

Customer experience management in capsule hotels: a content analysis of guest online review

Capsule hotels

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Abstract

Purpose – Capsule hotels are a revolutionary Japanese concept of lodging that dates back over four decades. On the other hand, capsule hotels are a relatively new concept for most travelers outside of Japan. Organizations within this target segment are starting to recognize the critical role that an excellent customer experience management (CEM) strategy offers in improving competitiveness and organizational success. Thus, this research provides scholastic insight into the framework of CEM by evaluating the user-generated content at capsule hotels.

Design/methodology/approach – This study inspected 1,304 online user-generated content from the top 10 capsule hotels from Booking.com. Leximancer 4.5 was deployed to analyze the data.

Findings – The analyses revealed nine key themes to CEM of capsule hotels which are “staff,” “hotel,” “area,” “location,” “bed,” “capsule,” “check-in,” “noisy” and “luggage”.

Practical implications – This research encourages hospitality and tourism executives to develop specific strategies for capsule hotels.

Originality/value – This research differs from previous writings in that it attempts to fill a gap in the research by offering insight into the issue in the low-budget hotel industry and by identifying key indicators that influence customer experience.

Keywords Capsule hotel, Customer experience, Customer experience management, Content analysis, Leximancer

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Capsule hotels, also called pod hotels, are a new “Japanese concept” to lodging that began four decades ago, combining the benefits of space conservation and resource sharing. They are comprised of a series of small bed-sized rooms dubbed capsules that provide more inexpensive as well as minimal overnight lodgings than traditional hotels (Chen and Wei, 2022; Chiang, 2018). Many countries around the world have introduced and emulated capsule hotels in urban areas and airport terminals in recent years (Chen *et al.*, 2020a). Recent years have seen an increase in interest in studies of budget hotels (Chen and Wei, 2022). In contrast to budget hotels, capsule hotels offer only a narrow sleeping area and no bathroom, resulting in a significantly lower room rate (Chen *et al.*, 2020a, b). To stay ahead of the competition, capsule hotels must meet clients’ fundamental accommodation demands as well as provide convenient, low-cost service.



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In the hospitality industry, customer experience (CE) does not only originate from experiences in the beverage, food, entertainment and accommodation aspect of hospitality but also other support supporting processes and features such as facility designs, in-room entertainment, offline and online interactions, technology, websites and exchanges with the service staff as well as other customers. Customer experience management (CEM) is consequently a complex process in the hotel industry. Burns (2016) asserts that only a small number of firms can achieve the maturity level of CEM, necessitating more study in this area.

Broadly speaking, there is a paucity of research on CEM in the hotel industry (Kandampully *et al.*, 2018). Scholars, as well as executives, have noted, however, that CEM is especially significant for the hotel business, as it involves substantial customer-employee connections also service characteristics which are crucial to the hospitality experience (Kang *et al.*, 2022; Kandampully *et al.*, 2018). Hospitality services feature lengthier customer-employee interactions, which affords an exceptional opportunity to build connections. Thus, customer-employee connections frequently contribute to the satisfaction of consumers (Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2022; Guan *et al.*, 2021). According to Walls *et al.* (2011), customers are highly involved in hotel services, which makes it imperative to examine the importance of CEM in the hotel industry as it will be of great importance managerially and theoretically. A study done by Brun *et al.* (2017) argued that CE consists of an amalgam of relationship, emotional, branding and functional appeals; however, to date, most studies on CE have restricted their approach to developing an integrated heuristic framework.

Several studies have made efforts to understand customer travel experience (Kim *et al.*, 2018; Omo-Obas and Anning-Dorson, 2022; Uner *et al.*, 2022), brand experience (Pham *et al.*, 2022), hotel image (Jeong and Kubickova, 2021) and emotions (Sultana *et al.*, 2022; Şahin and Kılıçlar, 2022), however, most of these studies have emphasized customer emotional experience and have not integrated the functional aspect of CE to have a more integrated and balanced framework for CEs in the tourism and hospitality industry. According to Hwang and Seo (2016), the conceptual framework for CE in the tourism and hospitality industry is advancing slowly and it is important that there is research to understand the total CE in the hospitality industry, therefore, this shows a significant void in the literature concerning a systematic theoretical framework with the evidential proof for evaluating the capsule hotel's total customer experience.

Furthermore, while several components of CE in budget hotels have been identified in literature and capsule hotel is an extension of budget hotels, however, there have been limited studies on CE in capsule hotels. Previous studies on CE in budget hotels have streamlined it to motels (e.g. Ren *et al.*, 2016), Airbnb (e.g. Brochado *et al.*, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2019) and inns (Barry O'Mahony and Clark, 2013), which creates a dearth in the literature that this study attempt to bridge. To achieve the above goals, this research will answer the following three research questions.

- R1. What are the key concepts that influence CE in capsule hotels?
- R2. What are the key triggers for positive and negative experiences in popular capsule hotels?
- R3. How can practitioners effectively manage the CE in capsule hotels?

Contribution of the study

While some studies have evaluated CEM in the hospitality industry, most have been done in restaurants and luxury hotels (Jim *et al.*, 2013) with none covering low-budget hotels such as capsule hotels. In addition, by offering a thorough analysis of the online reviews of guest users of capsule hotels, this study will broaden existing perspectives for handling experiences of customers (not factoring in memorable experiences) in the hospitality industry. Second, the majority of previous studies trusted the drop-off and pick-up questionnaire technique. However, research indicates that survey-based studies' external validity is jeopardized by

sampling and attenuation bias (Chittiprolu *et al.*, 2021). As a result, we relied on and gathered data from online reviews, which accurately reflect the travelers' unbiased experiences (Arica *et al.*, 2021; Ruiz-Equihua *et al.*, 2022). To the best of our knowledge, the indicators that influence satisfaction and dissatisfaction regarding capsule hotels have not been taken into account in extant literature. By identifying this, the research offers factors that should be considered by managers to generate and improve their marketing component such as brand image, value for money satisfaction, etc. In addition, the study is beneficial in identifying capsule hotel operational activities that need modifications to provide better services and establish continuity in the business environment. Recent research conducted by Hodgkinson *et al.* (2022) has emphasized the role of CEM in business success, subsequently calling for researchers to explore CEM differently to fill up the gap in the literature. This research yielded to that call by exploring CEM in the context of capsule hotels.

Literature review

Theoretical underpinnings

Components of CE in budget hotels have been identified in the literature, which include authenticity, social interaction, personalized services and home benefits (in the case of Airbnb). The authenticity dimension is founded on the self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), which posits that customers are authentic when their activities portray their true selves, or when they are self-determining. The proclivity to share and recount emotional experiences with others is a social sharing of emotions, and it is a psychological phenomenon (Christophe and Rimé, 1997; Rimé *et al.*, 1998). The social sharing of emotions theory has been used by tourism research to understand why individuals express emotions and how they connect based on their emotions (Li *et al.*, 2019). The personalized services dimension of the CE is supported according to the paradigm of self-identity. Customers can identify their activities, preferences, status and values, according to the self-identity theory (Becker, 1974). According to Guttentag *et al.* (2018), CE can be enhanced by the functional attributes of a home, and Kotler's (1973) atmospheric theory underpins this dimension.

Customer experience

Past studies on CE have considered the angles of psychology, consumer behavior and marketing, offering new acumens to how information is processed by consumers based on heuristic stimuli with the possibility of activating consumption behavior (Carvalho and Alves, 2022; Jafari *et al.*, 2020). There are three theoretical paradigms that these studies mostly stem from a experiential thought, which encourages a comprehensive outlook of experience that incorporates different experiential factors such as relate, act, think, feel and sense (Le *et al.*, 2019) experiential economics thought, with focus on pleasures be subjected to during the evolution of products due to economic growth (Kohnen, 2021) which emphasizes the classification of attributes or products based on the context of purchase (Yoon and Lee, 2017). According to Le *et al.* (2019), the general concept in all three paradigms is that those experiences occur as a reaction to marketing activities or experiences triggered pre- or post-purchase, due to direct assessment and involvement in events. Fatma (2014) opined that based on the holistic experiential viewpoint, promoters should include stimuli that will stimulate the experiences of consumers. This is because, depending on the experiential strategies marketers employ to create experiences, the preference or image that consumers have towards a brand can change.

The "Strategic Experiential Modules" (SEMs) were proposed by Song *et al.* (2015, p. 587) and are considered "a set of experiential types that provide basic direction to experiential strategies and purposes". The objective of experience management, according to (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) is to establish comprehensive and integrated customer experiences that

involve experiential blends. Experiences are categorized into two: shared experiences and individual experiences; the share expresses include “relate” and “act”, when people seem to share experiences culturally and socially, while individual experiences include “think”, “feel” and “sense” components of experiences that are discrete and personal in nature (Le *et al.*, 2019). Some past researchers have viewed experiences as behaviors that mainly project either pre-purchase trials or searches (Yoon and Lee, 2017), product use or purchases (Marutschke *et al.*, 2019), and searches on brand information (Lee *et al.*, 2018). Direct experiences are found to be more effective for searching for practical product qualities than advertising (Ert *et al.*, 2016).

Then three different communication methods (infomercials, advertising and direct experiences) were compared by Yoon and Lee (2017), they discovered that infomercials and direct experiences will influence purchase intentions, attitudes and recall more than advertising. Other scholarly research has investigated experiences as a significant way of evaluating service quality (Marutschke *et al.*, 2019). For example, a study conducted by Song and Park (2009) on family restaurants, put forward that experiences are processes that are mirrored in customers’ purchase behavior and attitudes, which is a consequence of usage experiences comprising having services and food, observation and participation. Overall, In short, experience management emphasizes consumer holistic experiences in a deviation from conventional marketing and can be used in different research fields (Le *et al.*, 2019).

Previous seminal works also emphasized that organizations should provide goods and/or services to create CE (Schmitt, 1999); however, recent studies on CE have contended that to have a memorable experience, consumers are seeking to co-create value (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013). Minkiewicz *et al.* (2014) argued for the relevance of value creation through customer-company interaction, signaling a change from a firm-centric approach to personalized customer experiences. Hwang and Seo (2016) in their study on CEM discussed that the CE includes “authentic experience,” “transcendent experience,” “transformational experience,” “customer experience,” and “co-creation experience.”

Customer experience management in hospitality and tourism research

Although CEM has been utilized in the service/hospitality sector, the tourism industry has applied it rather sparingly (Rahimi *et al.*, 2017). CEM analyzes the entire experience, from first inquiry to post-trip assessment; consequently, as the tourist industry is experiential and intangible, CEM may be an applicable strategy. It is claimed that CEM is applied specifically to the hotel industry due to the extended booking periods and the opportunity to enhance customer connections, boost revenue and improve overall business performance (Sharples, 2019).

Moreover, Holbrook and Hirschman’s (1982) symbolic, hedonic and aesthetic perspective on consumption was the first to expose the CE. Since then, several theoretical and managerial approaches pushed forward our understanding of CE (Fonseca *et al.*, 2021). According to Prebensen and Rosengren (2016), there is a growing emphasis in the hospitality and tourism literature to ensure strong customer loyalty via memorable customer experience, instead of ordinary CE. Sthapit and Coudoumaris (2018) empirically verified the constructs in the tourism and hospitality industry; the study established that four dimensions of the fore mentioned CE framework gives a conceptual fit as well as provide validity for the measurement of tourist experiences, offering scholarly substantiation on CE measurement applicability. Similarly, to further investigate tourist experience, Okumus and Cetin (2018) examined the concept of CEs successfully in destination marketing where they carried out a content analysis to explore food usage in destination marketing. They found that promoting cuisine and food is important in creating memorable experiences for the visitor as well as having successful destination marketing. Even though some studies have emphasized the significance of authenticity while CE is being delivered, however, only very few researches

have been carried out to determine what authentic experiences entail and how they are evaluated, especially in the hospitality and tourism industry.

An exhaustive study carried out by [Godovykh and Tasci \(2020\)](#) in their study of CE in tourism identified conation, sensory, affect and cognition as four components that make up tourists' total experience during the pre-, during- and post-consumption stages. They also identified three categories of antecedents: situational, brand-related and consumer-related antecedents. For the situational antecedents, macro-environmental factors and consumption context were identified, while for brand-related antecedents, authenticity, experiences came and the marketing mix are some factors identified. For the consumer-related antecedents, group characteristics, knowledge, previous experience, culture, psychographics and sociodemographic factors were identified. It is expected that these will lead to brand-related outcomes (brand trust, evangelizing, customer involvement, customer-based brand equity) and customer-related outcomes (utility transformation, value, satisfaction, cognition and emotions).

[Rahimian et al. \(2020\)](#) in their study of CEM have identified four stages in the CEM process and customer identification is considered the foundation of the process. The customer identification process involves identifying the needs, characteristics, values, expectations, and previous experiences and classifying your customers. Personal factors such as psychological and demographic elements have been considered in studies on hotel CE ([Taheri et al., 2021](#)). In earlier studies of CEM ([Ryan, 2002](#)), it was noted that personal characteristics such as personality, knowledge and motives shape tourists' experiences. Demographic variables (gender, education, income and age) and psychographic variables (customers' lifestyles and motives) are antecedents of purchase intention ([Mahrous and Hassan, 2017](#)).

Motivation, in social sciences, has been considered in terms of motives (cause) and behaviors (effects). It has been regarded as a process that determines the course, importunity and dynamism of goal-directed behavior (e.g. [Kim et al., 2021](#)). According to [Lee \(2021, p. 4\)](#), the motive is "an internal factor arousing, directing and integrating a person's behavior". For low-budget travelers, the most significant motive is social interactions, as such, they aim to spend less on accommodation, while still having their privacy and comfort, therefore, they often use capsule hotels ([Rahardjo, 2020](#)). As CEM is experiential in nature, it is suggested that it complements the hotel industry. It is vital to advance CEM knowledge and investigate its relationship with the hotel industry to advance the knowledge base as well as provide practice guidance to ensure that clients are satisfied at this phase of their journey to enable the growth of relationships and the increase in extra sales ([Kandampully et al., 2018](#)).

Customer experience in a budget hotels and premium hotels

Budget hotels are difficult to categorize since their scope and nature are fluid, and they change with time. With the opening of Motel 6 in California in the 1960s, the term "budget hotel" has been coined. The name "Motel 6" comes from the fact that it primarily offered rooms for the cheap price of US\$6 per night ([Gilbert and Lockwood, 1990](#)). The concept of a budget hotel is becoming increasingly elaborate and extensive as product offerings have evolved through time. The definition of this type of hotel has been attempted by different scholars using pricing ranges, however, the majority of these definitions have become obsolete over time due to fluctuating prices. Other scholars have compared and contrasted budget hotels with full-service hotels based on service range, qualities and hotel size ([Chen and Wei, 2022](#)). Other definitions have emphasized the budget hotel's location, operational features consistent, chain-affiliated and branded offering ([Ren et al., 2018](#)). Companies often use the term "economy hotel," which is extensively used in varied contexts, to emphasize the objective of saving money. As a result, the terms "economy hotel" and "budget hotel" are interchangeable ([Mun et al., 2019](#)). On the hand, a luxury hotel is defined as "a hotel that is

unique, superior in quality, provides excellent service and can symbolize the wealth and status of the owners” (Peng and Chen, 2019, p. 1349).

Customer experience is a “subjective mental state” (Pujiastuti *et al.*, 2017) of the customer and is dependent on a different range of cues. Customers’ perceptions of their budget hotel-consuming experiences have yet to be properly investigated. Current knowledge on the topic is based on some studies conducted in various contexts. For instance, in the motel sector in New Zealand, three primary dimensions were identified by (Clemes *et al.*, 2011), which include price/value construct, outcome quality and physical environment. A study on CE in China’s budget hotels by Huang *et al.* (2014) identified online reservation, room design, staff attitude, check-in/out services and location as important factors that affect customer experience. A similar study in the Chinese context was carried out by Peng *et al.* (2015). Li *et al.* (2019) identified social connection, authenticity, personalized services and home benefits in Airbnb in the US. Customer experience in luxury hotels has also been carried out in different studies and contexts. For instance, Wu and Gao (2019), identified human interaction, service offerings and management, and physical environment as important factors in Ireland’s luxury hotels. Cetin and Walls (2016) also identified social interaction (interactions with other guests and interactions with staff (attitude customization/attentiveness and professionalism) and physical environment.

Comparing CE in budget and luxury hotels, in budget hotels, room cleanliness, room facilities, location and comfort are the most important factors, while food quality, smooth reservation, social interaction with staff and feeling relaxed are the least important (Ren *et al.*, 2016), whereas, in luxury hotels, the physical environment and social interaction are feeling relaxed, sense perception, pleasure, freedom, safety, ego-enhancement and social interaction are most important.

CEM and capsule hotels

The services provided within the lodging sector are sybaritic in nature and the implication of using such service is mostly psychosomatic these characteristics contributed to the hotel industry being among the experience-intensive industry. Examining CEM in the hotel industry is important both managerially and theoretically because customers are greatly involved in the services (Kandampully *et al.*, 2018). An increasing number of scholars have dedicated their attention to exploring the concept of CEM in different general service industries, to better establish our knowledge of the construct (Zolkiewski *et al.*, 2017) and in the tourism and hospitality industry (Yoon and Lee, 2017). The physical environment is primarily the subject of the classical servicescape theory framework but is often arguably questioned for not including social or human factors (Bolton *et al.*, 2018). Jang *et al.* (2015) indicated that social factors with a clear focus on the encounters between service staff and visitors are more prevalent than physical factors, especially in the hospitality industry (Bolton *et al.*, 2018). Jang *et al.* (2015, p. 291) therefore introduced the concept of “social servicescape” about the notion of consumers and staff, who play a significant and influential role in the service environment. Taylor (2020) study has moved to socially distance servicescape research from mere servicescape research, however, the focus has been on the restaurant context which makes it worth exploring the CEs of the capsule hotel.

Ren *et al.* (2016) in their study of budget hotels found that customer satisfaction is positively influenced by customer experiences. A recent study by Chen *et al.* (2020a, b) sought to create a behavioral model of capsule hotel guests by embedding maximized stimulation level, perceived risk and experiential value. Their results indicate that the optimal stimulation intensity has a favorable influence on perceived risk and experience value. Another exceptional study done by Chiang (2018) indicates that visitors’ perceptions of pricing and service convenience affect functional value. The convenience of service and social service environment affects experiencing value. The functional and experience benefits of capsule

hotels inspire guests to buy and spread positive electronic word-of-mouth. Some other studies have also investigated the influential nexus between other post-purchase behavior and experiential value. Two main predictors of hotel performance are electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and repurchase intentions. Since young travelers are predominantly the guest of capsule hotels and they often emphasize the use of social media and the Internet, therefore, an important indicator of hotel performance is guests' eWOM. According to [Chiang \(2018\)](#), capsule hotels must deliver social servicescape, convenience and price to produce benefits that can be classified as experiential and functional.

Methodology

Sampling method

Due to the rising prevalence of the Internet and social media, customers increasingly rely on user-generated content to collect information and make their decisions ([Abdullah et al., 2022](#); [Saydam et al., 2022a, b, c](#)). As a result of the lack of user-generated content in capsule hotels, the purposive sample approach was used, and the top 10 capsule hotels in the globe based on [booking.com](#) reviews were analyzed. The top ten capsule hotels were chosen based on their popularity index and the number of reviews per hotel. Thereafter, Leximancer 4.5 was used for analysis due to its exploratory and predictive capabilities ([Saydam et al., 2022a, b, c](#)). The locations of the hotels are shown in [Table 1](#). Furthermore, the names of the hotels are not revealed due to ethical considerations.

The total number of comments available from the 10 capsule hotels was 6,520, and a total of 1,304 were collected from the 6,520 using a probability sampling technique approach known as systematic sampling. Systematic sampling is a simple technique, as it is an occasional systematic data collection method; this is achieved by deciding each *n*th individual from the targeted population. This approach is usually followed by the random selection of the main subject and the subsequent selection of each *n*th case. The number *n* is defined as the inspecting component and is dictated by the division of the objective population size by the required sample size. The advantage of this sampling approach is its relative simplicity and the fact that no specific frame is needed ([Altinay et al., 2015, p. 93](#)). This study used $n = 20$ to sample from the 6,520 total available comments from the 10 capsule hotels, the technique account for the 1,304 data used in the study. The *n*th sample is decided by the sequence in which the comments were posted (from the first post to the date of data collection). The reviews naturally appear in the sequence in which they were posted, when we collected every 20th review from the first to the final post to an excel sheet. This sample size also correlates in range with other studies such as [Arasli et al. \(2021\)](#) collected 1,250 online reviews to inspect tourists' reviews about Muslim-friendly hotels. Another study by [Sulu et al. \(2021\)](#) examined passengers' service insights toward airline service quality using 498 reviews.

Name	Location
Hotel A	Thailand
Hotel B	Singapore
Hotel C	Japan
Hotel D	Russia
Hotel E	Sri Lanka
Hotel F	Australia
Hotel G	Taiwan
Hotel H	Netherland
Hotel I	India
Hotel J	England

Table 1.
Hotel location

Data treatment

Content analysis is a method of data analysis that is widely used. It is a method for discovering large amounts of word-based data that uses hierarchical coding and grouping. It defines sentence patterns, frequency, connections and connection structures. This Leximancer-based content analysis converts word-based data from popular languages into semantic forms. In the current study, four steps were taken to create a virtual map (as shown in Figure 1).

In the first step, reviews posted by online visitors were obtained from [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) and copied to an Excel sheet (CSV. Comma Delimited) folder. Consequently, concept seeds are generated. Afterward, from the concept, the thesaurus is generated. The term thesaurus was linked with each seed, and a map was created by combining words that were potential keywords of distinct concepts. As stated earlier, concepts are arrays of correlated terms that cover a core subject. When these descriptions of terms have been defined for each concept, a concept map will be created to demonstrate the relationship between the concepts in the document. The thesaurus shows a list of concepts, and the number of variations done by the learning method of the thesaurus, thus generalizing the concepts from the seed terms and generating a graded list of the words of the thesaurus that identifies and explains each concept. The thesaurus list also displays the weightings associated with each indicative word.

Data analysis

Leximancer software was used to analyze the data. Leximancer is a program that analyzes the type of document and explains user-generated content details. This program then visually defines the dominant themes found in the writing and details how the themes are related. Leximancer employs a quantitative approach based on the Bayesian hypothesis of utilizing computations as well as nonlinear components (Olorunsola *et al.*, 2022a, b; Öztüren *et al.*, 2021). Three key functional units, “words”, “concepts” and “themes” are considered by researchers during the analysis (Dambo *et al.*, 2021). This program uses a two-organized analytical approach for dealing with extricating co-event data to conduct theoretical and social research (Dambo *et al.*, 2020). Hence, Leximancer determines the similarity of reformulated ideas and forms where these ideas are linguistically interconnected to create a

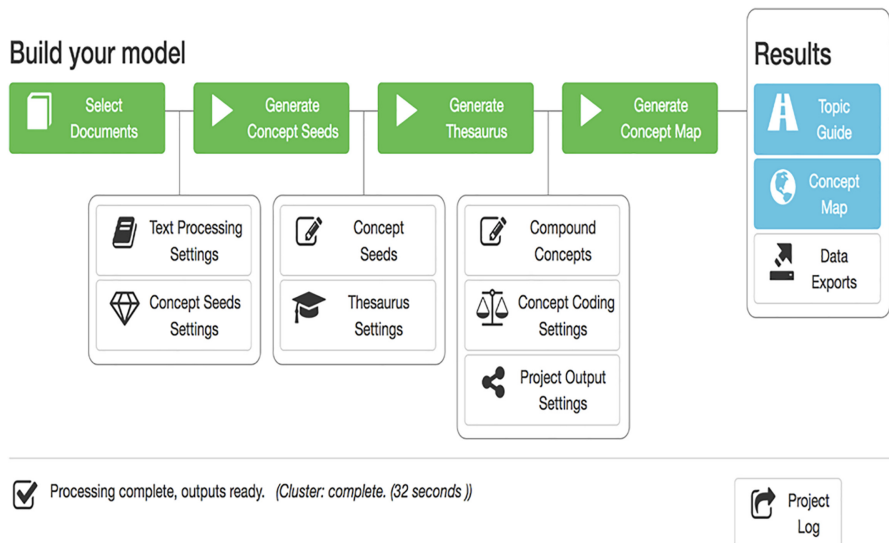


Figure 1.
Leximancer software

graphic representation of the results (Saydam *et al.*, 2022a, b, c). In addition, Figure 2 illustrates the research’s visual portrayal in greater detail. Circumferentially displayed themes are linked with associated concepts. The concepts on a Leximancer concept map are “heat mapped,” which means that hot colors (red and orange) represent the most significant concepts, whereas cool colors (blue and green) represent the less significant concepts (Arasli *et al.*, 2021). In addition, as shown in Table 2, the connectivity percentage in this sense is the entirety of all text co-occurrence counts of the concept with all other concepts on the map.

In general, achieving a high degree of reliability in human-coded content analysis is difficult, especially when handling huge data sets, as the researcher’s likelihood of committing errors rises (Arasli *et al.*, 2021). Leximancer’s reliability is quite high because it prevents bias and helps researchers to interpret a text. The analysis is performed automatically, and the results are visualized as idea maps that resemble clusters of bubbles (Arici *et al.*, 2022; Dambo *et al.*, 2021).

Results

Overall analysis

User experience at capsule hotels is cumulated in these nine themes, “staff,” “hotel,” “area,” “location,” “bed,” “capsule,” “check-in,” “noisy,” and “luggage”.

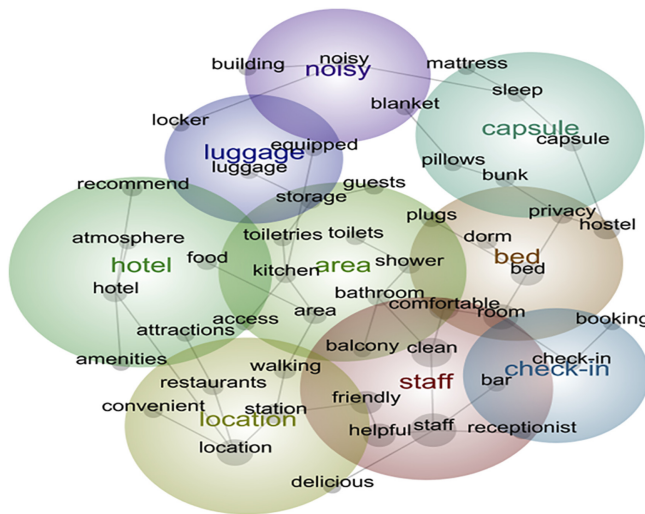


Figure 2. Conceptual map

Satisfiers	Percentages %	Dissatisfiers	Percentage %
Staff	82	Noise	65
Clean	71	Wi-fi	43
Helpful	68	Shower	42
Friendly	69	Bathroom	39
Bed	52	Guest	28
Room	50	Food	27
Comfortable	45	Toilets	25
Lockers	43	Security	20
Mattress	41	Location	16

Table 2. Co-occurrence frequency for customer satisfier and dissatisfier

RQ1. What are the key concepts that influence CE in capsule hotels?

Staff theme

The staff theme was identified as the biggest theme, characterized by concepts such as “Staff” (Word count = 610; word relevance percentage = 100%), “Clean” (471; 77%), “Helpful” (248; 41%) and “friendly” (232; 38%). Posts reflecting this theme include the following;

It is a modern place with friendly, helpful staff.

Bed theme

The level of word incidence about theme Bed in the context of capsule hotels includes; “Bed” (296; 49%), “Comfortable” (221; 36%), “Room” (374; 61%), “Hostel” (225; 37%), “Plug” (27; 2%), “Privacy” (76; 12%), “Locker” (53; 9%) and “dorm” (46; 6%). Examples that typify the narrative under theme include;

very comfortable beds with own light and plug, good breakfast Buffet, nice rooftop, very central situated.

Location theme

The statistical count of the concept under the theme location in relation to capsule hotel is; “Location” (437; 72%), “Station” (193; 32%), “Walking” (76; 12%), “Restaurants” (61; 10%), “convenient” (32; 5%). and “delicious” (11; 2%). This theme is characterized by a comment such as;

Location! The location was so perfect, walking distance to shops, restaurants, the famous Dotonbori, Shinsaibashi, and Namba station.

Area theme

Theme Area accommodates concepts such as; “Area” (110; 18%), “Bathroom” (91; 15%), “Shower” (79; 13%), “Kitchen” (62; 10%), “toilets” (48; 8%), “guests” (48; 8%), “Storage” (35; 6%), “access” (22; 4%) and “toiletries” (13; 2%). A representative example of feedback used in this theme includes;

In a shared area there’s hot/cold water, tea, microwave for free. Of course, there is a shared bathroom and toilets but they are extremely clean, good shower with hot water, hairdryers.

Hotel theme

The frequency count of concepts under the theme hotel are; “Hotel” (155; 25%), “recommend” (81; 13%), “food” (56; 9%), “amenities” (54; 9%) and “attraction” (49; 8%)

Examples typifying this theme include

WIFI was a disaster. Hotel is aware but is not committed to improving.

Capsule theme

The concept’s frequency count under the theme capsule is “Capsule” (83; 14%), “Sleep” (55; 9%), “Bunk” (30; 5%), “Pillows” (9; 1%), and “mattress” (13; 2%).

Examples of reviews that represent the theme include

The beds were bigger than average hostel beds and isolated with thick curtains so it felt like having your mini capsule room. A great bonus was also that you didn't feel your bed shaking if the person sleeping above or below you were moving in the night because each bed was its unit.

Check-in theme

The Check-In theme consists of four ideas; "Check-In" (47; 8%), "Receptionist" (15; 2%), "Bar" (12; 2%) and "Booking" (13; 2%). The following are some examples of reviews that reflect this theme:

Slow staff. Check-in time was about 20 minutes and 20 minutes of waiting for show me the room, there was nobody else to check in.

Luggage theme

The luggage theme comprises concepts such as; "luggage" (31; 5%), "equipped" (13; 2%) and "locker" (53; 9%). Below are some examples of reviews on this topic:

Do not let coins on the table. It will disappear without a trace. The only safe place is the locker.

Noisy theme

The Noisy theme comprises 2 concepts which are; building and noisy; "Noisy" (35; 6%) and "Building" (30; 3%). Example of feedback on the theme;

It was so noisy!!! Noise from music clubs, noise from other people, noise from cleaning staff, noisy! They give free earplugs, so I guess they know.

RQ2. What are the key triggers for positive and negative experiences in popular capsule hotels?

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction indicator

The result within the research context also reveals that servicescape is highly influenced by social and human factors. This also aligns with the criticism forwarded by [Bolton et al. \(2018\)](#) in those human activities such as "Staff" influences concepts such as comfortability, cleanliness, check-in/check-out experience and room service experience which are all key components of the service scape. This result aligns with the findings of [Arasli et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Sulu et al. \(2021\)](#). In line with our findings, [Arasli et al. \(2020\)](#) discovered that the theme of employees was one of the most major themes that popped up in the reviews of travelers and that employees were the most pervasive determinant of satisfaction. According to [Srivastava and Rai \(2013\)](#), employees are often considered significant precedence of customer experiences in tourism and hospitality, and retail, and have shown to be critical in capsule hotels. Although Capsule hotel is mainly for lodgers who need an inexpensive room without additional amenities and extravagante service, the Staff's customer-oriented spinning behavior such as helpfulness, friendliness elevates the experience of guests validating [Le et al. \(2019\)](#) claims that consumers are emotional beings and as a result of consumption, seek a pleasurable experience. Consequently, businesses should become experience-oriented organizations. Relatively, [Bustamante and Rubio \(2017\)](#) stated that customer interaction with employees runs on a continuum that fosters customer engagement and results in better customer experiences.

Customer engagement highly influences CS because when customers are engaged, they create value for the organization by, for example, giving referrals ([Prentice et al., 2020](#)). [Harrigan et al. \(2017\)](#) addressed different customer engagement antecedents, which include

organizational and environmental features, as well as the implications of customer engagement. Customer engagement is an essential way to increase the co-created experience value in the context of CEM since the production process with increased engagement will result in positive CEs. This was reflected in the comment shared, in that reviewers made mention of staff names and how they have fostered positive experiences in the process of engagement. In the service and retail industries, ambiance-related research is predominant, as such, contributions have emphasized how customers’ experiences are influenced by physical surroundings (Bäckström and Johansson, 2017). A lot of tourism and hospitality research has emphasized the importance of physical surroundings to CEs (Godovykh and Tasci, 2020).

This study revealed how architecture (reflected in the concept building) influences the experience of the guest in capsule hotels which was revealed in the theme Noisy, which affects the sleeping experience. The size of the locker also influenced the perceived service quality of the capsule hotel. Service quality, according to marketing literature is considered a key determining factor of customer experience, behavioral intentions, and customer satisfaction (Srivastava and Rai, 2013). Another study conducted by Chen et al. (2020a) affirmed that a key antecedent of customer experiences, customer behavioral intentions and customer satisfaction is service quality. Effectively ensuring high quality in the service scape (putting the social, physical and human factors into consideration) will yield better CE.

RQ3. How can practitioners effectively manage the CE in capsule hotels?

Customer experience management framework (during service encounter)

The research reveals key components that serve as emotional triggers to which management should pay critical attention during service encounters. As shown in Figure 3, further categorization was carried out in light of existing literature and result hence, 5 categorizations were done which are: Ambience, Location, Co-creation, the physical environment and guest behavior (see Figure 4).

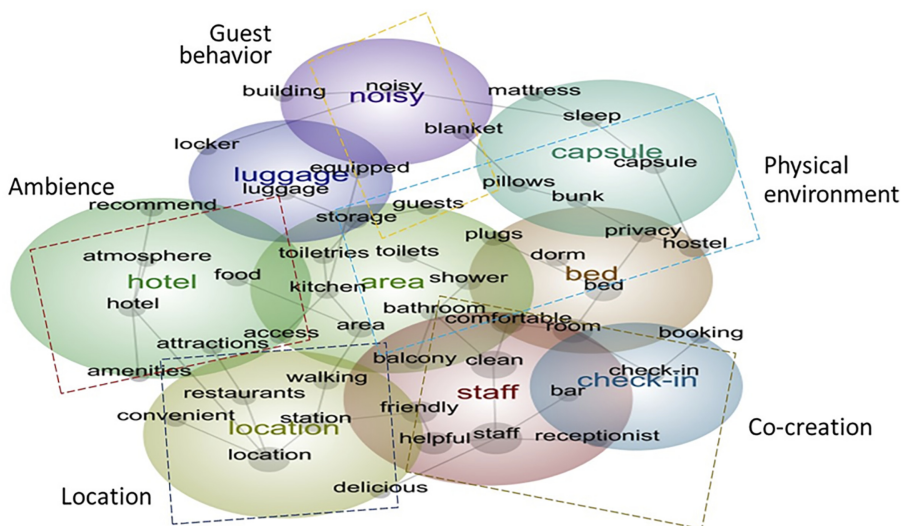


Figure 3. Conceptual map with categorization

One exceptional research conducted by [Adhikari and Bhattacharya \(2016\)](#) found that physical environment attractiveness, the atmosphere, the quality of the product, and the design characteristics are among the most important attributes. These attributes are also corroborated in the result derived from this research such as facilities (bed, plugs, toilets, bunk) and architecture (building and hotel) typify the physical environment. Co-creation has also been found to be critical in extant service-oriented literature in the service industry ([Cerdan Chiscano and Darcy, 2021](#)). This has been seen to be evidenced in the result obtained from the analysis that co-creation has been established to be an essential emotional trigger in the customer co-creation experience. Staff behaviors, such as empathy and dependability, has also been emphasized as having a substantial influence on a favorable experience ([Bastiaansen et al., 2019](#)). Concepts such as “Helpful”, “friendly” and “Booking” process, had a strong influence on customer experience. The choice of business location is among the most essential decisions an operator must make ([Yang et al., 2015](#)). The location of different amenities plays an important role in the guest experience. Hotel location has been seen as an important phenomenon in the hospitality industry but is not acknowledged as a major precursor to a positive experience. This might be due to the different contexts of research. [Lin and Liang \(2011\)](#) indicated that the area’s atmosphere has a great impact on the customers’ experience. Concepts such as “clean”, “attractive” and “convenient” were the most prominent concepts that qualify ambiance. Guest behavior was another dimension identified, taking into account customer share space, other guest behavior was discovered to be critical in CE in capsule hotels. This dimension evaluates the causal association between the interaction impact between guests and the lodging experience. According to [Mossberg \(2007\)](#), interactions with service other guests alter the guest’s experience. This encounter might be vocal or nonverbal, physical or non-physical. This dimension can assist management in implementing policies that can help define guest behavior. The comments in this dimension contained concepts such as “noise” and deviant behavior such as theft. Positive social connections between guests will influence the overall experience guest experience in capsule

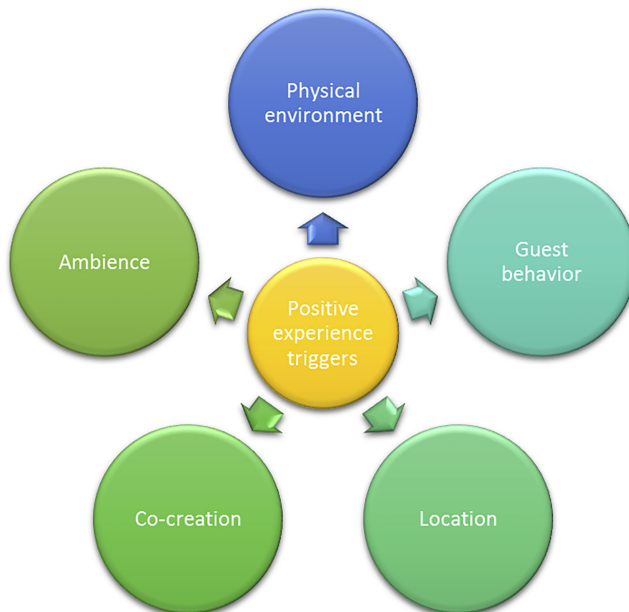


Figure 4. Customer experience management framework (triggers for positive experience)

hotels. Based on extant literature and the above findings this research proposed a CEM framework for capsule hotels during the service encounter. Consequently, management and evaluation of customers' experiences can be properly managed in capsule hotels.

Discussion and conclusions

Investigating CEM in the capsule hotel segment is significant both managerially and theoretically because customers are greatly involved in the services (Kandampully *et al.*, 2018). Several scholars have devoted their attention to unraveling the concept of CEM in the service industries, so as to better advance knowledge of the construct (Nysveen *et al.*, 2013; Zolkiewski *et al.*, 2017) and in the lodging industry (Kandampully *et al.*, 2018; Yoon and Lee, 2017). This research advances knowledge by inspecting CEM in the context of capsule hotel which has been previously lacking in the extant hospitality literature. This study inspected 1,304 online user-generated content from the top ten capsule hotels on [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) based on the customer choice popularity index. The outcome of the analysis showed nine themes, "staff," "hotel," "area," "location," "bed," "capsule," "check-in," "noisy" and "luggage".

Some of the aforesaid themes have already been mentioned in previous research, such as "staff," "hotel," "area," "location," (Arasli *et al.*, 2021), "check-in," and "luggage" (Sulu *et al.*, 2021), "bed" (Li *et al.*, 2013) and "noisy" (Levy *et al.*, 2013). The theme of staff is mainly used in positive tones in the reviews shared by tourists accommodating in capsule hotels. This conclusion is in line with the findings of Sulu *et al.* (2021) and Saydam *et al.* (2022a, b, c). Brochado *et al.* (2019) also ascertained that the theme of employees was one of the most predominant themes that came up in traveler comments and that employees were the most predominant way to drive satisfaction throughout all traveler clusters, which is in line with our results. Although the concept of "staff" is consistent through all price ranges of hotels, visitors of capsule hotels require less social interaction with staff.

Another important theme that appeared in our study was "hotel". The theme "hotel" is a dimension that has the highest connectivity rate after the theme of "staff". The hotel theme has been frequently used with a concept such as recommendations, food and atmosphere. These findings are supported by a study conducted by Arasli *et al.* (2021), who reported that the theme of "hotel" was closely associated with concepts such as food and recommendation. Other themes found in our study, such as "location" and "area" were found to be essential forecasters of service quality. These findings also corroborated with Alnawas and Hemsley-Brown's (2019) research. Another striking theme that has been found in our current study was "check-in". During peak hours, long lineups to check-in are frequent in hotels since the demand for services outnumbers the supply. The long check-in lines would create a bad impression of the hotel's service quality and lower visitor satisfaction (Cheong *et al.*, 2017). The theme of "check-in" also has been found as an important concept in the study done by Cheng and Jin (2019). Despite the similarities found in comparison to other price range hotels, this study reveals the behavior of other guests (noise, deviant behavior and so on) as a key influencing factor to customer experience, as well as room cleanliness, room facilities, location and comfort, whereas customers in other hotels, such as luxurious hotels, seek social interaction are feeling relaxed, sense perception, pleasure, freedom, safety, ego-enhancement and social interaction in-service experience.

Theoretical implications

From a theoretical perspective, our research contributes to current knowledge in the following ways. Broadly speaking, only a limited number of research studies have been conducted with respect to capsule hotels and none has investigated CEM in capsule hotels. To begin with, this study adds to the CEM literature in the service business, specifically in the budget hotel field, by conceptualizing CEM for capsule hotels. This study drew from

customer reviews and concepts from existing theoretical frameworks to expand the body of knowledge by proposing a CEM for capsule hotels which was previously missing in the literature. This research also provides insight into the subject for more researchers to draw on in other ways to develop CEM.

Secondly, since that most research work on CEM has been conceptual, this study adopted a different methodological approach via analysis of user-generated content using Leximancer. Leximancer's tools made it possible to explore trends with minimal interference by academics in the guests' inclusive interactions. Among these themes, it has been shown to be more substantial in comparison with other themes. In addition, the current investigation adds to the literature by describing the key narrative trends associated with "higher" and "lower" evaluations of the satisfaction level of capsule hotels.

Third, our research examines the variety of theoretical approaches to CEM in the hotel context and shows the value of technology and customer reviews in managing total CEs, which will help to broaden the awareness of CEM in the hospitality sector. While some studies have evaluated CEM in the hospitality industry, most have been done in restaurant and luxury hotels (Jin *et al.*, 2013) with little covering capsule low-budget hotels such as capsule hotels. Essentially, by offering a thorough analysis of the online reviews of guest users of capsule hotels, this research will broaden existing perspectives for handling CE in the hospitality industry.

Practical implications

The results present several beneficial implications for business practice. First, understanding online feedback as a manifestation of guest interactions will allow capsule hotels to identify key features that are important for achieving positive post-purchase trends and reducing negative actions. As a result, hotel guest reviews provide not only a cost-effective technique for capsule hotels to collect input from their guests, but also an opportunity to discover strategies for making positive post-purchase plans.

Second, another important implication is for employees, since it was a recurring theme in our present research. Hence, staff members should welcome guests proactively and give help as necessary. If the hotel is not filled, guests should be permitted to inhabit capsules that are physically isolated from one another to avoid disruptions caused by neighboring capsules.

Third, internet-related services are the most desired by guests, and it is found to be a dominant theme in online guest reviews. As a result, computers, Wi-Fi connections and sockets are required in the communal spaces. At the same time, personal spaces should have an Internet connection and charging stations (Chiang, 2018).

Fourth, the "accommodation function" is more important to capsule hotel visitors than the services provided. As a result, capsule hotel managers or planners should thoroughly think about the location across the development stage. Given the importance of the other criteria (price and service quality), capsule hotel visitors must strike a balance between appropriate service delivery and cost when making their decisions.

Fifth, with today's fast-paced lifestyle, capsule hotel managers can compete favorably in the market. Because of the low prices and hassle-free services, capsule hotels are becoming popular among young travelers who want to travel the world; therefore, managers can capitalize on this opportunity by strategically positioning capsule hotels near locations that are appealing to young travelers. Managers can positively boost their post-purchase performance by managing the customer experience. Existing service quality literature has revealed that positive service experience can lead to positive future behavior (such as positive word of mouth, repurchase intention and so on). Furthermore, understanding CEM, as well as tangible, non-tangible and cognitive aspects of service, will play a significant role in further increasing customer experience. Moreover, capsule hotels can use the knowledge of physical and social servicescapes gain from CE study as market segmentation tools in their marketing

strategies. As a result of these findings, managers can implement strategies such as designing an environment to elicit positive emotions, improving facilities to enhance positive experiences (such as the adoption of a soundproof capsule bed pod) and many other strategies. The findings also reveal the concept of staff being “helpful” and “friendly” as a positive experience trigger, implying that management can implement an internal-marketing strategy to assist staff in fostering customer-oriented boundary-spanning behavior (Olorunsola *et al.*, 2022a, b) consequently enhancing guest’s experience.

Lastly, the capsule rooms are adjacent to one another and sound transmission is possible due to their design. In this circumstance, the management of the capsule hotel can provide free earplugs to incoming customers to assure their satisfaction.

Limitations and avenues for future research

This study has a few limitations which should be considered. This research considered 1,304 online-generated reviews. Although the sample size is justified based on the available review, the sample for this research has been gathered from one social media site. Further research should include user-generated content from social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other social media platforms. Second, we could not collect the reviewers’ demographic information such as gender or age due to the high percentage of missing data. Hence, further research can test whether the main themes of travelers’ overall experiences vary according to traveler profiles (e.g. gender, nationality). This could also provide marketing insight into capsule hotel segmentation. Last but not least, the pandemic greatly disrupted the lodging industry (Jafari *et al.*, 2021; Karatepe *et al.*, 2021, 2022). Comparing online ratings and textual views of capsule hotel guests before and after the COVID-19 pandemic will provide hotel management with crucial information regarding which aspects of tourist satisfaction have been affected the most by COVID-19.

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