

성급 평가제도의 지속가능한 호텔 품질기준 기능성에 대한 최근 연구동향 문헌고찰

Will Star Ratings Remain a Sustainable Quality Measure for Hotels? A Review of Recent Studies

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Abstract

오랜 기간 '성급' 평가제도는 호텔의 유무형적인 품질에 대해 잠재 투숙객 및 고객들과 소통하는 중요한 수단으로 이용되어 왔다. 하지만 최근 들어 호텔산업의 성급 제도 운영에 대한 기능성, 타당성 및 적용가능성에 대한 의문점들이 제기되고 있으며 이와 관련한 이론적 및 실무적 논의가 이루어지고 있다. 본 논문은 이러한 호텔 성급 제도 관련 최신 지식과 연구 동향을 살피고 이에 대한 함의를 도출해 주요 안전들을 정리하고 향후 연구방향 및 주안점을 도출하고자 한다. 특히, 최근 호텔 성급을 주제로 다룬 연구들을 통합해 네 가지의 키워드를 도출하고 (안전 및 보안, 녹색 성과, 서비스 성과, 고객 리뷰), 이에 대한 추가 연구의 필요성을 역설하고자 한다. 연구의 시사점과 함께 관련 분야 후속 연구를 위한 고려사항들을 같이 제안하고자 한다.

주제어 : 호텔품질(hotel quality), 성급제도(star rating), 안전 및 보안(safety and security), 녹색 성과(green performance), 서비스 성과(service performance), 고객 리뷰(consumer reviews)

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I. INTRODUCTION

In many regions where tourist accommodation facilities are present, ‘star ratings’ are used to classify hotels based on their quality of tangible attributes (e.g. facilities) and intangible service quality (e.g. availability of service provided by on-site staff). These ratings can be public, when assessed under the laws and regulations approved by national or regional governments, or private, when applied the criteria set forth by invested associations, organizations, and other consumer-oriented groups (Denizci Guillet & Law, 2010). Regardless of its official status the star-rating system for hotels and tourist accommodation is rather globally acknowledged, where the most common method to classifying hotel quality ranges from 1 (the lowest) to 5 stars (the highest)(Martin-Fuentes, 2016).

The benefits of maintaining such a classification is evident. Star ratings communicate to guests important information about the property’s facilities, amenities, and service standards, thus providing guests with useful information about the property and availability of services and amenities; in turn, this information helps formulate guests’expectations about the quality of they stay, leading to influences on perceived satisfaction and value for money (Mohsin, Rodrigues, & Brochado, 2019). When combined with other antecedents such as purpose of trip, the preformed expectations determine the guests’evaluation of the overall experience and subsequent behavioral intention toward the hotel (Rajaguru & Hassanli, 2018).

Considering the significance of its roles in the decision-making process and in the evaluation process of the guests, it is not surprising that star ratings have been discussed in the literature as a strong predictor of performance for hotel business as well. For example, Israeli(2002) found that starratings of the hotels, as traditional measures of hotel quality, is a robust determinant of room rates. Pine & Phillips(2005) found that along with foreign ownership connections and size, star rating is a significant predictor of hotel performance. One step further, Nalley, Part, & Bufquin(2019) found a positive correlation between the rating (in their study a Michelin Diamond rather than a star) and performance of the hotels.

Given the importance, there is much to be yearned by the industry

professionals as well as the policymakers regarding the implications of star ratings and the system through which they are implemented (Zhan-Qing & Liu, 1993). Although there have been recent studies and new findings on this issue, however, a comprehensive view of the recent practice and synthesis of pertinent findings has not been offered to the audience, both academic and practitioner. To this end, the current article purports to critically review select recent articles from the literature (between 2022 and 2024) on the various aspects of hotel ratings system and synthesize the major findings and implications, thereby drawing conclusions for future research and practice. Findings of the review will be of contribution to the academics who are interested on this research topic, as well as to the practitioners whose responsibilities are pertinent to quality management of hotel products.

II. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE

1. Guest Perceptions on Health and Safety and Star Rating

It is a widely known fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the global hospitality industry, while the hotels were the most impacted as separation of service consumption (e.g. for restaurants) is not feasible even to a limited extent and their dependence on traveler demand is usually higher. While the hotels as an industry suffered, however, two studies have focused on the relationship between star rating and the impact of COVID-19 on hotels. Tiwari & Omar(2023) investigated the relationship between star rating and health and safety risk perceptions of tourists, finding that a higher star rating is positively correlated with the said perceptions of the tourists. The findings imply that star ratings can be used as an effective strategy to mitigate exposure of hotel demand to unpredictable risk of similar nature. Yet, Lin & Chen(2022) found that concerning the rooms revenue, the five-star hotels suffered a greater revenue decrease on average during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it is expected that the covariance contribution of guests' perception on health and safety to rooms

revenue variance would not be dominant, further studies can investigate further the process through which star rating affects the revenue and costs of the hotels during industry-wide shocks and events.

2. 'Green' Perception and Star Rating of Hotels

Hotels are known for, due to their operating nature and characteristics, the burden they place on the environment due to over-consumption of water and energy (Casado-Díaz, Sellers-Rubio, Rodriguez, & Sancho-Esper, 2020). Meanwhile, the role of star ratings in the relationship between the guests' perception on such activities and the effectiveness of hotels' strategies, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to mitigate pertinent concerns, has not been a straightforward one in the literature. Hypothesizing that star ratings moderate the causality between CSR activities of the hotels and green word-of-mouth, Lin, Zhou, Zheng, Jiang, & Nguyen(2023)'s work found a significant moderating effect of star ratings, reporting a more sizable word-of-mouth effect for hotels with more stars. Similarly, Tran, Nguyen, & Nguyen(2025) found that impacts of green hotel practices on customer citizenship behavioral intentions, pride, and moral elevation are stronger for higher-star-rated hotels. The recent findings constitute an important question for practitioners as management of perceptions on green initiatives is becoming increasingly important (Khalil, Che Abdullah, Haron, & Hamid, 2024) and a strategic approach to this would entail star ratings of the hotel properties managed by the brand.

3. Expectations, Performance, and Hotel Star Rating

Although theoretically, the positive relationship between star rating and service performance of hotels is a longstanding one with abundance of support from the past literature, recent studies have investigated in-depth the related causality in an empirical manner, yielding interesting questions. El-Adly & Jaleel(2024) found a significant moderating effect of star rating between staff performance and perceived value, and perceived value and satisfaction/loyalty, respectively, which is attributed by the authors to the higher expectations of the guests associated

with higher star ratings, implying that dissatisfaction would also be commensurate when the expectations are not met. Such a perspective is also shared by Pichierri, Pino, & Guido(2024), who found that unfavorable reviews on hotels' disservice are significantly lengthier for only the hotels with higher star ratings. Gao, Choosri, Kunkhet, & Paphawasit's(2024) recent work posits a similar line of reasoning and finds that respondents tend to believe that prices should be higher for higher star-rated hotels than for the hotels with lower star ratings. One interesting finding is that the perceived room rates for high-star-rated hotels were lower than their actual room rates, whereas for the low-star-rated hotels the results were exactly the opposite -actual room rates are lower than the perceived room rates. As a consequence, interesting question managerial questions arise for hotels with respect to star ratings. A higher star rating can be beneficial if the guests' expectations can be met, but works negatively when they are not. In addition, the appropriate room rate assessed by guests are lower for high-star-rated hotels, which becomes a constraint in revenue maximization. Such a concept can be in part contradictory to the existing belief on the effect of star rating on room rates (Israeli, 2002) and require additional investigation by future research.

4. Star Ratings and Consumer Ratings and Ratings

Since the proliferation of online travel agencies (OTAs), online reviews that take the form of user-generated content (UGC) or electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) have started to function as another measure of quality for hotel guests. The review ratings often convey more, detailed, and possibly helpful information than the 5-star based hotel ratings, and is believed to interact with the hotel ratings when affecting the guests during information search (Hu & Chen, 2016). As a natural result, online reviews become an important consideration as they interact with the star rating when the guest is searching for information related to quality, and complications can also arise where star ratings and consumer reviews (as well as ratings) are in conflict.

Focusing on this relationship between star ratings and consumer reviews, some studies have scrutinized the relationship in more depth. Arzaghi, Genc, & Naik(2023) found that although 'linearly' related, customer reviews and ratings

often deviate considerably from the ‘official’ ratings, which may result in lost demand for the hotels. The study also reveals that while the star ratings are more related to the property, reviewer ratings are more related to amenities and location, where the importance of certain amenities are valued differently between star and review ratings. Ye, Xia, Zhang, & Li(2022) found that the importance of particular attributes of a hotel, as judged by consumer reviews, varies according to different segments according to hotel star ratings as naturally, the attributes guests focus on would be different based on the hotels’ quality segments they are searching for. Given the increasing importance of online consumer reviews and ratings, additional research efforts should be directed to the topic, including the issue of inter-platform and time-series variance in online ratings, whereas such variance for star ratings would be low or non-existent (Kirilenko, Stepchenkova, Gromoll, & Jo, 2024).

III. CONCLUSIONS

For a long time, star ratings have provided travelers with crucial information on the expected quality of the lodging accommodation that they may consider staying. The system for quality rating of the hotels can be quite different in each country or city, depending on the local regulations, where they are usually based on objective, measurable criteria such as facilities, services, amenities, and the sizes of the rooms and common areas. Nevertheless, the merit in and motivation for these star ratings are globally common and widely agreed (Fang, Ye, Kucukusta, & Law, 2016). This review article summarizes the recent developments in the research stream and finds that a number of studies are associating the star ratings of hotels with various performance measures, consumer expectation and evaluation, as well as other sources of information available to guests from different sources.

More specifically, a synthesis of the recent studies published on the effectiveness and importance of hotels’ star ratings suggest that they are still an important part of quality communication for the hotel industry. Specifically, star ratings were associated with higher standards of health safety and security for

hotels during the COVID-19 pandemic, influences the outcome of green initiatives, ever more important for the hotels, and still plays a vital role in governing the expectations and determining the outcomes for guests' experiences at hotels. More importantly, the star ratings now have a formidable associate the consumer reviews and ratings available in OTAs. The quantity of information generated by consumer reviews and ratings overwhelmingly exceed that provided by star ratings, while its relative quality position is still to be determined. Yet, because of their responsiveness and proximity to customer needs, it is suggested that star ratings will need more frequent reviews and flexibility to swiftly adapt to new market conditions (Koutoulas & Vagena, 2023).

It has been 10 years since Torres, Singh, & Robertson-Ring(2014) suggested the possibility that the formal star ratings for hotels may become obsolete in the industry; however, contrary to the expectations of many, they are still around and active in many aspects regarding guests' experience. Although they may eventually fade away in the market, it is concluded from the survey of recent literature that at least for the time being, additional studies to shed light on its role is warranted. In this light, star rating providers can also consider taking into account the new sources of information and further standardization among the relevant markets.

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