback;

Importance of customer feedback for the organization was already discussed previously in the report. According to information received during interview there is still room for improvements in terms of utilization of information – especially, when it comes to social media feedback.

These three objectives will be discussed in application to each of customer feedback collection methods performed daily in the commissioner company.

5.1 Guest contact

Personal contact with guests appears to be one of the most important methods of collecting feedback from customers. Establishing personal connection through dialogue allows encouraging clients to share their opinions concerning services. However, since responsibilities of Guest relation agents in the hotel are quite variable and time consuming, one might not always have enough time to collect enough responses to create a full analysis of overall satisfaction score between guests. In order to improve this method of gathering feedback from customers following propositions are offered:

- Lobby host/hostess or special Guest Relation Agent with specialization on personal contacts with guests.

Having a special task employee to take care of collecting customer feedback might improve general impression of the hotel as well as permitting collecting more responses. Taking into consideration the amount of daily duties that Guest Relation agents handle, it is quite logic that spending at least 3-4 hours of the shift separately on conducting personal contact with guests might be challenging. Lobby host will be able to concentrate on meeting, greeting and contacting guests during their check in, stay and check out.

Extending personal service and attention to all guests will encourage them to share more freely on reasons of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Since many duties of Guest relation agents take place all around the hotel, it is valuable to have a person who is always present and available for guests in the hotel lobby.

- Flexible system of reporting customer feedback for all departments involved in customer service.

From authors personal experience and information gathered during interviews it is clear that currently hotel management is motivating all employees to get in personal contact with customers in order of receiving feedback. In order to support this idea, it would be useful to create a tool, or a system which will allow sharing information between representatives of each department. Modern technologies provide a lot of opportunities for businesses to keep its departments in touch with each other. Apart from special programs and services, it might also be possible to organize communication via messengers as long as it is not getting in conflict with company policy regarding information distribution.

These recommendations may bring new value to personal contact with guests and allow gathering and sharing customer feedback more effectively.

5.2 Guest Satisfaction Survey

Being one of the most popular methods of collecting customer`s feedback, satisfaction survey provides to guests opportunity to share their opinions on the last stay without need of getting in personal contact with hotel representatives. According to information received from interviewee, this survey is sent randomly to guests upon check out to the email address stated during check in in the registration card. Main weakness of this method is the following: due to various reasons, the amount of responses is not high enough. Reasons of not receiving enough responses may be technical (incorrect e-mail address, mistake in the recordings, small random amount of recipients, email got automatically to the spam folder) or personal (guest ignored survey email on purpose or accidentally). Apart from that, structure of the survey does not allow guests to share their opinions on performance of each department.

Taking all above mentioned into consideration following propositions for further improvement can be made:

- Sending survey to all guests upon check out without random selection.

Refusing the idea of making random selection for survey recipients will provide more responses – the more emails will be sent, the higher chance that bigger part of guests will be willing to share their opinions on their stay. Unfortunately, since there is no official information regarding percentage of recipients from amount of daily check out guests, it is hard to compare how much more responses will this improvement bring.

- Include in the survey evaluation of each department separately

This improvement gives customers opportunity to provide feedback on every kind of service provided in the property (for example – housekeeping, restaurant service, quality of food, variety, animation on the beach, etc.). In the same time, for hotel management it allows receiving more data concerning department performance, provide essential trainings and improve customer satisfaction in future.

One of the possible ways of improving guest satisfaction survey is described below:

Guest Satisfaction Survey

Arrival:

Check-In Experience

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hotel:

Property (Exterior and Interior) Overall

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stylish and Up-to-date Design/Décor

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Maintenance and Upkeep

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Lobby Area

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Staff:

Staff Service Overall

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Staff Service in Restaurants and Bars

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Room/Suit/Apartment:

Room Overall

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Room Cleanliness

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Figure 16 Plan of restructuring the Customer Satisfaction Survey

Since one of main features of Marriott hotels is exceptional service, it is offered to include lines concerning experience during check out and service quality of restaurant staff members. Structure of the survey may be changed in the following way: instead of evaluating overall score customers will be offered to evaluate firstly each stage of their trip (check in - stay - check out) and based on that metrics concerning overall satisfaction are placed in the end of the survey to make a conclusion and encourage customers to provide more sincere feedback.

Other ideas for improvements of the survey are listed below:

1. Deleting the line concerning lobby area since this metric comes after "Maintenance and Upkeep" and in fact repeats the same question;
 2. Taking away lines "Bathroom overall" and "Comfort of bed" for the following reasons: firstly, the survey should be kept short in order to encourage customers to answer it, secondly - it is more important to focus on metrics which will provide evaluation on staff performance in order to provide trainings, and finally - information concerning cleanliness of the room is already requested in the previous metrics "Room Overall" and "Room Cleanliness".
- Using data to create monthly statistics analysis on performance of each department include analysis in reports presented to hotel management.

During daily meetings, the average score is presented to management in order to get understanding of general customer satisfaction level in the property. It would be useful to add more metrics apart from average score, for example percentage of complains con-

cerning cleaning to overall amount of negative reviews. It will allow using data collected via survey more efficiently and provide more information on performance of each department.

Guest satisfaction survey can be considered as one of most efficient methods of gathering customer satisfaction. With changes proposed, this method may be improved and bring more value for both sides – customers (allows sharing more information) and hotel management (evaluation of services and ideas for improvement).

5.3 Social media

According to social media analysis which was performed in chapter 4, the main social media channels that demonstrate the efficiency in collecting customer feedback online are TripAdvisor and Booking. In order to get more reviews on these channels following changes can be applied:

- Encourage guests to write reviews on TripAdvisor and Booking during personal contact upon check out;

It was mentioned during interview that guest relation agents are willing to collect customer feedback personally during check out to ensure that exceptional service was provided to the customers. In order to motivate guests to share their opinions online it would be useful to recommend them to leave reviews on social media.

- Include direct links to web-pages of the property on TripAdvisor and Facebook in email with Guest Satisfaction Survey;

This improvement will motivate guests to leave reviews on social media due to the fact that they won't have to make extra effort to find hotel web-page on these web-sites. During the interview it was stated that people are willing to share their reviews only in cases if their stay was extremely satisfying or if their expectations were not met at all. Easy access to services will encourage guests who were not impressed by services but quite satisfied to share their opinions and point out weaknesses in current strategies.

- Include detailed reports from Booking.com and analysis of activity on TripAdvisor to monthly reports in order to increase management awareness of customer satisfaction level;

During social media analysis it was found out that Booking.com is automatically generating statistics based on reviews. These statistics may become a useful material to analyse

the efficiency of the current strategy, if they would be included in monthly or weekly reports that are presented to the management.

6 Research process evaluation

6.1 Planning and conducting interview

In-depth interview was considered to be the biggest source of information for the research, which is why preparations for it started in advance. First milestones, to conduct in-depth interview were set in early August 2016 when the decision on research problem was made. Hotel management was contacted and assistance in terms of providing essential information were requested. After approval of thesis subject analysis from thesis supervisor, Ms Angelika Artamonova has been contacted separately in order to clarify research topic and sign essential documents.

After theoretical framework for the research which was done by middle of October, a list of questions for the interview was created in coordination with research questions. List of questions for the interview has been forwarded to the interviewee one week in advance. The interview has been conducted on 29.10.2016 via Skype.

Interview

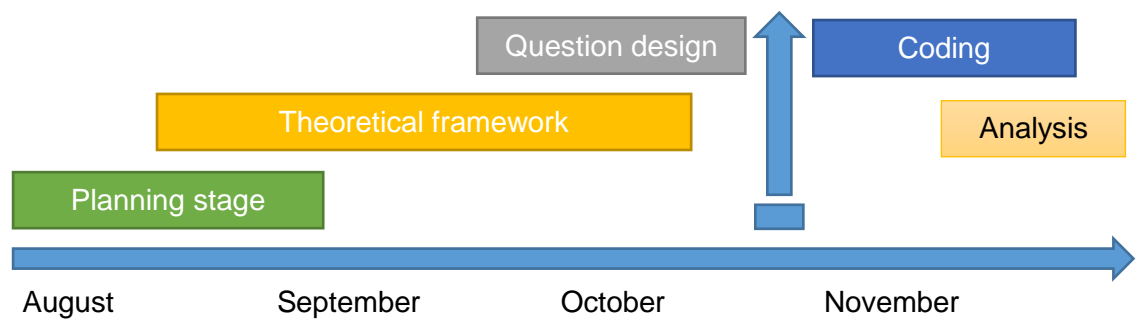


Figure 17 Process of planning and conducting in-depth interview

As it is shown on the figure above, process of planning and conducting interview started in early August on the planning stage. In order to support research almost one and half months were spent on creating strong theoretical framework of the research. After the framework was reviewed and applied to research problem, list of questions was creating in accordance with research questions and goals of the report. From the figure, it is visible that the research on theory took most of the time of the process. This time could have been used differently. Indeed, Coding and analyzing the data collected during the interview could have been pushed deeper.

One thing that could have been improved in process of conducting the interview is choosing more interviewees in order to get more data. Nevertheless there were several reasons of conducting only one in-depth interview, and they are the following:

- Ms. Artamonova has more experience in collecting, analysing and reporting customer`s feedback than her colleagues, who have been employed recently and mainly concentrate on paper work. Relevance of information that could have been gotten from her colleagues won`t be reasonable enough for time and effort used to conduct several interviews;
- Saving time allowed concentrating on triangulation and pay more attention to social media research – it resulted in more ideas for further improvement;
- Since guest relation manager is involved in majority of inner processes in the hotel, interviewee could give full review of the processes related to collection, analysis and usage of customer`s feedback. Ms. Artamonova had enough experience and knowledge of the subject and could comment on research problem on behalf of the whole department.

After the interview was conducted and recorded, information were analysed and decoded. Codes serve as shorthand devices to label, separate, compile and organize data (Ghari & Gronhaug 2005, 208). In order to structure and categorize data open coding was applied. Open coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and

categorizing data. (Ghari & Gronhaug 2005, 208). Information received during interview was categorized according to the following topics:

- Information regarding personality of the interviewee (personal background);
- Main findings (answers to research questions);
- Additional results (support for the research);
- Points to be considered during social media research;

Data was included in chapters of the report according to its category and used to complete part of the research and support social media research which was conducted as a next step of the thesis process.

6.2 Conducting social media research

In order to look at the research questions from different angles, it was decided to conduct research on main social media channels that are used in the property for online feedback collection. The research was conducted from the end of October to middle on November and included brief review of all social media channels that are involved in customer`s feedback collection, and precise analysis of three of them – TripAdvisor, Booking.com and Facebook. Results of the research were introduced in chapter 5 – Development plan.

The need of conducting this research was discussed during first thesis seminar, but during process of creating research plan its importance was slightly underestimated. Nevertheless during process of planning interview, the importance of social media research increased since it was noted that there might not be enough information from one in-depth interview to fully support the research. According to information received during in-depth interview customer feedback received through social media has a great impact on daily operations in hotel.

List of social media channels that need to be analysed was created due to information received during interview. Nevertheless only three main channels were selected from the list to be analysed precisely. Choice of these channels was made due to the following reasons:

1. Amount of reviews;
2. Popularity of the service;
3. Accessibility of the service (for example, concerning target markets and available languages;

Process of conducting social media research was structured and time efficient. After each of three services was carefully inspected analysis of strength and weaknesses of each was performed.

One of the things which could have been improved in the process is time management – it would allow spending more time on planning and structuring the research. Nevertheless results of the research would not have changed since analysis was done properly and a maximum of available information was used to support the research.

6.3 Findings

The analysis of information gathered during in-depth interview and social media research led to conclusions and production of development plan for each of the methods of gathering customer`s feedback.

The main aims of the report – research on current methods of collecting feedback from customers and offering ideas for further improvement – were met. Development plan was created based on data gathered during in-depth interview with the company representative and social media research. Findings provide valuable ideas for the commissioner that may improve current customer`s feedback collection process, it makes it more convenient and encouraging for customers and more useful for hotel management in terms of data usage.

Despite the fact that the research process could have been better organised, there is no evidence that more structured management of time and efforts could have affected final results. Indeed, they were based mainly on triangulation supported by personal observations and previous experience of the author.

6.4 Reliability and validity

When it comes to conduct a research it is important to keep in mind such terms as reliability and validity. Reliability refers to matter of accuracy (Golafshani, 2003) of the research. In other words, this term makes researcher analysing if the conducted research would have to be repeated in same environment and with use of same instruments, would the findings be the same? In the same time, validity measures trustworthiness of the findings and asks the following question: is this observation record – true? (Shank 2006,111)

In order to prove that collected data are reliable and valid triangulation was used while conducting the research. Triangulation is the process of converging upon a particular find-

ing by using different sorts of data and data-gathering strategies. Each set of data or each strategic finding on its own might not be strong enough to support findings. But when these different “strands” are taken together, there is stronger evidence for findings. In qualitative research triangulation is also often called upon to help establish and maintain rigor in a given study. A rigorous study is one that was designed carefully, conducted properly and analysed correctly. Furthermore, its findings are robust and important (Shank 2006, 113-114).

Since conducting only one in-depths interview is not enough to collect all data that is needed to answer research questions, social media research was conducted. Collecting information from different sources allows considering received data as reliable and valid. Moreover in order to support the research, personal observations were included in the analysis of information gathered during in-depth interview. It is also important to mention that interviewee can be considered as reliable source of information due to her experience and position in the field, and due to personal relationship with the author of the report – both of them used to work together in Hurghada Marriott Beach Resort as colleagues from October 2015 to March 2016.

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Appendices

1. Guest Satisfaction Survey

Guest Satisfaction Survey

Overall metrics

GSS: Overall Satisfaction

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Intent to Recommend Property

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Intent to Consider Brand

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Arrival:

Check-In Experience

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hotel:

Property (Exterior and Interior) Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stylish and Up-to-date Design/Décor

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Maintenance and Upkeep

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Lobby Area

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Staff:

Staff Service Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Room/Suit/Apartment:

Room Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Room Cleanliness

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Bathroom Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comfort of Bed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Plan of restructuring Guest Satisfaction Survey

Guest Satisfaction Survey

Arrival:

Check-In Experience

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hotel:

Property (Exterior and Interior) Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stylish and Up-to-date Design/Décor

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Maintenance and Upkeep

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Lobby Area

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Staff:

Staff Service Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Staff Service in Restaurants and Bars

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Room/Suit/Apartment:

Room Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Room Cleanliness

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Bathroom Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comfort of Bed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Departure

Check out experience

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Overall metrics

GSS: Overall Satisfaction

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Intent to Recommend Property

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Intent to Consider Brand

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



- Delete



- Add



- Change position

..

3. Final version of edited Guest Satisfaction Survey

Guest Satisfaction Survey

Arrival:

Check-In Experience

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hotel:

Property (Exterior and Interior) Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Stylish and Up-to-date Design/Décor

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Maintenance and Upkeep

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Staff:

Staff Service Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Staff Service in Restaurants and Bars

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Room/Suit/Apartment:

Room Overall

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Room Cleanliness

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Departure

Check out experience

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Overall metrics

GSS: Overall Satisfaction

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Intent to Recommend Property

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Intent to Consider Brand

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. List of questions for the individual interview

Personal questions

- What is your educational background?
- How long have you been working in Marriott Hurghada?
- What are the main advantages of working in world-known brand hotel?
- What are the main disadvantages of working in world-known brand hotel?

General questions about hotel

- What can you say about importance of a guest relation manager?
- How many guest relation agents are there on duty during a shift and how the duties are distributed?
- What are the main target markets of the property? (approximate % of nationalities)

Questions concerning personal duties

- What are your key responsibilities in the property?
- How do you view main goals of your department?
- What are top 5 problems or issues that guests encounter in your property? How are they resolved?

Questions concerning research topic

- Is it important to collect and analyse customer feedback?
- What are the main methods of collecting customer`s feedback during their stay?
- What are the main methods of receiving customer`s feedback after check out?
- How customer feedback influences daily operations in the hotel?
- How social media helps to indicate customer satisfaction score in the hotel?
- Can you describe methods of handling customer feedback that was received online? How is it used, responded and forwarded to other departments?