Research Article

The Influence of Online Reviews on Purchase Decisions of Consumers with Special Reference to Hotel Industry

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I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

Online reviews play a crucial role in determining the success of a product or service. Likewise, online reviews have a significant impact on the hotel business. It serves as a promotional instrument for the property. Many individuals rely on online evaluations when making hotel reservations. In order to obtain necessary information, they must consider both qualitative and quantitative reviews. This study was done to examine the impact of online reviews on purchase decisions and analyse the elements that influence customer purchasing decisions through online reviews, given the growing significance of online reviews. Following the completion of the investigation, three components were identified and emphasised: Informative reviews, Attractiveness of reviews, Usefulness of reviews. The objective of this study is to enhance comprehension of the effects that online evaluations have on consumer behaviour and their choices to actively choose and buy services from various hotels. This study investigates the determinants of the influence of online reviews, the function of online review platforms, the reliability of reviews, and the potential consequences for hotel managers. Hotel management may optimise their marketing strategy and increase the visitor experience by comprehending the impact of internet reviews.

Keywords: Online Reviews, Hotel Reservations, Impact, Online Evaluations, Influence, Internet Reviews

Introduction

For many customers, the internet has replaced other information sources as their main source, and this has had a significant impact on consumer behavior. The shift from a passive to an informed and engaged customer has been one of the major trends in modern consumer behavior. Online product reviews are a popular choice for consumers in today's e-commerce-driven environment when buyers cannot personally inspect things before making a purchase. Customers can communicate with a wide range of other consumers by sharing their experiences and views about products and services via the internet. Prospective purchasers of similar products who want to learn more from others who have bought and utilized a product of interest might consult online customer reviews.

Consumers decide whether or not to make a purchase from an e-commerce website based on information from online reviews. Nowadays, almost everyone uses the internet to read reviews. Actually, 84% of people believe them as much as they would a personal endorsement, and 91% of people read them. Reviews have measurable consequences as well. Following their purchase, customers will publish their own reviews on the item. Online reviews are customer-

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generated assessments of goods and services that are posted on other websites and by shops. The relevance of comprehending how consumers make judgments about what to buy online is rising. Customers may now study and plan travel with unparalleled ease and access to opinions and information thanks to the internet. Online reviews are among the most powerful information sources and have completely changed the hotel industry's environment. This study explores how consumers' decisions to buy, particularly when it comes to hotels, are influenced by their internet reviews.

Literature Review

Sylvain Senecal (2004): According to the survey, participants who looked at product suggestions chose suggested products twice as frequently as those who didn't. The likelihood of following product suggestions was significantly influenced by the type of product as well.

Kunal and Benbasat (2006): Determined the significance of any website's text or message from a customer review. These evaluations may draw customers and lengthen their stay on the website. This pre-stage technique aids in the assessment of the good or service.

Ivar E. Vermeulen, Daphne Seegers (2008): These evaluations may draw customers and lengthen their stay on the website. This pre-stage technique aids in the assessment of the good or service. The impact is greater on less well-known hotels. The impact of reviews is positively influenced, but only slightly, by reviewer expertise.

Beverley A. Sparks, Victoria Browning (2010): According to the study, consumers are more likely to be swayed by early negative information, particularly when the majority of the reviews are negative. However, positively framed material combined with specific number ratings enhances consumer trust and booking intentions. Further investigation on electronic word-of-mouth is warranted given the increasing dependence on the Internet for information when selecting travel products. The study came to the conclusion that booking intentions and customer trust are increased when positively framed information is combined with numerical rating facts.

Aurelio G. Mauria, Roberta Minazz (2013): It has been established that, when it comes to the hotel business, online evaluations are a valuable source of information that affects consumers' decision-making and purchase intentions. The study demonstrates a favorable association between consumer expectations, hotel purchasing intention, and review valence. Conversely, the availability of hotel managers' reactions to reviews from visitors has the opposite effect on their propensity to make a purchase.

Dipendra Singh, Edwin Torres (2015): According to the study's findings, a hotel's popularity may be inferred from its review count, which also has a favorable effect on the average transaction value.

Luis V. Casaló, et al. (2015): The survey came to the conclusion that online reviews and peer opinions are having a bigger influence on tourist booking decisions. Online rating ratings published by well-known travel websites, such as TripAdvisor, are more reliable and helpful. When a hotel is included among the best hotels, guests have more positive opinions of it and are more likely to make a reservation.

Zan Mo, Yan-Fei Li (2015): The study demonstrated that a variety of online review variables, such as cumulative, positive, picture, description, and extra reviews, have a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. In addition, there are additional elements that influence purchasing behavior, such as service, bad and moderate evaluations, and so forth.

Abdulaziz Elwald (2016): Claimed that product reviews found online are now a major source of information for consumers and have a big impact on their purchasing decisions. The quick development of internet communities has made it easier for consumers to recognize the distinctions between different products and services and make decisions based on other people's reviews.

Paul Phillips, et al. 2016): A key factor in hotel organizations' success, according to the study, has been their understanding of the requirements and desires of its patrons. The three areas that set the hotel apart are its physical features, the caliber of its food and beverages, and its human components related to service delivery. The study found that favorable remarks had the greatest influence on consumer demand, and that hotel factors, such as building quality, Internet availability, and room quality, have the most impact on hotel performance.

Wu He, et al. (2017): According to the report, the whole review's findings are more enlightening. The five areas of cuisine, location, rooms, service, and staff are of importance to both highly satisfied and profoundly unsatisfied hotel guests.

Diana Gavilan, et al. (2017): The study came to the conclusion that consumers' decision-making is influenced by ratings. Reviews and numerical ratings interact with one another. The amount of reviews determines how trustworthy a rating is when it is high, yet. On the other hand, if the rating is low, the quantity of reviews has no bearing on how reliable the rating is.

Long W. Lamb, et al. (2017): According to the report, online reviews are a major factor in consumers' purchasing decisions, especially when it comes to hotels, and have grown in popularity as a source of information for travelers. Customers' intentions to book hotels are positively correlated with review valence, and this association is expected to be

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tempered by both surface-level (demographic) and deep-level (preference) similarities.

Stany Wee, et al. (2018): Online reviews are a valuable resource for tourists to assess the caliber of services provided by accommodations. In order to draw in visitors who utilize digital media for information searches, hoteliers make use of online reviews.

Ana B., et al. (2018): Following the reading of a poor set of internet reviews, customers' perceptions of the hotel have dramatically decreased. Their intention to book is lower. Depending on the kind of social media where bad word of mouth arises, different responses have different advantages. Furthermore, it implies that neither accommodating nor defensive reactions are inherently worse than any other.

Rinaldo de Castro Oliveira; Elaine Christina (2020): According to the study, consumers' need to research hotel options, internet reviews' reliability, and quality all have an indirect impact on their purchase decisions.

Ching-Cheng Shen, Yen-Rung Chang (2020): This study demonstrates the significance of online reviews and customer satisfaction in influencing consumers' intentions to make online reservations. The tourism industry's suppliers now have new avenues to offer their goods and services directly to customers thanks to the growth of e-commerce, the proliferation of mobile devices, and the development of information and communication technology. Additionally, consumers can now buy goods and services directly from suppliers for significantly less money, which has changed their purchasing habits. The study looked at the interaction between online reviews, perceptual obstacles, and customer experience and how these affected both mobile and non-mobile device users' intentions to book online, as well as how customer value acted as a mediator.

Ji Wen, et al. (2020): According to the survey, customers are exposed to a variety of cues, including online reviews, when they make hotel reservations online. When choosing a hotel to stay in, customers consider reviews found online.

Osman Ahmed El-Said (2020): Booking intention is not impacted by reviews with positive valence, according to the study, but it is strongly impacted by those with negative valence. The most important factor to take into account when booking a hotel stay is word of mouth. The study concentrated on the necessity for hotel managers to commit the required time and resources to responding to and taking advantage of online evaluations, viewing them as a means of fostering better customer relations and drawing in new business.

Olivia Karlsson, Martin Ström (2021): Customers value customer evaluations more when they have more exposure to online reviews; this may influence their choice when making an online hotel reservation, and online reviews have a greater influence on hotels' brands.

Research Methodology

Research Objective

- To investigate how customer buying decisions are influenced by online reviews with regard to the hotel industry.
- To use online reviews to investigate how demographic factors affect consumers' intentions to make purchases.
- To investigate, via online reviews, the variables influencing customer booking decisions.

Sampling Plan

The people in Ludhiana, Punjab, are chosen for this study. The method of non-probability sampling is applied. Convenience sampling is also employed as the study's sample design. With this approach, the researchers' judgment is put to the test. Convenience sampling is another method utilized under non-probability methodology. There are 200 people in the study's sample. The questionnaire approach is the instrument employed in this study.

Data Collection

The data collected was primary in nature through a well-structured questionnaire. Additionally, secondary data is employed.

Data Analysis and Tools

A variety of data analysis approaches are employed to investigate how internet reviews affect consumers' decisions to buy. To obtain an analysis, graphs, tables, percentages, and pie charts are used. The data are analyzed using T-tests, Chi-square tests, and factor analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Analysis

The demographic profile that was compiled from the numerous respondents in the city of Ludhiana is shown in the following table. Table 1 presents the specific bifurcation in detail:

Table 1.Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Age	18 or less than 18	10	5%
	19 – 29	113	56.5%
	30 – 39	22	11%
	40 – 49	18	9%

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	50 and above	37	18.5%		Once in a year	45	22.5%
	Total	200	100%		Once in two years	27	13.5%
Gender	Male	102	51%		Total	200	100%
	Female	98	49%	**Online reviews being checked by respondents**	Always	118	59%
	Total	200	100%		Sometimes	58	29%
Monthly income	0 – 49,999	89	44.5%		Rarely	23	11.5%
	50,000 – 99,999	42	21%		Never	01	0.5%
	1,00,000 – 1,49,999	27	13.5%		Total	200	100%
	1,50,000 – 1,99,999	20	10%	**Checking the online reviews before booking is must**	Yes	191	95.5%
	2,00,000 – 2,49,999	03	1.5%		No	9	4.5%
	More than 2,50,000	19	9.5%		Total	200	100%
	Total	200	100%	**Online reviews give a clear picture about the hotel**	Yes	119	59.5%
Educational qualification	Matrices	03	1.5%		No	81	40.5%
	Senior secondary	21	10.5%		Total	200	100%
	Graduate	91	45.5%	**Factors considered before booking a hotel**	Price	116	
	Post graduate	70	35%		Availability of hotel	102	
	Informal education	15	7.5%		Brand name	78	
	Total	200	100%		Location	144	
Occupation	Student	75	37.5%		Budget	108	
	Service	56	28%		Quality of service	124	
	Business	37	18.5%		Others	02	
	Home maker	08	8%	**Type of review of selection of a hotel**	Qualitative	66	33%
	Entrepreneur	09	9%		Quantitative	24	12%
	Self employed	13	6.5%		Both	110	55%
	Others	02	1%		Total	200	100%
	Total	200	100%	**Sites preferred for booking the hotel**	Make My Trip	143	
Visit of respondent for vacation	Every month	19	9.5%		Yatra.com	42	
	Once in three months	52	26%		Ease My Trip	34	
	Once in six months	57	28.5%		Trivago	57	
					Goibibo	70	
					Hotels.com	39	
					Airbnb	120	
					Others	11	
				Online reviews affect the booking the hotel	Strongly agree	48	24%

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	Agree	121	60.5%
	Neutral	29	14.5%
	Disagree	01	0.5%
	Strongly disagree	01	0.5%
	Total	200	100%
Pictures attached to a review makes it more credible	Strongly agree	73	36.5%
	Agree	93	46.5%
	Neutral	30	15%
	Disagree	04	2%
	Strongly disagree	-	-
	Total	200	100%
Negative customer review impacts the booking decision	Strongly agree	56	28%
	Agree	108	54%
	Neutral	33	16.5%
	Disagree	01	0.5%
	Strongly disagree	02	1%
	Total	200	100%

Source: Author's Calculation based on Primary Data

Factor Analysis

Barlett's Test and KMO

The KMO test measures how strongly the variables' partial correlation is with one another.

Formulation of Hypothesis

H0: The factors have a substantial association with one another.

H1: The components do not significantly relate to one another.

Table 2.KMO and Barlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.869
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	942.267
df	105
Sig.	.000

As the KMO value is higher than 0.7 at 0.869, we can say that the sample size we're using is sufficient to extract the components from the provided data. The null hypothesis is rejected since the preceding table demonstrates that the significance level is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. There is insufficient significance to support the null hypothesis. This indicates a relationship between the various components.

Interpretation and analysis: As we can see, the factors are limited to the variables with Initial Eigenvalues greater than 1. According to the aforementioned data, the first factor explains 35.108% of the variance, the second, 10.606%, and the third, 7.846% of the variance. The remaining variables are all not important. 53.561% of the total variance is recovered from the remaining three factors, out of the original 15.

Using principal component analysis as an extraction method, Rotation technique: Kaiser Normalization with Varimax, Five iterations of rotation convergence.

- **Under component 1 Informative Reviews, there are 5 variables:**

1. Online reviews influence the decision to buy.
2. Reviews with images increase their credibility.
3. Reviews with images increase their credibility.
4. Online reviews lend credibility to the hotel.
5. Online reviews raise awareness about the property.

- **Under component 2 Attractiveness reviews, there are 5 variables:**

1. Positive internet reviews are given more consideration.
2. Views from the internet are more reliable than those of a buddy who went there.
3. Condensed reviews have greater authority.
4. Internet reviews are biased and manipulative.
5. Booking a hotel is based on positive reviews left by previous visitors.

- **Under component 3 Usefulness of reviews, there are 3 variables:**

1. Comprehensive reviews are more reliable.
2. Online communities rating lists are more beneficial.
3. The lodging experience is comparable to what was written in the review.

T-Test

Hypothesis of the study is

Null Hypothesis

H01: The Informative reviews are not significantly impacted by gender.

H02: Gender has no discernible effect on how appealing reviews are.

H03: Gender has no discernible effect on how useful reviews are.

Alternate Hypothesis

H11: Gender has a major influence on informative reviews

H12: Gender significantly affects how attractive reviews are.

H13: Gender significantly affects how useful reviews are.

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Table 3.Total variance explained

Com-po-nent	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.266	35.108	35.108	5.266	35.108	35.108	3.084	20.558	20.558
2	1.591	10.606	45.714	1.591	10.606	45.714	2.705	18.032	38.590
3	1.177	7.846	53.561	1.177	7.846	53.561	2.246	14.971	53.561
4	.958	6.386	59.947	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	.807	5.383	65.330	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	.752	5.010	70.341	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	.717	4.777	75.118	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	.636	4.238	79.356	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	.614	4.096	83.452	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	.485	3.233	86.684	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	.448	2.989	89.673	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	.434	2.894	92.567	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	.419	2.792	95.360	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	.381	2.541	97.900	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	.315	2.100	100.000	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4.Rotated component matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]	Component		
	1	2	3
Online ratings affect the purchase decision	.744	-	-
Pictures attached to a review makes it more credible	.680	-	-
Negative reviews affect the booking decision	.667	-	-
Reviews posted online helps in trusting the hotel	.617	-	-
Reviews posted online, increase the awareness of the hotel	.601	-	-
More attention is paid on hotels having larger volumes of online reviews	.577	-	-
More attention is paid on positive online reviews	-	.801	
Online views are trusted more than a friend who visited the same place	-	.748	-
Summarized reviews are more credible	-	.685	-
Online reviews are manipulative in a biased way	-	.539	-
Hotel booking depends on the basis of guest positive reviews	-	.525	-
Detailed reviews are more credible	-	-	.812
Online rating lists posted on online communities are more useful	-	-	.771
The staying experience is similar as in the review posted	-	-	.683

Table 5.Group Statistics

Group Statistics					
	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
G1	Male	102	4.1242	.47297	.04683
	Female	98	3.9456	.54246	.05480
G2	Male	102	3.6176	.65467	.06482
	Female	98	3.4612	.67007	.06769
G3	Male	102	3.8758	.62391	.06178
	Female	98	3.6224	.74249	.07500

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Table 6.Independent sample test

-	-	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
G 1	Equal variances assumed	.312	.577	2.485	198	.014	.17860	.07188	.03685	.32036
	Equal variances not assumed	-	-	2.478	192.049	.014	.17860	.07208	.03643	.32078
G 2	Equal variances assumed	.321	.572	1.670	198	.097	.15642	.09368	-.02831	.34115
	Equal variances not assumed	-	-	1.669	197.206	.097	.15642	.09372	-.02840	.34125
G 3	Equal variances assumed	1.021	.314	2.617	198	.010	.25337	.09683	.06241	.44432
	Equal variances not assumed	-	-	2.608	189.496	.010	.25337	.09717	.06170	.44504

Table 7.Summary

Sr. No	Null Hypothesis	Sig.	Results
H01	There is no significant impact of gender on the Informative reviews	0.014	Rejected
H02	There is no significant impact of gender on the Attractiveness of reviews	0.097	Accepted
H03	There is no significant impact of gender on the Usefulness of reviews	0.010	Rejected

Analysis: The table shows that the null hypothesis is rejected since the sig. column's p values—0.014 for H0 and 0.010 for H03—are less than 0.05. As a result, it asserts that gender significantly influences the informative reviews' usefulness. In contrast, the null hypothesis is accepted since the p value for H02 is 0.097, which is more than 0.05. This indicates that gender has no discernible effect on how attractive reviews are.

Chi-square Test between respondent's preferences and gender:

- **It is essential to read internet reviews before making a reservation or choosing a hotel. * gender**

Hypothesis of the study

H01: Gender and reading internet reviews before to making a hotel reservation are unrelated.

H11: Gender and reading internet reviews before making a hotel reservation are related.

1. Of the cells, 2 (50.0%) have an anticipated count below 5. 4.41 is the bare minimum anticipated count.
2. Limited to a 2x2 table computation

Analysis: The null hypothesis (H01) is accepted since the p-value (0.780) is higher than 0.05. Therefore, gender and reading internet reviews before making a hotel reservation are unrelated.

- **A location that receives good reviews and is recommended by travelers aids in choosing where to go. * gender**

Hypothesis of the study is

H02: Destinations with good ratings and endorsements from travelers have the power to determine visitor preferences, independent of gender

H12: A destination with good ratings and promotion from visitors can determine a visitor's stay, and gender is not a determining factor in this decision.

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Table 8.Crosstab 1

Checking online reviews before booking or selecting a hotel is must		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Yes	Count	97	94	191
	Expected Count	97.4	93.6	191.0
No	Count	5	4	9
	Count Expected	4.6	4.4	9.0
Total	Count	102	98	200
	Expected Count	102.0	98.0	200.0

Table 9.Chi Square Test 1

-	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.078[a]	1	.780	-	-
Continuity Correction[b]	.000	1	1.000	-	-
Likelihood Ratio	.078	1	.779	-	-
Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	-	1.000	.525
Linear-by-Linear Association	.078	1	.780	-	-
N of Valid Cases[b]	200	-	-	-	-

Table 10.Crosstab 2

A place having positive review and is promoted by tourists, helps in deciding they stay		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
yes	Count	88	82	170
	Expected Count	86.7	83.3	170.0
no	Count	14	16	30
	Expected Count	15.3	14.7	30.0
Total	Count	102	98	200
	Expected Count	102.0	98.0	200.0

Table 11.Chi Square Test 2

-	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.265[a]	1	.607	-	-
Continuity Correction[b]	.100	1	.751	-	-
Likelihood Ratio	.265	1	.607	-	-
Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	-	.693	.376
Linear-by-Linear Association	.264	1	.607	-	-
N of Valid Cases[b]	200	-	-	-	-

1. The predicted count is fewer than 5 in 0 cells (.0%). 14.70 is the bare minimum anticipated count.
2. Limited to a 2x2 table computation

Analysis: The null hypothesis, or H02, is accepted because the p-value (0.607) is higher than 0.05. Therefore, a place with good evaluations and promotion from travelers can determine whether or not a visitor's gender will be independent of their stay.

- **Internet evaluations provide an accurate image of the hotel's * gender**

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Hypothesis of the study is

H02: The hotel is depicted clearly in the online image, and the genders are not related to one another. H12: The hotel is clearly depicted in the online image, and gender is not a factor in this.

1. The predicted count is fewer than 5 in 0 cells (.0%).

39.69 is the bare minimum predicted count.

2. Limited to a 2x2 table computation

Analysis: H02, the null hypothesis, is accepted because the p-value (0.177) is higher than 0.05.

Therefore, the online image presents a clear image of the hotel and shows that gender is not related to either other.

Table 12.Crosstab 3

Online reviews give a clear picture of the hotel		Gender		Total
		Male	**Female**	
Yes	Count	56	63	119
	Expected Count	60.7	58.3	119
No	Count	46	35	81
	Expected Count	41.3	39.7	81.0
Total	Count	102	98	200
	Expected Count	102	98	200

Table 13.Chi Square Test 3

-	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.826[a]	1	.177	-	-
Continuity Correction[b]	1.458	1	.227	-	-
Likelihood Ratio	1.830	1	.176	-	-
Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	-	.196	.114
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.817	1	.178	-	-
N of Valid Cases[b]	200	-	-	-	-

Findings and Conclusion

The respondents' ages are distributed as follows: 56.5% are between the ages of 19 and 29, while 1.5% are under the age of 18. 11% of the population is between 30 and 39 years old, 9% is between 40 and 49 years old, and 18.5% is over 50. Of the sample, 49% of respondents are female and 51% of respondents are male. 9.5% of the respondents said they would want to take a vacation there once a month, 26% once every three months, 28.5% once every six months, 22.5% once a year, and 13.5% once every two years as their frequency of travel. The majority of responders check internet reviews before booking a hotel. People are willing to stay at because of positive reviews and advertisements left by visitors. The modern customer is more knowledgeable, active, and compiling information online. Online customer reviews provide a number of benefits, including the ability for customers to compare the performance of different hotels. Because a lot of people check online reviews before booking a hotel or making a reservation, it is imperative that operators improve their operations and provide excellent customer service. Respondents are searching several websites for hotel reviews in order to better understand their options. Online reviews are helping to increase the

hotels' knowledge. A customer's decision to book a room is directly influenced by both good and negative reviews. Online endorsements are very important.

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