

What do emotions say about guest satisfaction?: Hotel Moliceiro Case Study

O que dizem as **emoções** da **satisfação dos hóspedes**?: O Caso do Hotel Moliceiro

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Abstract | The interaction with others and the demand for information has been changing with the growth of the internet and the increase of eWOM sharing platforms. Online reviews are thus the most widely used source of information and the emotions conveyed through them can be indicative of guest satisfaction. The present case study focuses on Hotel Moliceiro, a 4-star boutique hotel located in the city centre of Aveiro. The research consists mainly of descriptive and emotional analysis of 416 TripAdvisor reviews of Hotel Moliceiro, using tools such as IBM Watson Tone Analyzer. The data collected was duly analysed and compared and it is possible to conclude that there are behavioral differences regarding the month and type of trip, the language of the review and the origin and gender of the guests.

Keywords | Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), online reviews, emotions, TripAdvisor, Tone Analyzer, Hotel Moliceiro

Resumo | A interação com outras pessoas e a procura de informação tem vindo a ser alterada com o crescimento da internet e o aumento de plataformas de partilha de eWOM. As *reviews* online são uma das fontes mais utilizadas para recolha de informação e as emoções transmitidas através destas são indicadoras da satisfação dos hóspedes. O presente caso de estudo foca-se no Hotel Moliceiro, um hotel de charme de 4 estrelas localizado no centro da cidade de Aveiro. A investigação realizada centra-se na análise emocional de 416 *reviews* do TripAdvisor relativas ao Hotel Moliceiro, através da ferramenta *IBM Watson Tone Analyzer*. Os dados recolhidos foram devidamente analisados e comparados, sendo possível concluir que se verificam diferenças comportamentais relativamente ao mês e tipo de viagem, ao idioma da avaliação e à origem e sexo dos hóspedes.

Palavras-chave | Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), reviews online, emoções, TripAdvisor, Tone Analyzer, Hotel Moliceiro

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1. Introduction

With the increasing development of the Internet, the way of searching for information and interacting with others has changed (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014) and over the last few years there has been an increase in the number of opinion platforms that allow the sharing of information through online comments that demonstrate satisfaction with the product or service in question (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Reviews available on online platforms are the most widely used source for information gathering (Schindler & Bickart, 2005) and can be indicative of consumer satisfaction, with a favourable experience being shared with positive feelings (Isen, 1987) and can motivate positive evaluations (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006). Thus, with eWOM being such a widely studied area, it becomes relevant to understand the role of emotions in online reviews and to identify possible behavioural differences with respect to month and type of trip, language of review and origin and gender of guests.

This case study focuses on the TripAdvisor reviews regarding the Hotel Moliceiro, a 4-star charm hotel located in the city centre of Aveiro, which stands out for the luxury and refinement of its services. This article is structured as follows: Firstly, a theoretical contextualization is made concerning the role of emotions in the eWOM sharing process, followed by the methodology. Section 4 presents the descriptive analysis, the emotional analysis and the discussion of results, and, finally, section 5 highlights the main conclusions of the study.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The importance of online reviews in purchase intentions

The sharing of information content through interpersonal communications is a phenomenon

called Word-of-Mouth (WOM) (Arndt, 1967). With the increasing development of the Internet, the way of seeking information, interacting with others, and buying products, changed. Thus, WOM behaviour can now be done online (King et al., 2014), being named electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) by Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler (2004, p.39), who defined it as 'any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product or a company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet'.

A consumer's purchase intention is the subjective probability that users will behave in a certain way. If consumers are interested in obtaining a specific product or service, it means that there is a purchase intention and that they want to buy that product or service, in the short or long term (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972). When there is this purchase intention, there is the decision-making process in which consumers decide whether to buy the product or service and which of the available options they choose. Online reviews play an important role and strongly influence this decision-making process (Goldenberg, Libai, & Muller, 2001; Martins, Rachão & Costa, 2018; Leite-Pereira, Brandão & Costa, 2020), and their impact is not limited to a specific stage of the process. The reviews available on online platforms are thus the most used source for information gathering and allow consumers to consult the experience of many people, support or confirm a decision previously made (Schindler & Bickart, 2005), evaluate alternatives, read traveller content and share travel ideas and experiences (PhoCusWright, 2010).

2.2. The role of emotions in online reviews

After the product or service is bought, used or consumed, consumers form a perception about it. If the performance meets or exceeds initial expectations, the consumer experiences a positive ex-

pectation confirmation. On the other hand, if the product or service fails to perform, the consumer experiences disconfirmation (or negative expectation confirmation) (Oliver, 1977). After the trip, a consumer can share their personal experience on an online platform, regardless of the existing eWOM (Nam, Baker, Ahmad, & Goo, 2020).

Positive WOM is associated with satisfactory consumer experiences, while negative WOM is considered a customer complaint (Singh & Pandya, 1991). Generally, consumers who are extremely satisfied or dissatisfied are more likely to share their opinion online (Hu, Zhang, & Pavlou, 2009), with positive reviews referring to favourable experiences, which motivate the recommendation of the product or service to other customers, while negative feedback refers to unfavourable experiences, written with the intention of dissuading others from buying that product or service (Cheng et al., 2006).

According to Breazeale (2009), dissatisfied customers tend to be more aggressive in their communication, seeking to tell more people about their experience than those who are satisfied with their purchases. On the other hand, a consumer who is satisfied with a product or service shares their thoughts with positive feelings (Isen, 1987). Thus, it became relevant to understand how the feelings shown in reviews relate to customer satisfaction and their influence on the perceived usefulness of reviews. A feeling is a thought, point of view, attitude or opinion that is rooted in emotions. Subjective opinions regarding products or services available online are a critical source of information (Mankad, Han, Goh, & Gavirneni, 2016).

The sentiment in eWOM is the level of satisfaction in terms of positive, negative, or neutral feelings that consumers represent when posting reviews. A good experience about a product or service can increase the perceived quality of that product/service, which is the antecedent of guest satisfaction, while a bad experience is the antecedent of dissatisfaction (Dai, Luo, Liao, & Cao,

2015). Thus, it is possible to conclude that satisfied guests write positive feedbacks to express their happy feelings about the hotel and that dissatisfied guests have the opposite behaviour (Aakash & Gupta Aggarwal, 2020).

The importance of emotions has been recognised by some researchers, with regret and frustration being among the most frequently expressed negative emotions by eWOM authors (de Matos & Rossi, 2008; Moreno-Lobato, Hernández-Mogollón & Pasaco-Gonzalez, 2021). Kim & Gupta (2012), through a study examining the effect of positive and negative emotions on the usefulness of online reviews, concluded that converging negative emotions across multiple reviews increases perceived informational value. Complementarily, Ahmad & Laroche (2015) state that reviews that demonstrate happiness positively influence perceived helpfulness and have greater influence than hope. Additionally, Ismagilova et al. (2020) conducted a study in which they found that different emotions have different effects on the perceived usefulness of messages: reviews expressing regret positively affect usefulness, while frustration has a negative impact.

2.3. Different online complaint behaviours

People's personal experience and language can be the basis of different perceptions and reactions to products and services (Chen, Cheung, & Law, 2012). Legohérel, Daucé, & Hsu (2012) argue that cultural differences create different expectations and perceptions of service quality, willingness to buy again, and motivation to recommend to others. Expectations and perceptions, as they may vary according to culture, generate differences in satisfaction ratings (Mok & Armstrong, 1998). Regarding the language used to write online comments, the research results of Schuckert, Liu and Law (2015) and Mariani, Borghi and Kazakov (2019) show that the language used affects

online ratings.

In order to understand potential differences in behaviour between people from different cultures regarding hotel attributes, Sann, Lai, & Liaw (2020) analysed online reviews of 353 hotels in 63 countries. The authors conclude that people from different cultural backgrounds tend to create different perceptions and expectations regarding various hotel attributes, which influences not only satisfaction but also online complaint behaviour. These results are in line with the research of Liu, Teichert, Rossi, Li, & Hu (2017) who, by analysing 412,784 Chinese hotel reviews on TripAdvisor, concluded that foreign tourists from eight distinct language groups evaluate hotels differently taking into account several attributes.

The evaluation given to hotels may also depend on the nature of the trip: for business or in company (couple, family, with friends and solo). According to Mariani et al. (2019), business travellers tend to give more negative evaluations than those travelling in company (family, friends or groups). These results are in line with the study of Chang, Ku, & Chen (2019), which indicates that couples generally give the highest ratings, to the point that business travellers tend to give the lowest ones. The difference in the importance criteria presented by the various types of travellers was also studied by Wang, Wang, Peng, & Wang (2020), which indicates that travellers of different typologies have different perceptions, valuing different criteria.

Regarding the month of travel, the results of a study conducted by Yang, Mao, & Tang (2018) indicate that March, April, May and July are the months with the highest number of reviews. The period from December to February presents the lowest values. Also, according to Chang et al. (2019), users tend to give higher ratings in January, May, September and December, to the point that the most negative ratings are given in July and October.

Lastly, Alrawadieh & Law (2019) conducted a study where 58.7% of the comments in the sam-

ple were written by men, to the extent that only 41.3% were written by women. After further investigation, the authors then state that young European males travelling as a couple or with family are more likely to share their experience online. Additionally, Yang et al. (2018) indicate that female guests tend to give higher ratings to hotels.

3. Methodology

3.1. Theoretical Approach and Data Collection

The literature review was essentially related to three themes: from traditional Word-of-Mouth to electronic Word-of-Mouth, guest satisfaction and the relevance of emotions in online reviews. In a first phase, relevant studies were selected based on article type, abstract and content. All selected documents were screened in order to separate the articles according to the topic under study and were also subjected to in-depth analysis, which allowed for conclusions that support the research.

The Hotel Moliceiro, a 4-star boutique hotel located in the centre of Aveiro, was selected for the empirical study. It prides itself for the luxury and refinement of its services and is among the most highly rated hotel establishments in the various travel platforms. TripAdvisor was the website chosen for the collection of comments regarding the Hotel Moliceiro, for being the largest travel platform in the world (TripAdvisor, 2019). From the 615 available reviews, 416 were selected for analysis, from 2015 to 2020.

Firstly, data was collected according to the information regarding comment description, gender, general classification, language, country of origin, month of trip, year of trip and type of trip, which are subsequently treated and analysed. Figure 1 shows the schematization of the process of collection and analysis of the comments.

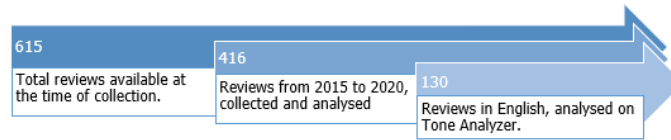


Figure 1 | Process of collecting and analysing comments
Source: Author's construction

3.2. Emotional Analysis

Finally, the 130 English comments of the sample were entered into IBM Watson Tone Analyzer, a cognitive linguistic analysis to detect emotional intonations in texts written in English and French (Tone Analyzer, 2020). This service can analyse tweets, online reviews, emails, or messages and recognises three linguistic tones (analytical spirit, confidence, and hesitation) and four emotional tones (joy, sadness, anger and fear). For

the present study, the emotion 'fear' was not assessed as it was not present in any comments. After inserting the comment in the text box, the programme identifies the tones present and classifies them by a point system, which may be less than 0.5 (no intonation or weak intonation), between 0.5 and 0.75 (medium intonation) or more than 0.75 (strong intonation). As a rule, if two levels of intonation are identified in a review, only the level with the higher score is considered. Table 1 shows the tones assessed and their description.

Table 1 | Tones evaluated and their description

Tone class		Description
Linguistic Tones	Analytical Spirit	An analytical tone indicates a person's reasoning and analytical attitude about things. An analytical person can be seen as intellectual, rational, systematic, unemotional or impersonal.
	Confidence	A confident tone indicates the degree of certainty of a person. A confident person can be seen as secure, collective, hopeful or egotistical.
	Hesitation	A hesitant tone indicates the degree of a person's inhibition. A hesitant person may be seen as questionable, doubtful or arguable.
Emotional Tones	Joy	Joy (or happiness) has overtones of appreciation, satisfaction and pleasure. Joy brings a sense of well-being, inner peace, love, security and satisfaction.
	Sadness	Sadness indicates a feeling of loss and disadvantage. When a person is quiet, less energetic and withdrawn, it can be inferred that he feels sadness.
	Anger	Anger is evoked by injustice, conflict, humiliation, neglect or betrayal. If the anger is active, the person attacks the target, physically or verbally. If anger is passive, the person gets into a bad mood and feels tension and hostility.

Source: Author's construction, adapted from <https://tone-analyzer-demo.ng.bluemix.net/>

4. Analysis and Discussion of Results

4.1 Descriptive analysis

For the empirical study 416 reviews were collected from the TripAdvisor platform, from 2015 to 2020, and in this last year the number of reviews is reduced because Tourism was one of the economic

sectors most affected by the pandemic of COVID-19 (UNWTO, 2020). Through the analysis of figure 2, it's possible to see that April, May and July are the months where travellers commented the most about Hotel Moliceiro. On the other hand, January, November, and December are the months of lower eWOM sharing.

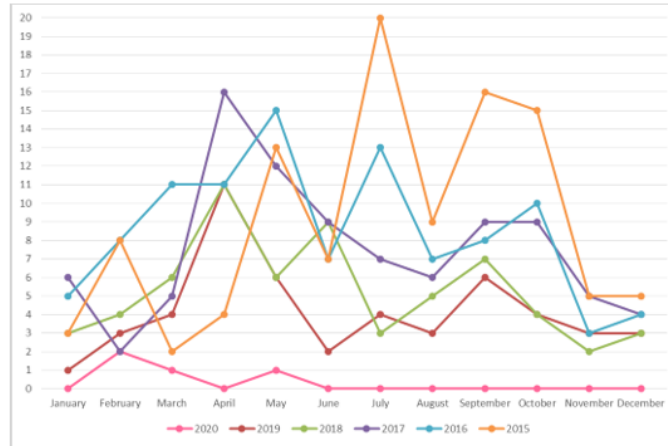


Figure 2 | Number of comments per month
Source: Author's construction

When writing a review, guests can rate the hotel on a scale of 1 to 5. In the years under review, the Hotel Moliceiro is rated with positive reviews 'Excellent' and 'Very Good' in 92.55% of the reviews. On the other hand, the negative evaluations 'Poor' and 'Terrible' only represent 2.4%. The average of all comments written between 2015 and 2020 is 4.45. As for the language, it is possible to see that the collected comments are written in 9 different languages: German, Korean, Spanish, French, Hebrew, Dutch, English, Italian and Portuguese. Portuguese is the predominant language, being used in 37.02% of the reviews, followed by English (31.25%) and Spanish (17.79%).

Regarding the type of trips, more than half of the comments were written by tourists who travelled as a couple (54.57%). In second place are family trips (18.27%), followed by business trips (10.10%), with friends (8.65%) and, finally, solo (1.92%). Regarding the gender of the guests, 41% of the reviews were written by men and 36% by women. Finally, from the 365 reviews where the origin of the visitors is mentioned, it is known that guests come from 28 different countries (Figure 3). Of these, Portugal stands out, accounting for 18.51% of the reviews, followed by Brazil (16.59%), Spain (13.94%) and the United Kingdom (9.38%).

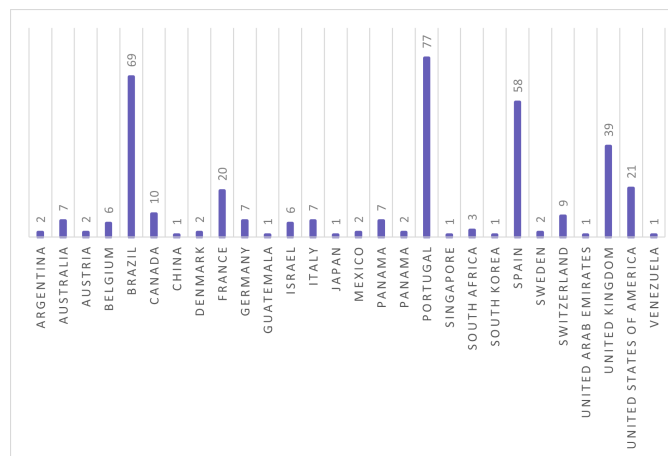


Figure 3 | Country of origin of the guests who commented
Source: Author's construction

4.2. Emotional analysis

For the emotional analysis the 130 comments in English were evaluated and it should be noted that no distinction is made between medium and strong intonation (Figure 4). 'Joy' is the most

frequent tone, being present in 97.69% of the comments. It is followed by the tone 'Confidence' (74.62%) and the tone 'Analytical spirit' (66.92%). 'Hesitation', on the other hand, is manifested in 51.54% and 'Sadness' only in 20.77%. Finally, 'Anger' is only present in 2.31%.

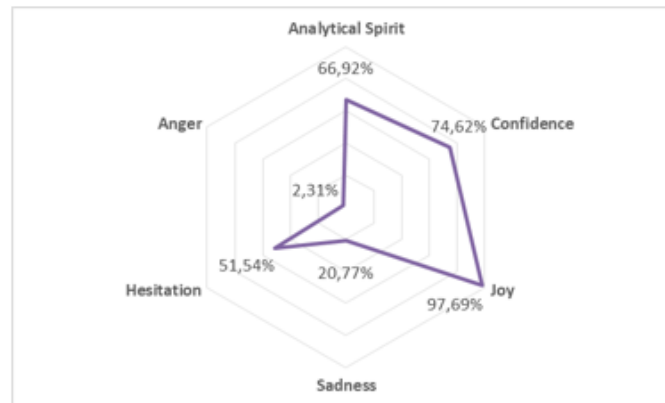


Figure 4 | Tones present in the comments analysed
Source: Author's construction

To identify possible emotional differences, the comments were divided according to the tourist's continent of origin. Regarding Africa, 'Confidence' and 'Joy' are the only identified tones and are present in all comments. As for North America, 'Joy' is the most frequent tone (96.7%), followed by 'Analytical spirit' (76.7%) and 'Hesitation' (66.7%). In South American evaluations, 'Analytical spirit', 'Confidence' and 'Joy' are present in 100% and 'Hesitation' only in 50%. As for Asia, 'Confidence' and 'Joy' are the most frequent tones (87.5%). In Europe it is observed that 'Joy' is present in all comments, 'Confidence' in 77.3% and 'Analytical spirit' in 66.7%. Lastly, there is Oceania where 'Joy' is identified at 100%, 'Confidence' at 85.7% and 'Analytical spirit' at 57.1%. Thus, it can be concluded that 'Joy' is the most frequent tone in all continents, followed by 'Confidence'. On the other hand, apart from 'Anger' which is only present in North America and Europe, 'Sadness' is one of the least mentioned tones.

Regarding the type of trip, in the comments

written by people who travelled with friends, 'Joy' is present in 100%, 'Confidence' in 80% and 'Analytical spirit' in 70%. Also in couple trips, 'Joy' is the most frequent tone (98.7%), followed by 'Confidence' (75%). For family trips, 'Joy' is the most repeated tone (94.7%), contrary to 'Sadness' (10.5%). As for business trips, 'Joy' is present in 92.9% of the evaluations and 'Confidence' in 85.7%. On the other hand, 'Sadness' is in 21.4% and 'Anger' in 7.1%. Finally, for solo travellers 'Joy' is present in 100% and 'Sadness' only in 25%. It is then concluded that 'Joy' is the most frequent tone across all types, followed by 'Confidence', and 'Sadness' is among the least indicated. 'Anger', in turn, is only present in comments written by tourists who travelled as a couple and on business.

The comments were further segmented according to different times of the year. For comments written between March and May, it is found that 95.2% of the comments refer to 'Joy', 69% to 'Confidence' and 2.4% to 'Anger'. From June to August, 'Joy' is mentioned by 97% and 'Con-

confidence' by 82.5%, while 'Sadness' is only mentioned by 22.5%. From September to November, Joy is present in all the comments, followed by 'Confidence' (70.6%). On the other hand, there is 'Sadness' at 29.4% and 'Anger' at 5.9%. Finally, between December and February 'Joy' is the most frequent tone (100%), followed by 'Analytical spirit' (92.9%), with 'Sadness' only at 7.1%. Having said this, we can conclude that the most frequent tone is 'Joy' and that those indicated less frequently are 'Sadness' and 'Anger', the latter only being present from March to May and from September to November.

Finally, regarding the gender of the tourists, 'Joy' is the most frequent tone in both genders and both 'Analytical spirit', 'Confidence' and 'Sadness' are more present in comments made by females. 'Hesitation', in turn, is more prominent in male reviews and, finally, 'Anger' is the tone that presents lower values.

4.3. Discussion of results

Of the 416 comments evaluated, 92.55% the hotel is rated as 'Excellent' and 'Very good', the average of all ratings being 4.45. Additionally, in 97.69% of the English comments the tone 'Joy' is present and in 74.62% the tone 'Confidence'. ISEN (1987) indicates that a consumer who is satisfied with a product or service shares his thoughts with positive feelings and also Aakash & Gupta Aggarwal (2020) refer that satisfied guests write positive feedbacks to express their happy feelings about the hotel. Thus, it can be stated that most tourists who commented on the Hotel Moliceiro were satisfied with their experience and expressed this satisfaction through positive comments.

Considering the continents of origin, 'Joy' is the most frequent tone, having different weights in each one. 'Confidence', in turn, is the second most indicated in all continents, except for North America, which shows more 'Analytical spirit'. Sad-

ness' is one of the least frequently indicated factors and is only present in guest comments from North America, Asia, Europe and Oceania and Anger is only mentioned in North America and Europe. Thus, we conclude that tourists from different continents, despite showing mostly positive feelings in online comments, show some emotional differences. These results are in line with the research of Sann et al. (2020), which indicate that people from different cultures tend to create different perceptions, which influences satisfaction and consequently the online complaint behaviour.

Although the tones identified in the comments are, in descending order, 'Joy', 'Confidence', 'Analytical spirit', 'Hesitation', 'Sadness' and 'Anger' across all trip types, the proportion of each is different. Tourists travelling solo, with friends or as a couple more often express happiness in their comments. On the other hand, business travellers have the highest percentage of comments with a 'Confidence' tone. Sadness is more prominent in comments written by solo and couple travellers. Finally, only business and couple travellers have comments with an angry tone, and the percentage is higher for business trips. Thus, it is possible to state that guests undertaking different types of travel show different emotions in the online complaint process, corroborating the findings of Wang et al. (2020), who suggest that travellers of different typologies have different perceptions, and Mariani et al. (2019), who indicate that business travellers tend to be more negative in reviews than those travelling with family or friends.

Regarding the months in which tourists stayed at the hotel, it is possible to notice that, similarly to the study of Yang et al. (2018), April, May and July are the months with the highest number of comments, to the point that January, November and December are the months with the lowest eWOM sharing. The 'Joy' tone is the most frequent in all seasons, having more relevance from September to February and less weight from March to May.

It should also be noted that from June to August is the time when tourists write more comments with a 'Confidence' tone and from December to February the analytical spirit is higher. The feeling 'Sadness' is one of the least frequent emotions and is mostly present from September to November. Finally, the feeling of 'Anger' is only shown from March to May and from September to November, with a greater emphasis on the latter. Thus, we conclude that the tones demonstrated in online comments vary depending on the time of year.

Finally, it can be seen that reviews written by women more often demonstrate a cheerful, confident and analytical tone. A hesitant tone, on the other hand, is more present in reviews written by men. Yang et al. (2018) indicate that female guests tend to give higher ratings to hotels and according to Aakash & Gupta Aggarwal (2020), satisfied customers write positive feedbacks to express happy feelings about the hotel, so it is suggested that overall, female guests feel more satisfied regarding Hotel Moliceiro.

5. Conclusion

The present research allows to conclude that most of the tourists who commented regarding Hotel Moliceiro are satisfied with their experience and expressed that satisfaction through positive comments. It is also perceived that those guests who make different types of trips show different emotions in the online complaint process. Regarding the months in which tourists stayed, it is known that April, May, and July are the months with the highest number of comments and the tones shown vary depending on the time of year. Regarding the gender of the tourists, although men write more comments, the results suggest that, in general, female guests feel more satisfied regarding the Hotel Moliceiro.

One of the main contributions of this research concerns the construction of a consistent theoretical body regarding the role of emotions in the eWOM sharing process and the variables that generate different behavioural patterns. Emotional analysis also allows strengthening the relationship of emotions presented in comments with customers' satisfaction towards the service. Future researches should focus on a larger sample, including several boutique hotels in the country. The period of the analysis could be even longer than 5 years, to have an evolutionary perspective. Linguistic and emotional tests could also be done on comments in both English and French, to make the analysis more comprehensive.

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