

Consumer Research Emphasizes Importance of Online Feedback Management

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Executive Summary

Travelers show similar behavioral patterns in regard to their relationship with online guest feedback about hotel accommodations. Touchpoints related to online reviews occur throughout every phase of the guest journey. During the pre-arrival, on-site, and post-stay stages, guests write about and share their expectations, experiences, and perceptions through feedback.

In fact, the majority of guests have left at least one review about their experience with an accommodation within the previous 12 months of traveling. Out of these reviews, guests state that they usually leave very positive reviews. Further, when an accommodation asks a guest to write a review, they are over three times more likely to get a response: plus, there is a much higher chance that the guest will leave them a 5-star review.

The following findings suggest that it is in any accommodation provider's best interest to both manage their online reputation and also to significantly impact it by collecting and building online review content. To further increase these efforts, providers should adopt a review marketing strategy to share and display their positive reputation across the web, which in turn convinces more future travelers to book their accommodation. Additionally, gaining feedback from guests is a valuable method to gain relevant data that encourages positive operational changes.

Findings show that:

- The majority, 54%, of guests have experience writing and submitting at least one review in the previous 12-months.
- On average, 95% of traveler reviews are positive; 93% of travelers' most recent reviews are reportedly positive.
- When a review is requested by an accommodation provider, guests are 3.6x times more likely to leave a review.
- Reviews requested are also 16% more likely to be "extremely positive" 5-star reviews.
- After price, "Review Score" is the most important decision variable that travelers need to convince themselves to book a certain accommodation.

Method

To understand the relationship between travelers and online review patterns, the following study employed direct survey questions to individuals who have admittedly traveled within the previous year. With progressive questioning, respondents reveal the importance they place on online recommendations, their willingness to write a review, and their experience writing reviews. The objective of this research is to summarize how travelers engage with and contribute to online guest feedback.

To gain a representation of online traveler behavior, a research sample was taken from a panel through Qualtrics of US consumers. The 920 participants were all over the age of 18, had both traveled within the previous 12 months and booked some sort of accommodation. Both leisure and business travel were considered in this survey.

The survey respondents were asked various interrelated questions; multiple choice, short answer, and Likert scale. As part of a larger body of research focusing on the consumer behavior journey, this study specifically addressed the topic of guest feedback.

This research comes as the third part of a larger study focusing on the consumer behavior of travelers. The first [study](#) uncovered online search and booking behaviors. The second [study](#) revealed guest preferences and expectations for direct hotel communication pre-arrival, on-site, and post-stay. This third collection of research emphasizes the importance of post-stay feedback.

This approach led to strong, interconnected results that show deep insights into the consumer behavior of travelers. It also encouraged the opportunity to revisit the research data under new conditions.

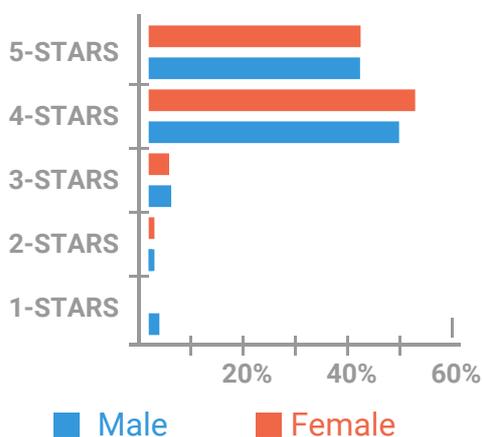
Research Results

Profile of Today's Reviewer

The research sample consists of a representative group of travelers within the US, defined by whether they had booked and stayed in any accommodation in the previous year. Furthermore, as the purpose of this research is to illuminate behavior around travelers and their experience with online reviews, over half of guests have left a review online about one of their past accommodation providers.

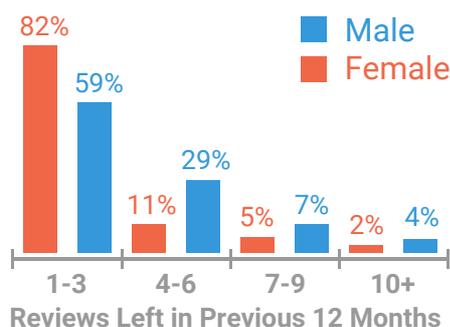
When observing the demographics of travelers who have written a review in the past, researchers found that there is a difference between male and female behaviors. Male respondents are 7% more likely than females to have left a review in the previous 12 months. Female respondents, however, leave 3% more positive reviews.

Distribution of Feedback by Gender



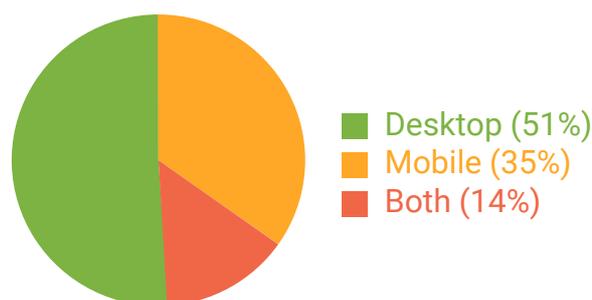
As further evidence of the difference between gender, male respondents are 23% more likely to frequently write reviews, meaning 4 or more reviews per year.

Review Frequency by Gender



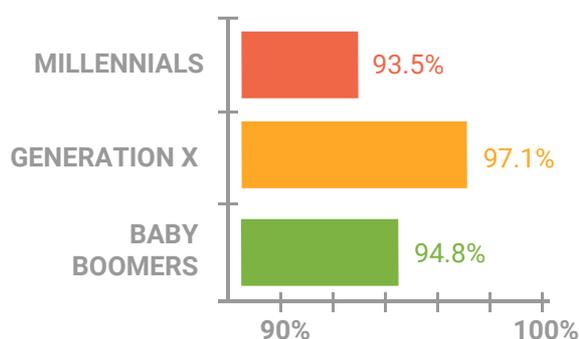
Additionally, it is interesting to report how feedback is submitted. 51% of travelers provided reviews only via desktop, an additional 14% left reviews via both desktop and a mobile device, and 35% left reviews only via a mobile device.

Devices Used to Submit Reviews



Further testing reveals that there is a difference between age groups and their likelihood to leave positive reviews.

Review Positivity By Generation



Research Results

Guests Leave Positive Reviews

As previously referenced, more than half of travelers (54%) say they have left one or more reviews about their accommodation within the previous year. Out of those who leave reviews, an overwhelming majority of guests report that they are leaving positive feedback. Overall, 95% of travelers who have left feedback, state that their feedback was positive.

Review Ratings



When asked specifically about their most recent review, 93% of travelers affirm that their last review was positive, a figure slightly lower than their reported average.

More Reviews Mean More Positive Feedback

To determine further details about the relationship between guests and their review behaviors, researchers asked two correlated questions:

Question 1: Have you submitted a review online about your accommodation experience in the last 12 months?

Question 2: After your stay in the last 12 months, have you been contacted by the accommodation provider to submit a review?

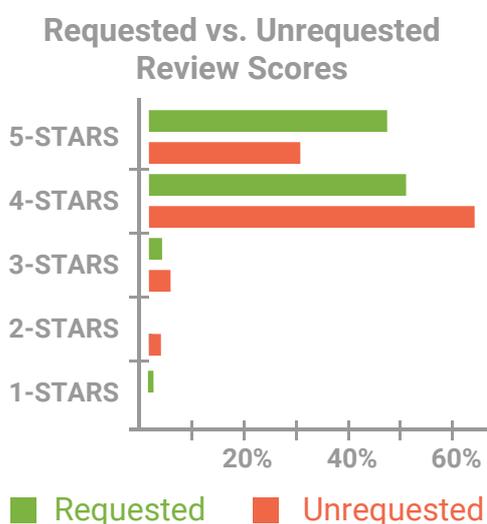
Cross Tabulation:
Submitted vs. Solicited Reviews

	REVIEW REQUESTED	REVIEW NOT REQUESTED
REVIEW(S) SUBMITTED	413	87
REVIEW(S) NOT SUBMITTED	103	317

As a result, we can see that 80% of travelers who received a request left a review. In comparison, only 22% of travelers wrote a review without having been asked. This also means that 78% of travelers who were not asked to write a review, did not write a review.

Research Results

When a hotelier contacts a guest to submit a review, there is a 16% higher chance that the guest would leave a 5-star review. Overall, 96% of reviews travelers left were positive when the review was solicited by the accommodation provider.



Feedback Impacts Future Bookings

Research about the guest journey comes full circle with guest reviews. This is due to the fact that post-stay feedback is summarized by review scores that appear next to hotel listings on various channels.

Referring back to an earlier phase of this research project, it was revealed that after the hotel's price, the review score is the most important decision variable.

Ranked Top Decision Variables



Further, having a low review score increases the likelihood that guests would not book your hotel, since 88% of travelers would sort out hotels scores under 3 stars. Conversely, 33% of travelers would actively filter to see hotels with ratings above 4-stars.

Implications

The results displayed in the previous section related to reviews become more relevant when explained in further detail and context.

In specific regard to guest demographics, gender appeared to be the strongest variable with a relationship to travelers who have left a review. It was observed that male travelers are more likely to leave a review after their stay. While it is outside the scope of this research to determine what external factors cause this difference, there does exist an opportunity for hoteliers to encourage more feedback from their female guests, especially because they tend to leave more positive reviews. This recommendation could be carried out through targeted marketing campaigns, in-person staff trainings, or targeted guest satisfaction surveys.

Other demographic tests were also completed; however, there were only slight variations between the research population and the sample relating to variables such as age and income. For example, one can observe that Millennials make up 37% of travelers, and also 37% of travelers who leave reviews. More interesting implications occur when testing the additional variable of average review score from within the sample. Therefore, it is possible to determine that although 93% of millennials rate their accommodation providers with positive scores, this is a lower amount when compared to previous generations, which both leave higher scores. 97% of travelers from Generation X and 95% of Baby Boomers report leaving positive reviews.

Hence, there is a strong argument to increase the amount of review content available about a hotel, since the threat of negative reviews decreases with the increase in quantity. Theoretically, these numbers would reach a stable figure, especially once review score algorithms come into play and add value to reviews based on their time-recency. For example, a hotel's TrustScore is calculated by the overall score of a review, the sentiment (or words written within the review), and also the recency of the review. Most reviews scores found around the web are calculated using specific algorithms to maintain the integrity of an accommodation's review score.

One of the easiest ways to begin collecting more feedback is by requesting it directly from guests. That explains why researchers used a cross-table approach to display the relationship of guest feedback when it is directly solicited by a hotel. This proves that guests are 3.6x times more likely to leave a review when asked by their accommodation provider. This also provides the unique opportunity for a hotel to own these reviews, rather than being left to deal with reviews hosted on other sites.

Implications

Furthermore, there is a significantly higher average review score when guests were asked to submit a review. The amount of 5-star reviews increases by 16% under the condition that they were asked for their opinion. So not only does it make sense to get more feedback because feedback is generally very positive, but it also makes sense to request it, because one is most likely to have a high review score around the web under these conditions.

The importance of review collection comes into play further when understanding that review scores are already being calculated and displayed around the web. Travel sites, booking engines, and booking platforms offer summarized review scores within their search listings along with other search criteria. In fact, travelers report that review scores are second only to price as a factor in their booking decision. Therefore, there is a relationship between a hotel's review score and its RevPAR.

Conclusion

Each one of the research points taken separately has limited valuable meaning, but when considered together, there is a thread of purpose that confirms the importance of online reputation management. Feedback collection can begin as soon as a traveler makes their booking decision and continue until after their stay.

The most impactful method to improve feedback collection is to ask for it, as this more than triples the likelihood that a guest will leave a review. Adding to this, reviews are then best collected through guest satisfaction surveys, because this enables richer feedback on both the general stay as well as hotels' specific areas of interests.

The ubiquity of reviews being submitted online means that there is already content that needs to be monitored, and has the potential to be transformed into a useful marketing tool.

TrustYou's entire guest feedback platform offers an all-in-one solution related to all aspects of feedback along the guest journey. Advanced survey solutions, such as [TrustYou's Guest Surveys](#) are automated feedback tools for hoteliers that solicit reviews from guests. Complimentary features from the

entire [TrustYou's Guest Messaging](#) solution enable hoteliers to gather even more feedback by reaching out to guests via messaging services with pre-stay, on-site, and post-stay guest surveys send-outs, which have significantly higher open rates than emails. Additionally, there are multiple features that play a role in the marketing of these reviews towards future travelers. With [TrustYou's Review Marketing](#), hotels can market their reviews by pushing their guest survey reviews to sites like Google and TripAdvisor and also by adding a variety of review summary widgets to their own webpage and facebook page. These widgets display the same review data as is shown on Google, KAYAK, Hotels.com, and many more.

The research also points out that travelers are leaving feedback online without being explicitly asked. That means a fragmented amount of reviews that are dispersed across multiple booking channels, websites, and search engines. [TrustYou's Reputation Management](#) tool addresses this issue by collecting and summarizing all guest feedback that is written about a hotel online including reviews submitted on other sites as well as reviews collected through the proprietary survey tool.

About TrustYou

TrustYou, the world's largest guest feedback platform, empowers hotels with solutions to drive more bookings and improve their hotel product. Through each phase of the guest journey, hotels can utilize guest feedback to enhance review marketing and achieve operational excellence. Guest feedback influences 95% of booking decisions. TrustYou Meta-Review, which incorporates hundreds of millions of hotel reviews, surveys, and social posts for over 500,000 hotels worldwide, powers guest reviews on dozens of travel sites, including Google, Kayak, and Hotels.com.* These reviews also generate actionable insights for hotels to

improve their presence along each step of the guest journey, from booking and pre-stay search queries, to real-time guest requests and messages, to post-stay feedback in the form of survey responses and reviews. Through the TrustYou partner program, PMS, CRM, IBE and other hotel software providers can integrate TrustYou's guest feedback platform into their products to help their hotel clients positively influence bookings and revenue.

Find more information on TrustYou and the guest feedback platform on www.trustyou.com.

*TrustYou Meta-Reviews only contain verified reviews and do not include reviews from TripAdvisor