An Analysis of Customer E-Complaints about Hotel Enterprises

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Financial Performance Real Estate Investment Trusts CRITIC ARAS CORPAS Received 16 August 2023 Revised 21 October 2024 Accepted 5 November 2024 **Article Classification:** Research Article	**Purpose** – The aim of the current study is to investigate the reflections of hotel guests' complaints on web-based customer-opinion forums. For this purpose, negative guest reviews about 4- and 5-star hotel establishments were examined through Tripadvisor.com, which is a tourism-related social media platform and the world's largest travel site. The complaint's main themes and their sub-themes that caused the comments were also identified. **Design/methodology/approach** –In the study, the content analysis method was employed as a qualitative approach. In the scope of the research, all reviews in all languages against all 4- and 5-star hotels in Konya posted to Tripadvisor.com were investigated. The content analysis was conducted by the MAXQDA 2020 program. The data were also described in terms of frequency and percentage using descriptive statistics. **Findings** – According to the results of the study, male guests were more unhappy with the hotels than female ones. The majority (33,6%) of the e-complaints from guests had to do with the hotels' food and beverage offerings, especially the quality and variety of the food and beverages. **Discussion** – Customer satisfaction is very important in the hotel industry. Swiftly, effectively, and professionally resolving problems can help to avoid unfavorable reviews and comments from guests. In this respect, hotel management can adopt a number of proactive measures to reduce the spreading of negative word-of-mouth on social media and travel websites.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a service sector focused on customer satisfaction. Hotels are businesses that are an important part of this industry. Today, developments in communication technologies have created awareness and increased guest demands and expectations. This situation is important for businesses, especially in competitive conditions (Afriyie et al., 2016). The services offered by hotel businesses sometimes fall behind guest expectations and cause guest complaints. Guests can share the negativities they experience during their stay, the bad service they receive, and their dissatisfaction resulting from this situation via the internet. Especially in the 21st century, where access to the internet has become easier and the number of users has increased, e-complaints that can reach many people in a very short time are important for hotel businesses. Guests sharing their negative experiences on social media and online channels using the opportunities of technology can negatively affect the demand for businesses. Businesses experience a loss of guests due to complaints arising from service errors, and the cost of this situation to the business is high.

The revenue of the travel and tourism industry is projected to reach US$ 854.70 billion in 2023. The hotel market is the largest segment of this industry, with a projected market value of US$ 410.00 billion in 2023 (Statista, 2023). Businesses that want to get a share of such a big cake focus on customer satisfaction within the scope of a modern marketing approach. Although marketing practices are well planned in theory, various errors are encountered in practice (Zheng, 2009; Ünal, 2019), and this may cause customer complaints. Businesses that manage customer complaints well can turn this situation to their advantage by correcting errors and increasing service quality and customer satisfaction. As it is more cost-effective to keep existing customers than to invest additional marketing funds to find new ones (Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1987; Harrison-Walker, 2001), it is crucial to encourage customers to express their displeasure and to keep lines of communication open with them.

A complaint usually indicates dissatisfaction. Consumers examine whether their expectations are met by the product or service they purchase. Customer satisfaction occurs when the benefit obtained from the purchased product or service is equal to or superior to the value expected before purchase. If, as a result of the evaluation, the expected benefit from the product or service is not provided, there will be dissatisfaction. The feedback given by the dissatisfied customer regarding this situation appears as a complaint. Customers who are faced with any negative situation can convey their complaints to the business in writing or verbally, or they can prefer the internet, which is a faster method. With the development of information technologies, complaints are frequently communicated electronically and through social media. Virtual complaints, or, in other words, e-complaints, which are reflections of customer complaints on the internet, can be expressed as consumers expressing their dissatisfaction on the internet. This also applies to the feedback provided by guests who experience the products and services of hotel businesses. Considering that people's access to the internet and social networks is becoming easier and the number of users is increasing day by day, the management of e-complaints is important for hotel businesses in terms of customer satisfaction. There are various studies in the literature regarding consumer complaint behavior. Among these, studies focusing on e-complaints of hotel guests are limited (Lee and Hu, 2004; Zheng et al., 2009; Sparks and Browning, 2010; Barreda and Bilgihan, 2013; Au et al., 2014; Chen and Tabari, 2017; Fernandes and Fernandes, 2017; Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Hu et al., 2019; Sangpikul, 2021; 2022). In this context, the aim of the current study is to investigate the reflections of hotel guests' complaints on web-based customer-opinion forums. For this purpose, negative guest reviews about 4- and 5-star hotel establishments were examined through Tripadvisor.com, which is a tourism-related social media platform and the world's largest travel site. The complaint items that caused the comments were also identified. In the conclusion part of the research, suggestions for practitioners have been discussed based on the findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This segment of the study portrays the conceptual framework of the study as well as the literature review of prior studies compatible with the research purpose.

Online Complaints

Complaint refers to consumers' expressing their discomfort when faced with dissatisfaction (Sujithamrak and Lam, 2005) or their efforts to turn the situation resulting from this dissatisfaction to their advantage. E-complaint, on the other hand, is when the consumer, who benefits from a good or service, expresses the problems he or she experiences during this experience through electronic media (Schall, 2003). Consumer dissatisfaction, called e-complaints, can be shared on media such as web-based customer-opinion forums (Zheng et al., 2009), discussion platforms, boycott sites, news groups, consumer complaint sites (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and online travel platforms.

The developments in information technologies are an example of progress that enables the internet and social communication networks to become stronger and enter human life. These advances offer the opportunity for faster communication between guests and hoteliers. Hotel guests can share their dissatisfaction with the business more effectively thanks to the internet. According to Kızıldemir et al. (2019), the majority of customer complaints to hotel businesses are reported in the form of electronic complaints. While some customers send their complaints to businesses' e-mail addresses or websites, others are shared through social networks. The purpose of the guests' complaints is to convey their dissatisfaction with the service they received from the business or to share their thoughts by warning other guests who take into account the complaints about the related enterprise (Alrawadieh and Demirkol, 2015). Comments made electronically by current guests about hotel businesses are an important source of information for potential customers. According to Gretzel and Yoo (2008), more than 74% of customers review online guest comments when organizing their travels. Although there are also positive comments (Şahin et al., 2018), the majority of comments shared online are about negative experiences. Potential customers mostly focus on negative guest comments. In addition, negative comments about hotel businesses can remain on relevant websites for a long time, and this negatively affects the image of hotels (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). It is important for hotel businesses to handle e-complaints correctly and make the necessary arrangements in order to differentiate themselves in a competitive environment. Businesses can also increase customer satisfaction, when necessary, by sharing information with their

customers about the arrangements made as a result of their complaints. In this case, e-complaints are an important tool for hotel businesses to communicate with customers.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

In terms of marketing communication, word of mouth (WOM) is when consumers talk to other people when they are looking for ideas about a particular brand, product, or business. Buttle (1998) defines WOM as "oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator." WOM, one of the oldest communication methods, is one of the most effective marketing communication tools today. According to Bughin et al. (2010), the main factor behind 20% to 50% of consumers' product purchasing decisions is the information they obtain through WOM. The term refers to informal communication between people regarding a product. WOM is perceived as more reliable and more accepted because it is not a message conveyed by a business with a commercial concern (Liu, 2006). It's a communication tool that consumers use when they are both satisfied and dissatisfied with their purchasing experience. However, dissatisfied customers communicate more WOM than satisfied ones (Anderson, 1998). With the development of information technologies, these conversations were moved to internet platforms, and this development revealed the concept of electronic word-of-mouth (Pollach, 2006).

Nowadays, thanks to internet communication, people can quickly share all the problems they encounter in daily life and especially convey their shopping experiences to third parties (Jeong and Jang, 2011: 356). The term electronic word-of-mouth communication refers to the dissemination of customer attitudes and behaviors over the internet and has developed from traditional approaches to WOM (Lee and Hu, 2004). In other words, E-WOM is a form of communication in which consumers can share their positive or negative ideas and experiences about products and services with other consumers in electronic environments. With E-WOM, potential, current, or previous customers share their comments in online communities, forums, and other social media platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Through these platforms, travelers have the chance to share their ideas with others and seek knowledge from non-commercial online groups (Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017). As in traditional WOM communication, the information shared through E-WOM is considered more reliable by recipients than the information provided by businesses (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003). In addition, E-WOM is more effective compared to WOM for reasons such as speed, reaching larger audiences, convenience, requiring less Internet-related knowledge (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and the absence of face-to-face human pressure in communication (Sun et al., 2006).

Both positive and negative comments can be conveyed through E-WOM communication. Within the framework of consumer complaint behaviors, e-complaints are negative E-WOM behaviors. Although hotels are customer-satisfaction-oriented businesses, they often encounter service errors when customers and employees interact (Lee and Hu, 2004; Zheng et al., 2009). The failure of the service personnel to provide the expected service causes customer complaints. If customer complaints are not managed well, they cause negative E-WOM (Mattila and Mount, 2003), which damages the business and causes loss of income (Zheng et al., 2009). In the study of Gretzel et al. (2007) on travel comments in the electronic environment, it is stated that the existing comments negatively affect 83.9% of potential guests' thoughts of using the relevant service. As can be seen from the study results, the electronic environment allows the dissemination of information quickly, easily, and effectively. This may cause customer complaints to be instantly shared with large audiences and influence the opinions of potential customers. At this point, it is important for hotel enterprises to regularly monitor online comments and complaints and to offer solutions to compensate for the losses of dissatisfied customers.

Prior Studies About E-complaints by Hotel Guests

Studies conducted by examining the national or international literature on the subject are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Studies examining e-complaints using online reviews about accommodation enterprises

Author(s)	Purpose	Data Source	Main Findings	Research Design
Lee and Hu (2004)	Analysing the hotel customers' online complaints recorded on a specialized complaint forum, eComplaints.com	222 complaints from eComplaints.com.	"Customers were mostly unhappy with fundamental service failures (i.e., declined service quality and rude employees) in the hotel service encounter".	Content analysis
Zheng et al. (2009)	To analyse online comments of luxury resorts located in the southwestern United States.	504 reviews for 6 hotels from Tripadvisor.	"Customers were concerned about service quality the most and bad service experiences were most likely to motivate unsatisfied customers to post their comments on the Internet".	Content analysis
Sparks and Browning (2010)	To analyse the forms and motives of complaints made online about hotels and resorts.	200 reviews for hotels from Tripadvisor.	"Consumers report a wide range of service failures on the Internet. They tell a highly descriptive, persuasive, and credible story, often motivated by altruism or, at the other end of the continuum, by revenge".	Document review method.
Barreda and Bilgihan (2013)	To analyse traveler comments for hotels in all major cities of the northeast area of USA.	920 reviews were identified from Tripadvisor.	"Words about deficiency of cleanliness (dirty) appeared more regularly when travelers write negative reviews about the hotel. Travelers showed to be more likely to write positive reviews of hotels with convenient location".	Content analysis
Au et al. (2014)	To analyze online complaints about hotels in Mainland China and to examine the relationship between culture and other factors that affect the intention to complain online.	822 complaints about hotels in major Chinese cities drawn from Tripadvisor and Ctrip.	"Traveler age, hotel price, and travel partner significantly influenced the online complaints made".	Content analysis
Chen and Tabari (2017)	Customers' online reviews for The Marriott Hotel Group in Beijing and hotel managers' responses to these reviews.	6039 reviews for 11 Hotels from Tripadvisor.	"Employees' lack of empathy is the main factor underlying customer complaints, followed by reliability, tangible factors, amenities and availability".	Netnographic analysis
Fernandes and Fernandes (2017)	To analyze guest reviews of hotels located in Oporto, Portugal.	463 complaints for 69 hotels in Oporto from Tripadvisor.	"Results identify dominant complaint categories and show that guest's demographics and hotel class play a critical role".	Content analysis
Dinçer and Alrawadieh (2017)	To identify the nature of e-complaints directed at luxury hotels in Jordan.	424 negative reviews posted for hotels on Tripadvisor.	"The most frequent e-complaints were about service quality, the efficiency of hotel facilities, and cleanliness and hygiene. E-complaints were	Content analysis

			mostly posted by British, American, and Emirati guests".	
Ünal (2019)	It aims to classify e-complaints of hotel customers by examining them on an internet complaint site.	1458 e-complaints from www.sikayetvar.com.	"The most complaints are under the heading of *hygiene* and *cleanliness*. It has been observed that female customers have more complaints about hygiene and cleanliness, while male customers have more complaints about payment and fees."	Mixed methods design in which qualitative and quantitative research methods are used together.
Hu et al. (2019)	To understand the causes of customers' complaints against the hotels in New York City.	27,864 reviews for 315 hotels from Tripadvisor.	"While service is the main complaint in hotels with high amenities, facility-related complaints are more prominent in lower quality hotels."	Text analysis
Akdu et al. (2019)	To examine customer comments for 4 and 5 star hotels in Turkey providing service in halal concept.	1600 reviews from Tripadvisor.	"The most comments were about services regarding recreation, cuisine and housekeeping in general".	Content analysis
Ak and Kızılırmak (2019)	Examination of 5-star hotels in Istanbul within the scope of e-complaints and e-complaint management.	510 e-complaints for 9 hotels from Tripadvisor.	"There are complaints mainly about rooms and staff. 90% of the complaints examined were responded to by businesses."	Content analysis
Kızıldemir et al. (2019)	Determining the complaint elements by examining customer comments made on the internet about five-star hotel establishments in Afyonkarahisar.	1004 e-complaints from Tripadvisor.	It was understood that most of the complaints were about the food and beverage services offered in hotel businesses and the general service quality.	Content analysis
Sangpikul (2021)	To examine and classify customers' e-complaints regarding hotel service quality in Bangkok hotels.	394 reviews for 59 hotels from Tripadvisor.	"Customer complaints resulted from hotel performance which was below than customer expectations".	Content analysis and descriptive statistics.
Sangpikul (2022)	To analyse and classify negative reviews regarding resort services in Thailand	286 negative reviews for 53 resorts from Tripadvisor.	"E-complaints were associated with all of the five SERVQUAL dimensions".	Content analysis

As can be seen from the studies shown in Table 1, Tripadvisor is a web-based travel-opinion forum widely used by researchers. The results of the research examining e-complaints regarding hotel guests' accommodation experiences also show that negative guest reviews tend to focus on service quality (Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Lee and Hu, 2004; Zheng et al., 2009; Sparks and Browning, 2010; Hu et al., 2019; Kızıldemir et al., 2019), cleanliness and hygiene of the rooms and establishment in general (Barreda and Bilgihan, 2013; Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Ünal, 2019; Ak and Kızılırmak, 2019), housekeeping services (Akdu et al., 2019), food and beverage services (Kızıldemir et al., 2019; Akdu et al., 2019), employees attitudes (Chen and Tabari, 2017; Ak and Kızılırmak, 2019), the efficiency of hotel facilities (Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017) and recreation facilities (Akdu et al., 2019).

3. METHOD

The broad purpose of this study is to investigate the e-complaints of the hotel guests shared on web-based customer-opinion forums. Besides, the specific objectives of the research are:

to identify the main e-complaint themes that are subject to negative guest reviews,

to identify the traveler ratings of the investigated hotels,

to identify the most frequently mentioned e-complaints,

to identify the possible areas that hotel managers need to pay attention to improve service quality,

to identify the possible strategies for hotels to improve service quality.

In line with the objectives of the research, the content analysis method was employed as a qualitative approach. Analyzing the content of the customers' reviews is the most effective technique to fully understand how the client feels about their interactions with the hotel (Pullman et al., 2005). Besides, in studies on e-complaints in the tourism industry, content analysis has proven to be a crucial method (Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Lee and Hu, 2004; Zheng et al., 2009; Barreda and Bilgihan, 2013; Au et al., 2014; Fernandes and Fernandes, 2017; Hu et al., 2019; Akdu et al., 2019; Ak and Kızılırmak, 2019; Sangpikul, 2021; 2022; Kızıldemir et al., 2019). The content analysis was conducted by the MAXQDA 2020 program. The data were also described in terms of frequency and percentage using descriptive statistics.

The e-complaints were retrieved from Tripadvisor.com. The site was selected since it's the most known, preferred travel website and the world's largest web-based customer-opinion forum in the field of tourism (Tripadvisor, 2023). Tripadvisor was also chosen since it's preferred by many researchers in the literature (e.g., Zheng et al., 2009; Sparks and Browning, 2010; Au et al., 2014; Chen and Tabari, 2017; Fernandes and Fernandes, 2017; Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Hu et al., 2019; Sangpikul, 2021; 2022; Akdu et al., 2019; Ak and Kızılırmak, 2019) analyzing e-complaints.

In the study, guest reviews about hotels serving in Konya were examined. The reason why Konya was chosen is that the destination has a significant number of 4- and 5-star city hotels. City hotels are mostly preferred by guests staying on business trips. In these businesses, individual and company reservations are more common than reservations made through travel agencies and tour operators that serve mass tourism. The study assumed that the number of customers using travel sites such as Tripadvisor for such individual reservations would be higher. For this reason, 4 and 5-star hotels serving as city hotels in Konya were included in the sample group of the study.

In the scope of the research, all reviews in all languages against all 4- and 5-star hotels in Konya posted to Tripadvisor.com were investigated. Due to the low number of reviews on some hotels, comments on a total of 12 hotel establishments were included in the study. All reviews (N = 1039) for these 12 hotels have been examined, and only negative reviews were considered in the analysis. Customers can review their overall experiences with service providers on Tripadvisor.com using a scale of 1–5 with values of 1= terrible, 2= poor, 3= average, 4=very good, and 5= excellent. Since the study focused on negative comments, guest ratings in the "terrible," "poor," and "average" categories were chosen. In this context, the study data consists of a self-selected sample of 1039 online negative customer reviews about 12 hotel businesses between 2008 and 2022. The data were gathered between May and June 2023.

Before the identification of the main themes raised by dissatisfied hotel guests when complaining online, the related literature on the subject (Lee and Hu, 2004; Zheng et al., 2009; Akdu et al., 2019; Ak and Kızılırmak, 2019; Sparks and Browning, 2010; Barreda and Bilgihan, 2013; Au et al., 2014; Chen and Tabari, 2017; Fernandes and Fernandes, 2017; Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Hu et al., 2019; Sangpikul, 2021; 2022) was reviewed. The main themes and their sub-themes were constructed by the researchers in the light of prior studies and the analyzed data.

The process of content analysis was based on the guidelines from previous studies (Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Au et al., 2014; Sangpikul, 2022). In this respect, a team approach was adopted to increase the coding process's integrity. Reviews were coded independently by the authors, who have management experience in hotel operations and are also experienced hospitality and tourism researchers. During this process, complaint cases were grouped and categorized under the main themes and sub-themes by the researchers. To verify the accuracy of the categorizing procedure, the researcher cautiously reviewed and improved the coding scheme and complaint categories. The researchers debated their divergent classifications until they came to an agreement. Finally, a third researcher who is experienced in qualitative research and the content analysis

approach carefully analyzed the extracted themes and sub-themes that had been agreed upon by the two authors in order to further confirm the validity and reliability of the classification process, as in previous studies (Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Au et al., 2014). As a result of the coding process, reviews were classified into six main themes: physical characteristics, employees, food and beverage, front office, housekeeping, and other departments.

This study has some limitations. The data for the study is limited to negative reviews for 12 hotels in a single city. The data is also limited to reviews of 4- and 5-star hotels. Besides, the data was collected from a single website. All of these restrictions are preferred for the data processing and data gathering to be manageable (Fernandes and Fernandes, 2017). But this situation is a restriction on the generalizability of the findings. In addition to this, research on internet content has its own restrictions (Zheng, 2009). The content analysis was conducted with a self-selected sample, and studying a self-selected sample may introduce some bias. It is assumed that the reviews selected for the sample group actually come from guests who stayed in the hotels and that the guests provide accurate information. So the honesty and correctness of the customer reviews were not under control (Fernandes and Fernandes, 2017).

In future studies, it may be recommended to expand the data set to understand hotel guests' e-complaints more deeply. It is possible to obtain data from comments available on different web-based channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) and e-complaint sites. It's also possible to examine comments regarding hotel businesses operating in different destinations. In future studies, it may also be appropriate to obtain data from all business categories (including hostels, resorts, etc.) and conduct comparative analyses in order to have information about the overall accommodation industry.

The current study is focused on e-complaints, so only data on negative comments was collected. In future studies, positive comments can also be examined, and different suggestions can be produced for hotel managers thanks to guest messages conveyed with both positive and negative E-WOM. Future research may also concentrate on how businesses respond to complaints (e.g., Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Ak and Kızılırmak, 2019), looking into how satisfied customers are with those responses and the best practices.

4. FINDINGS

Under this heading, findings regarding the guests who complained and the businesses that were the subject of the complaints examined within the scope of the research are included.

Findings Regarding Guests Who Shared E-Complaints

Genders of the guests who sent reviews are listed in Table 2 below. According to the results, 33% of the guests who shared comments are men, and 13.4% are women. Table 2 also shows the results regarding the travel types of the guests. According to the table, it is seen that a significant majority (30.8%) of the guests who shared comments are business people.

Table 2. Summary statistics of reviewers

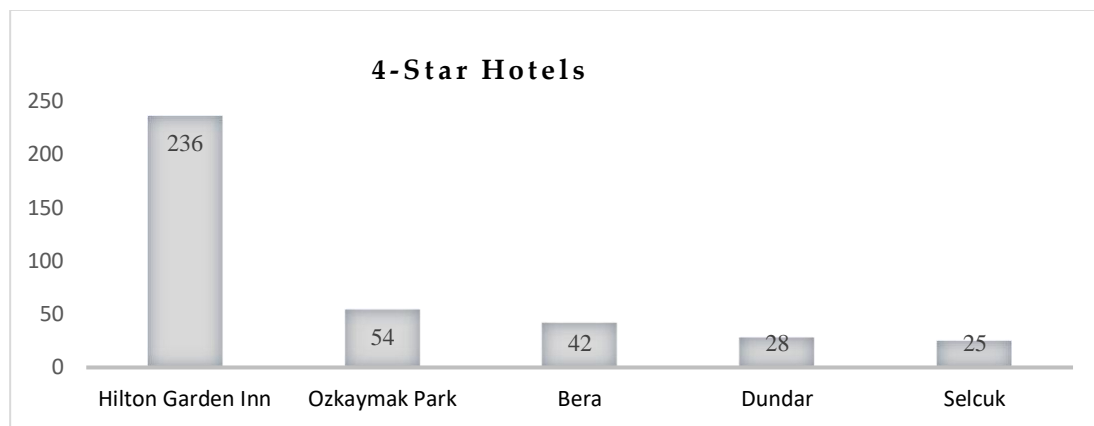| Distribution of reviewer gender	N	%
Male	343	33,0
Female	139	13,4
Undisclosed	557	53,6
Total	**1039**	**100,0**
Distribution of reviewer travel type	**N**	**%**
Business	320	30,8
Families	229	22,0
Couples	197	19,0
Friends	165	15,9
Solo	29	2,8
Undisclosed	99	9,5
Total	**1039**	**100,0**

Findings Regarding the Hotels Examined

The results regarding the scores given by the guests to the hotel establishments are shared below in Table 3. Accordingly, 57.30% of the guests rated the hotels as average, 22.20% as terrible, and 20.50% as poor.

Table 3. Traveler Ratings of the Hotels

Traveler Rating	N	%
Average	595	57,3
Terrible	231	22,2
Poor	213	20,5
Total	**1039**	**100,0**

The results regarding the distribution of reviews by hotels are shown in Figure 1 (4 star hotels) and Figure 2 (5 star hotels) below. As illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2 among the 1039 reviews 385 reviews (37,05%) were against 4 star hotels and 654 reviews (62,9%) were against 5 star hotels. Hilton Garden Inn has been the subject of largest part of complaints (61,2%) among 4-star hotels and Grand Hotel has been the subject of a great portion of complaints (33,6%) among 5-star hotels.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of reviews by 4-star hotels
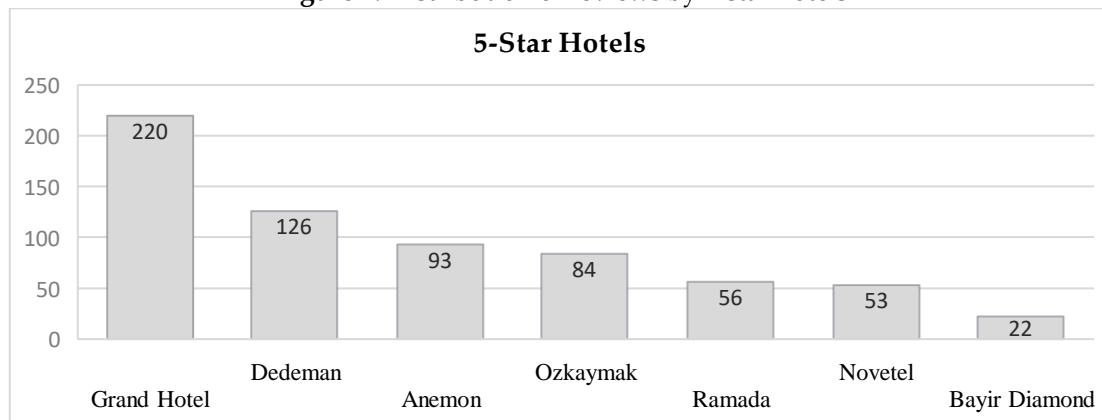
Figure 2. Distribution of reviews by 5-star hotels

Findings Regarding Customer E-Complaints According to Main Themes and Sub-Themes

Guest e-complaints identified into main themes and sub-themes are shared in Figure 3 below. As illustrated in the figure, e-complaints are identified into six main themes: physical characteristics, employees, food and beverage, front office, housekeeping, and other departments. Each main theme is further divided into various sub-themes.
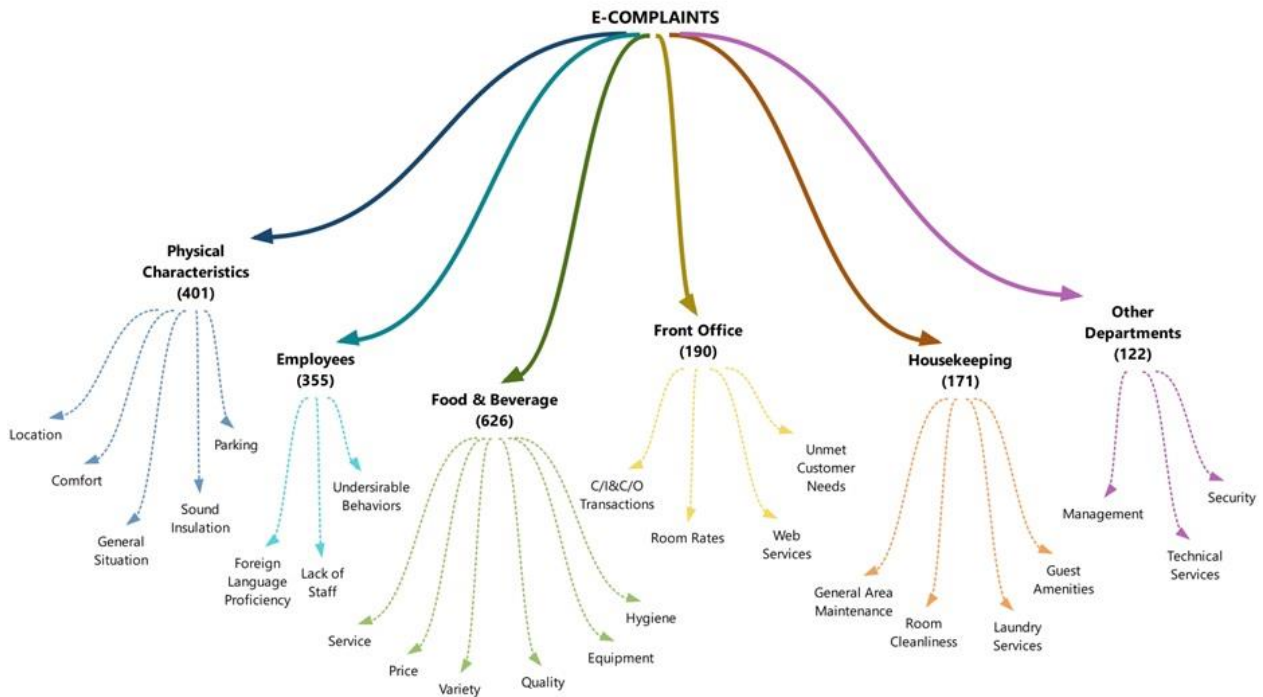
Figure 3. Main themes and sub-themes of guest e-complaints

According to Figure 3, complaints in the main theme of "Physical Characteristics" are about the location of the hotel, the comfort of the rooms, the general situation of the property, the sound insulation of the rooms, and the parking area. Under the main theme of "Employees," guest e-complaints are about foreign language nonproficiency, undesirable behaviors of the employees, and a lack of staff. Complaints in the main theme of "Food and Beverage" are about service quality, price, variety, quality and taste of the food, equipment used in the service (e.g., cutlery, plates), and failure to comply with hygiene rules in the service. Under the main theme of "Front Office," guest e-complaints are about room rates, web services of the hotel (e.g., web page of the hotel, wifi), check-in and check-out transactions, and unmet customer needs due to insensitive and uncaring employees who cannot find solutions to guest problems. Complaints in the main theme of "Housekeeping" are about general area maintenance, room cleanliness, laundry services, and guest amenities in the rooms. Under the main theme of "Other Department," guest e-complaints are about the management of the hotel, security, and technical services.

As a result of the analyses carried out in line with the main themes and sub-themes, 1039 customer e-complaint cases were examined, and a total of 1865 e-complaints were obtained in six main themes, as some comments included complaints regarding more than one sub-theme. The results are shared in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Results about the main themes and the sub-themes of guest e-complaints

Main Themes	N	%	Sub-Themes	N	%
Physical Characteristics	401	21,5	Sub-themes of Physical Characteristics		
			Location	124	**30,9**
			Comfort	54	13,5
			General Situation	25	6,2
			Sound Insulation	102	**25,4**
			Parking	96	23,9
			Sub-total	401	100,0
Employees	355	19,0	Sub-themes of Employee		
			Foreign Language Proficiency	38	10,7
			Lack of Staff	43	12,1
			Undesirable Behaviors	274	**77,2**
			Sub-total	355	100,0

Table 4. (Cont.)

Food & Beverage	626	**33,6**	Sub-themes of Food&Beverage		
			Service	94	15,0
			Price	69	11,0
			Variety	116	**18,5**
			Quality	179	**28,6**
			Taste	78	12,5
			Equipment	66	10,5
			Hygiene	24	3,8
			Sub-total	626	100,0
Front Office	190	10,2	Sub-themes of Front Office		
			Check-in & Check-out Transactions	36	19,0
			Room Rates	56	**29,5**
			Web Services	56	**29,5**
			Unmet Customer Needs	42	22,1
			Sub-total	190	100,0
Housekeeping	171	9,2	Sub-themes of Housekeeping		
			General Area Maintenance	65	**38,0**
			Room Cleanliness	18	10,5
			Laundry Services	21	12,3
			Guest Amenities	67	**39,2**
			Sub-total	171	100,0
Other Departments	122	6,5	Sub-themes of Other Departments		
			Management	95	**77,8**
			Security	14	11,5
			Technical Services	13	10,7
Total	1865	100,0	Sub-total	122	100,0

As shown in Table 4, the majority of the e-complaints relate to food and beverage services in the hotels (33,6%). Under this main theme, quality (28,6%) and variety (18,5%) of the food stand out as the most frequent complaint sub-themes. The following are some examples of these complaints:

"Weak breakfast but still better than dinner! I do not recommend! The food served is of poor quality and tasteless." (G 19)

"The breakfast was so bad that I couldn't find anything to eat. The food they gave was also of very poor quality. Milk and cheese were the cheapest. I definitely wouldn't want to stay here again!" (G 22)

"Breakfast has little variety and poor quality." (G 15, G 120)

"Food variety was low and not as good as previous guests' comments said." (G 179)

"From food varieties to cleanliness, there was a standard that really should not be in a 5-star hotel."(G 182)

According to Table 4, the second most frequent e-complaint theme was about the physical characteristics of the hotel (21,5%). Under this main theme, the location of the hotel (30,9%) and the sound insulation of the rooms (25,4%) meet the eye as the most frequent complaint sub-themes. The following are some examples of these complaints:

"Only suitable for one/two night stay. The location is quite far from the center." (G 25)

"The location of the hotel is far from the attractions in the city center." (G 252)

"It's a bathroom and toilet door that I've never seen before, it has zero sound insulation, if you cough in the bathroom you can hear it from the bedroom. It may be unimportant for the hotel, but toilet and bathroom privacy is important to me. I really don't know if I would stay again." (G 14)

"I woke up in the morning with the incredible sound of housekeeping in the next room. If the hotel had even a little bit of sound insulation, it wouldn't have such an impact. Due to zero sound insulation, you can hear everything from the guest in the next room entering the toilet and flushing the toilet to phone calls." (G12)

Again, according to the results expressed in Table 4, e-complaints related to the employees of the hotel (19,0%) are the third most frequent main theme. Under this main theme, undesirable employee behaviors (77,2%) and lack of staff (12,1%) stand out as the most frequent complaint sub-themes. The following are some examples of these complaints:

"A service that does not suit a 5-star hotel at all. Even though I mentioned it, after my room was cleaned, there were still finger stains on the mirror and the same stain on the sheets. Not being taken seriously by the staff in this way is a behavior that upsets me as a regular customer." (G 14).

"It is inappropriate for the employee at the reception to behave as if she was forced to work there and to be far from intelligence and logic." (G 20)

"Despite the efforts of the employees, the lack of personnel is noticeable in busy times (meetings and group accommodations)." (G 21)

As shown in Table 4, e-complaints related to the front office (10,2%) stand out as the fourth most frequent main theme. Under this main theme, room rates (29,5%) and web services of the hotel (29,5%) draw attention as the most frequent complaint sub-themes. The following are some examples of these complaints:

"The price we got during the reservation seemed very reasonable to us, but after our stay, we realized that the price we paid was high compared to this service and quality." (G 120)

"It's an old hotel, everything is worn out, it's unnecessarily expensive." (G 7)

"For a 4-star hotel, the price is expensive considering the quality and service of the hotel." (G 50)

"A 5-star hotel should have good internet, but this hotel does not have it." (G 31)

"There was a problem with the hotel's internet during our stay." (G 11, G 93)

"The half board reservation I made on the hotel's website did not appear at check-in, it was said to be a bed and breakfast, so I ordered dinner from the hotel restaurant." (G 152)

According to Table 4, e-complaints related to housekeeping (9,2%) are the fifth most frequent main theme. Under this main theme, general area maintenance and guest amenities in the rooms stand out as the most frequent complaint sub-themes. The following are some examples of these complaints:

"The meeting room toilets were in a very bad condition, I could not use them. They directed me to the other toilet in the lobby, its condition was worse." (G 1).

"Forget the rooms, I think they vacuum the corridors once a month. It cannot go beyond the corner of a 5 star rating. In short, I do not recommend it." (G 76)

"The cigarette smell in the rooms and corridors is so bad that I cannot explain it." (G 112)

"In the bathroom you will only find shampoo and shower gel, but no cotton wool, toothbrush or comb." (G 55)

"There was almost empty toilet paper hanging in the toilet, left over from the person who stayed in the room before. I didn't like it at all." (G 129)

"They only gave us 1/3 roll of toilet paper so we had to ask for more."(G 32)

"The towels in the bathroom were torn and there was only one shampoo and shower gel. It was very inadequate for me." (G 28)

Again, according to the results expressed in Table 4, e-complaints related to other departments of the hotel (6,5%) are the least frequent main theme. Under this main theme, e-complaints about hotel management (77,9%) stand out as the most frequent complaint sub-theme. The following are some examples of these complaints:

"I think it is a management that does not suit a group that owns chain hotels." (G 191)

"There was no solution to a series of problems I experienced at the hotel. They either turned off the air conditioner on purpose or they could not solve the problem. This situation is not good for a hotel with a reliable brand. Hotel management was inadequate in my opinion." (G 205)

Finally, in the study, e-complaints were compared in terms of 4-star and 5-star hotels. The results are shared in Table 5 below. Accordingly, customer complaints in all main themes are higher in 5-star hotels than in 4-star hotels.

Table 5. Comparison of results regarding the main themes of e-complaints according to 4 and 5 star hotels

Main Themes	4 Star		5 Star		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Characteristics	191	47,6	210	52,4	401,0	100,0
Employee	136	38,3	219	61,7	355,0	100,0
Food & Beverage	252	40,3	374	59,7	626,0	100,0
Front Office	73	38,4	117	61,6	190,0	100,0
Housekeeping	67	39,2	104	60,8	171,0	100,0
Other Departments	34	27,9	88	72,1	122,0	100,0

5. CONCLUSION

This research examined complaints made on the well-known travel website Tripadvisor to gain insight into the areas where hotel guests appear to be dissatisfied with 4 and 5-star hotels in Konya. According to the results, male guests were more unhappy with the hotels than female ones. Unlike this result, in the study of Hu et al. (2019), females reported more complaints than men. Nevertheless, the result of this study coincides with similar results obtained in previous studies (Ak and Kızılırmak, 2019; Dinçer and Alrawadieh, 2017; Ünal, 2019; Alrawadieh and Demirkol, 2015). It was also found that a significant majority of the guests who made negative comments were customers staying at hotels for business purposes. This result falls in line with the assumption stated in the method section of the study that Konya hotels are mostly preferred by guests staying for business trips.

According to the study, the majority (33,6%) of the e-complaints from guests had to do with the hotels' food and beverage offerings, especially the quality and variety of the food and beverages. Similarly, the studies of Kızıldemir et al. (2019) and Sahin et al. (2107) revealed that most of the guest e-complaints (24% and 23,3%) were related to food and beverage services. Besides, in the study of Dinçer and Alrawadieh (2017), food and beverage quality was among the main themes of complaints, and of the total number of negative reviews analyzed, 8% were complaints about the quality of the food and beverages. In the previous studies, Au et al. (2014) stated that 13% of all the negative reviews were about food and beverages; Sangpikul (2022) stated that 23% of the negative reviews; Ak and Kızılırmak (2019) stated that 6.1% of all the negative reviews were about food and beverages. According to Sangpikul (2021), of the subjective complaints, 16%, and of the objective complaints, 18%, were also about food and beverage. Similarly, Fernandes and Fernandes (2017) stated that quality and variety at breakfast (16%) and at bars and restaurants (5%) constituted an important part of guest complaints.

Customer satisfaction is very important in the hotel industry. Swiftly, effectively, and professionally resolving problems can help to avoid unfavorable reviews and comments from guests. In this respect, hotel management can adopt a number of proactive measures to reduce the spreading of negative word-of-mouth on social media and travel websites. Here are some strategies developed in light of the findings of the study:

- Observing social media and online reviews regularly to catch negative reviews from guests can be crucial to respond them. Hotels can cooperate with agencies providing services in this field to follow mentions of their establishments on social media and review websites.

- Hotels can check online reviews regularly and express their gratitude for positive feedback. Responding swiftly and courteously to both positive and negative reviews can also be critical. A response from the hotel management to negative reviews conveys to customers that their feedback is important. In this way, responses from hotel management can retain guest satisfaction. This can also show a dedication to guest contentment and perhaps even turn a bad experience into a good one. Dinçer and Alrawadieh (2017) suggested in their

study that the hotel management might offer compensation to persuade the visitor to stay again, even though it can appear difficult to provide service recovery after the guest departs.

- Hotels can post encouraging stories, news, and reviews from past guests on their social media platforms. They can also interact with guests and followers by answering comments.

- Hotel management may encourage guests to complete surveys while they're staying to get feedback from their experience. Feedback and reviews can provide hotels with useful information for enhancing their services and facilities. Continually improving and adjusting to shifting customer expectations may contribute to increased customer satisfaction. Even though it's hard to eliminate all negative reviews, hotels may lessen the effect of negative word of mouth and enhance their online reputation by proactively addressing problems and offering exceptional service.

- In the study, it's seen that the majority of the guest e-complaints related to the food and beverage services of the hotels. The quality and variety of the food stand out among the complaints. To eliminate these complaints, it's essential for the hotels to focus on improving the quality and variety of the food. Quality control might be an essential tool in this sense. To guarantee consistency in taste, appearance, and freshness, hotel management might set up a strict quality control method for food and beverage items. Training kitchen and service staff to comply with high food quality standards can also be effective in dealing with customer complaints.

- Guests who complained about the food and beverage services of the hotels stated that there was a lack of food variety, especially in the breakfast, such as the following statement: "There were only 2-3 types of cheese and bread for breakfast and almost nothing to eat." (G 83). Diversifying the menu might be essential for hotels to eliminate such complaints. Expanding the menu to accommodate a broader range of tastes, dietary needs, and cultural backgrounds would be one approach. Another would be to include seasonal and locally produced items to provide diversity and freshness to the menu.

- In the study, it is also seen that there is a significant proportion of complaints against employees. Customer complaints can decline by teaching staff members to be polite, responsive, and aware of visitors' requirements. Hotel management can train their staff members consistently and give them the authority to resolve issues raised by visitors. Implementing these strategies can enable hotel management to reduce customer complaints and enhance the overall guest experience.

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