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**A Qualitative Study on E-Reviews of Mid-Segment Hotels**

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the e-reviews for the mid-segment hotels of Mussoorie and to explore the major themes addressed by the consumers in the e-reviews. The qualitative data in the form of user-generated e-reviews was acknowledged through TripAdvisor.com. The data was collected for the past six months, i.e., from December 2021 to June 2022. A total of 993 reviews have been analyzed using the content analysis technique and RQDA (R Qualitative Data Analysis) package of R software to explore positive and negative e-reviews and evolve the top discussed themes of the e-reviews. The results revealed the categorization of e-reviews into positive and negative categories and highlighted the major aspects of these e-reviews to be addressed. Frequencies of the top-used words in both positive and negative e-reviews have been evaluated. Top themes discussed in the e-reviews have also been identified to provide significant insights into the hotel industry. The study encapsulates e-reviews given by those tourists who particularly stayed in mid-segment hotels. The data was collected from one travel portal site Trip Advisor.com for a relatively short period. Further studies should include more data by incorporating the other hotel categories. The study reveals some significant insights for mid-segment hotel management at the hill station of Mussoorie to attract and improve the tourist inflow.

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**Keywords:** E-Reviews, Qualitative Analysis, Trip Advisor, Mid-Segment Hotel, Mussoorie, R Software

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## **Introduction**

The tourism sector is an evergreen sector that contributes significantly to generating employment and adds to the growth of economies globally. Travel to popular destinations has off-late become popular with people from all generations. It has been observed that searching for information related to travel is one of the most popular online activities (Forrester, 2006a). Internet mediates varied tourism-related experiences as tourists use social media sites to portray, reconstruct and relive their trips (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). An interesting study (Xiang et al., 2008) identified the importance of Understanding the structure and representation of the online tourism domain to implement successful marketing campaigns.

Pan et al., in 2007, identified in their study that user-generated reviews expressed online are an important source of information for travelers. Experience speaks louder than words, and undoubtedly a view suggested by a customer post experience is bound to make a bigger impact on other potential customers. Gretzel and Yoo, in 2008, identified that travel reviews are broadly perceived to most likely provide information that is up-to-date, enjoyable, and reliable compared to any content that travel service suppliers post.

Studies have found that third-party review sites such as Trip Advisor allow travelers to share their comments on products and destinations they have experienced, and consumer-generated online reviews now regularly inform and influence individual travel purchase decisions (Lu & Stepchenka, 2012). Consumers often consider reviews from other consumers to be relatively more trustworthy and credible than the information provided and shared by suppliers of products and services (Park, Lee & Han, 2007).

According to (Trip Advisor, 2013), most (93%) of travelers indicate that other people's evaluations on travel review websites influence their travel plans. E-reviews can be defined as reviews shared on a given online platform. E-review is often synonymously used with e-WOM. Word of Mouth is undoubtedly a powerful marketing tool for a given business. An electronic review where a consumer shares a positive experience is a positive e-review, and an e-review by a customer that expresses a negative experience can be defined as a negative e-review.

Online customer reviews are a form of eWOM and have become the most important information source in customers' decision-making and are seen to be successfully influencing consumer behaviour compared to any other form like traditional marketing, the information

provided by product providers, or promotional messages of third-party websites (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008).

A study (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009) based on hotels found that negative e-reviews generate negative attitudes. The study further revealed that there might not be much bias created when looking at isolated cases but such reviews if repeated, can be highly damaging. Failure to deliver good value was a major cause of negative eWOM (Pantelidis, 2010).

Studies also revealed that people pay more attention to criticisms or negative reviews than to positive ones (Lee, Park, and Han, 2008). This effect has been confirmed by reports from the tourism sector (Papathanassis and Knolle, 2011). Negative e-WOM has received substantial attention, given its harmful impact on businesses (Cheng, Lam, and Hsu 2006). Numerous studies have confirmed that most consumers do not complain to the person providing the service or product but instead switch suppliers and share negative WOM (Susskind 2002). Negative WOM is often motivated by a desire to penalize or punish organizations that have not been able to deliver a memorable experience to consumers through incompetent, inefficient, or irresponsible attitudes, behaviors, tactics, strategies, or products (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Positive e-WOM generates positive attitudes in customers and increases the possibility of purchase, whereas negative e-WOM has the opposite effect (Hong, 2006; Karakaya and Barnes, 2010). These effects are noted in the accommodation businesses (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). A positive e-review reflects the level of satisfaction of a consumer post experiencing the service.

In this era of digitalization, the hotel industry is focusing on vivid electronic communication through e-reviews to increase the inflow of consumers in their hotels and to create a sustainable brand image of the hotels. Different booking websites like Trip Advisor, Trivago, booking.com, Make My Trip, Goibbo, and many more are considered by customers for checking the e-reviews about the hotels before their final booking decision. Over the period Trip Advisor website proved its popularity among global travelers. It is the world's largest travel and restaurant Website Company founded in early 2000 and is headquartered in the U.S. (Law, 2006). The website showcases hotel and restaurant reviews and travel-related content and takes bookings. It is likely to be the most popular travel portal website used by most travelers for bookings, browsing reviews, uploading their experience in the form of positive and negative feedback, and giving suggestions, giving star ratings.

Websites like Trip Advisor and the implementation of internet technology worldwide enhance the growth of the hotel industry worldwide. India is also not untouched by the proliferation of technological gradation in the hotel and tourism industry. Different states and cities in India are now adopting e-WOM practices to develop a better communication platform between a hotel and their customers. This is the foremost responsibility of hotels to cater the best services to their customers to facilitate them to give positive feedback about the hotels on the online platform. This study aims to evaluate the e-reviews provided by the customers for the different hotels that may contribute to urging the booking decision of customers and increasing the brand image of the hotels.

### **Literature Review**

Word-of-mouth plays a pivotal role in the exchange of information among consumers, experienced through the consumption of products and services (Grewal, cline, and Davies 2003; Richins, 1983) wherein its interpersonal communication element has always been initiated in the form of verbal communication and/or face to face interaction between the information giver and information seeker where the information giver shares a non-commercial message to others (Arndt 1967). The reviews embark on a key element, and its reciprocation symbolizes a deep influence on the customers' purchase intentions (Trusov et al., 2009). WOM is a simple yet vibrant form of interpersonal communication and tends to be more trustworthy than marketer-provided information. The transformation in information technology upgraded word-of-mouth communication to an electronic one. Kim et al. in 2019 explained that the rapid increase in the usage of digital communication technologies leads to more online engagement in the hospitality industry.

The advancement of new technologies has allowed consumers to share product-related information through the internet, thereby increasing the potential impact of WOM in the form of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). Now the transmission of information enables customers to share their opinions on, and experiences with, goods and services with a multitude of other consumers, i.e., to engage in electronic-word of-mouth (e-WOM) communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The study done by Dellarocas' (2003) stated that the e-WOM via e-reviews and the consumer's interaction on the website portals revealed the imperative implications for brand building, customer relationship, and product development for hotels. Online platforms allow

people to share their views with other users through pictures, videos, or texts. Xu, in 2018 advocated the relevance of online customer textual reviews on the hotel's product and service attributes. There are various types of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) that are used for giving reviews, such as social networks (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), company websites, product review sites (epinions.com), forums, and blogs (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Cheung and Thadani, 2012). The usage of social networks to support interactions among neighbours in society facilitates the exchange of information, discussion, and joint activity for local events; subjects matter, and concerns (Carroll and Rosson, 2003; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Smith et al. (2007) argued that social networks had become a fundamental technique for marketers to build and uphold strong brand associations with highly involved consumers. Dellarocas (2003, p. 1407) identified that for the first time in history, “individuals can create their individual opinions and responses which are easily accessible to the global community.”

Sun et al. (2006) also pointed out that those site contributors demonstrate fewer inhibitions, less social apprehension, exhibit less public self-awareness, and thus tend to be more honest and forthcoming with their viewpoints. The three factors influencing customers' online behavior the most include, purchase intention, and sales are valence, volume, and the e-WOM content (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Anaza & Rutherford, 2014; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Like other industries, the hotel industry is also attempting to optimally utilize the e-WOM to generate a better customer base and revenue. Over time, the internet has become a personalized information platform for hotel bookings done by consumers per their specific requirements (Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006). Shea and Roberts (1998) described user-generated reviews as a boon for hospitality providers as it helps overcome and improve product and service quality and empowers customers to make self-decision (Pantelidis, 2010). With the plethora of media forms and websites, user-generated reviews (UGR) and e-reviews tailored to particular niche markets within the media landscape attract more than 69 million users and generate more than \$450 million in advertising revenue (Verna, 2007; Gretzel, 2006). Many people use online travel referrals for their travel planning as they believe e-reviews provide the latest, most enjoyable, and most reliable information.

A study identified that searching for travel information is currently the most popular online activity and reliable source among one-fifth of the respondent (travelers and tourist), which are nearly double its nearest company-owned websites (travel agency) (Rainie and Horrigan, 2009;

Harwood, 2007). Ellis – Green, in 2007, revealed that within travel, the Web 2.0 theme received maximum attention due to user-generated e-reviews. It has been observed that frequent travelers, while making hotel booking decisions, more often consider reviews than other information sources (Bonn et al., 1999; Gretzel et al., 2008). The guests' comments on the online platform (both quantitative and qualitative feedback) play a vital role in sharing the hotel experiences (L. Murphy et al., 2007; Pullman et al., 2005). The hotel management further analyzes these reviews to seek improvement areas, efficiently utilizing resources in service operations, optimizing revenue and maximising profits, and increasing brand loyalty and image (Kreck, 1998; Ford and Bach, 1997). Various factors influence the customers to post reviews on the company's website about their comfortable stay, sometimes in the form of complaints. Weather factors like temperature, rain, and biometric pressure often drive the consumers' complaint behaviour (Bujisic et al., 2019). Xue and Phelps (2004) suggested that reviews posted on third-party websites are more authentic than sharing one experience with an online travel agency. Moreover, thus it gives the scope to the websites like — Trip Advisor while making hotel booking decisions.

The online review website 'TripAdvisor' gives different ratings to the hotel on different parameters as per the feedback given by the users is gaining immense popularity (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Travelers visiting various destinations for leisure, business, and other purposes are likely to go for suggestions from such websites before hotel booking. The study by Gretzel and Yoo (2008) revealed that 97.7 percent of TripAdvisor users were influenced by other's reviews, out of which 77.9 percent used other reviews for choosing their accommodation (Briggs et al., 2007; Miguéns et al., 2008; O'Connor, 2008). In another study, Chipkin (2012) observed that nearly half of the travellers whether travelling alone or with a group, irrespective of their purpose of visit, always scroll through customer ratings on hotel review websites before confirming their accommodation.

Online users are often more enthusiastic about writing a review on Trip Advisor when they perceive a higher transaction risk (Jurca et al., 2010). Liu et al. in 2015 discovered that reviewers with higher status tend to give lesser reviews and ratings. The authenticity of user-generated reviews on the website has always been under the scanner. Previous studies have also questioned the authenticity of user-generated reviews on a website (Keates, 2007; Milan, 2007). The study posits the company's effort towards verifying reviewer authenticity for those who stayed in the hotel, although the management claims that all reviews are verified by trained professionals



(Reiter, 2007). Moreover, it enables the customers to rely on the e-reviews available on the website.

E-WOM through web 2.0 has a robust impact on a brand image which in turn affects the purchase intention of consumers (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). Marketers have utilized various techniques to uphold the brand loyalty of their customers, including brand elements, classical marketing mix variables, and new marketing approaches, including internet marketing and social media marketing (Keller et al., 2011; Kotler and Keller, 2007). Previous studies revealed that social media marketing helps businesses establish better communication channels with consumers to build brand loyalty beyond traditional methods and hence helps build the brand image (Jackson, 2011). Charo et al. (2015) demonstrated in their study that electronic word of mouth significantly impacts purchase intention and brand image. Rouliez et al. in 2019 demonstrated that the reviewer's intensity level of writing negative reviews is influenced by their online review exposure.

The existing literature vividly emphasizes the importance of e-reviews for customers and hotels as the communication on the internet shows the influence of customers' booking decisions as well as the brand image of the hotel. Yet the previous studies spare the scope of analyzing the exact influence of the e-reviews, both positive and negative, on the customer's booking decision and the brand image of the hotels.

### ***Objectives***

- To explore the major themes discussed in the e-reviews for the mid-segment hotels.
- To evaluate the positive and negative e-reviews influencing the consumers' booking decisions and brand image of the mid-segment hotels.

### **Methodology**

From the extensive literature review, it has been evident that e-reviews significantly affect the booking decisions of the visitors and the brand image of the hotels by influencing the consumers' perception of the hotels. This study focuses on the qualitative analysis of different forms of e-reviews given by consumers for their stay in hotels at one of Uttarakhand's most popular hill stations, i.e., Mussoorie. Mussoorie is known as the "queen of the hills." Over the decades, it has been considered one of the key tourist destinations. Among all the hill stations of Uttarakhand,



Mussoorie has been found as the most visited hill station. The hotel industry in Mussoorie has flourished remarkably and can contribute effectively to the Uttarakhand economy by generating a great amount of revenue. As the Uttarakhand Government emphasizes sustainable and profitable developments in the state's economy, the hotel industry must cater to consistent services and coherently communicate with its customers (existing and new prospects).

In this era of digitalization and social media, consumers are often found to take suggestions and feedback from online sources like Google reviews, Trip Advisor, Trivago, and other websites. Trip Advisor is one of the most frequently used websites for hotel bookings, and hence qualitative data in the form of e-reviews has been gathered from this website for the last six months, i.e., from December 2021 to June 2022, for the mid-segment hotels. Mid-segment hotels are found to have repetitive visits in Mussoorie, and it is one of the prominent segments of the hotel industry, which is discussed often on the internet. Also, mid-segment hotels are more prone to electronic word-of-mouth to create awareness among consumers. This study gathered 993 relevant e-reviews about the mid-segment hotels at Mussoorie from the Trip advisor website. This qualitative data of e-reviews has been reviewed by using content analysis. Content analysis is the method to analyze the qualitative data by using the following steps i.e., coding of the variables, categorizing homogeneous variables together, and identifying the themes.

At the outset applying the content analysis for e-reviews qualitative content has been evaluated by emphasizing grounded theory. Coding, categorization of the variables, and identification of the themes have been made manually to provide some worthwhile insights. The human interface has been taken into consideration for the content analysis so that more humanistic interpretations could be made. A qualitative analysis software application has been used to evaluate the frequencies of the words used in the e-reviews RQDA package of R software. The analysis done by R Software helped in soliciting accurate frequency dissemination of the words used in the e-reviews and categorizing them into two categories, i.e., positive and negative e-reviews.

### **Analysis and Findings**

This study's content analysis resulted in 8 themes, emerging from the analysis of the 993 e-reviews, further segregated as positive and negative e-reviews (shown in Table 1). The content analysis revealed that customers discussed the food, room, hotel property, location, hotel connectivity,

staff, service, and facility in the e-reviews gathered from the Trip Advisor website. All these identified themes have been elaborated by discussing both positive and negative e-reviews (mentioned in Table 1).

**Table 1:** Positive and negative e-reviews for the hotels categorized as per the top themes evolved from the content analysis

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Positive e-reviews</b>	<b>Negative e-reviews</b>
Food	<i>Sumptuous food; Palatable food; Food will touch your heart because of wonderful taste; Food has a variety of option and taste good; We had Garhwali thali, and it was awesome; Food was very healthy and tasty; Food menu and quality is fabulous; No complaints with food facilities too; The experience of food is one of the best of my life; The food is nice and freshly cooked most of the time; Best food from different states; The buffet spread and Ala carte menu were excellent; Food is at par with the local market cafes rates, and quantity is good considering the price; Resort offers best of the cuisine, and on our request, they customised our food as per our small kids; food is good like homemade</i>	<i>Quality is Just OK, Taste is not so good. Options Very limited; But only thing that trouble us is food; No special food same morning breakfast repeated; During breakfast buffet some food items were chargeable; The food was average; Food was very bad; Don't have buffet for dinner; buffet variety is very very limited</i>
Room	<i>Good rooms with all comforts...we felt like home; The rooms are beautiful with a tasteful touch of luxury to it; Room was very good furnished, spacious; Room was beautiful with valley facing; Room was nice with balcony; Best place to stay for couples; Rooms were very spacious and comfortable; The rooms have a breathtaking view; Rooms are cozy and</i>	<i>Rooms are at different levels. Elderly persons may face problem and may have to change room to the main unit reachable by elevator; Our room was nearby the lift, so no privacy at all; Noise all the time and also the room gates were</i>

	<p><i>had good view; The rooms are clean with all possible amenities; Amazing and serene view from the rooms; Well decoration in the room; Washrooms are like new, always you go for this hotel. I would highly recommend if are cleanliness hygiene freak</i></p>	<p><i>jam; Toilets were cramped up in the studio rooms; Washroom size is small; The walls of premium room were having marks and seepage; Rooms are absolutely NOT sound proof. the voice passes through between rooms; Rooms stink a lot; the room provided by them was not up to the standards; We had booked a family room, which wasn't available so we were put in two separate double rooms which was inconvenient; the bathroom is very small with no proper drainage, Smelly rooms/lift; Towel was very smelly; Washroom lock was broken</i></p>
Hotel Property	<p><i>It has a very nice terrace and the lobby area is very open and has a positive vibe; This property is very beautiful and especially for nature lovers; Restaurant is multi-cuisine; Huge resort with lots of blocks.</i></p>	<p><i>Old stinking property</i></p>
Location	<p><i>Perfect location; Clean Surroundings; The scenic beauty of doon valley n the comfort of the stay made our trip a great one; Pollution free environment; Best option if your are looking for an escape from daily city routine; Weather is too windy; From the reception</i></p>	<p><i>They say that Himalayan View room is having best view, but actually it's not like that; Not nice location; Location is extremely remote; Doesn't give Valley view rooms in online</i></p>

	<p><i>balcony you can see entire dehradun with lighting its extreme beautiful; The environment is so peaceful and healthy; resort for people who want to unwind and relax; Selfie spot is cherry on top; Very good tracks are nearby; Absolutely pleasant stay amidst wonderful surrounding; It was a most relaxing and an amazing place to have a lavish holiday where you don't need to step out; Place is nicely located away from the hustle bustle of the town; It is a heaven; Where else to a working person need than this solace and peace at this picturesque place</i></p>	<p><i>bookings; Location not good, away from mall road</i></p>
Hotel connectivity		<p><i>Taxi service charges by hotel is 300 rupees for one way trip; Resort is far from city centre, so every day extra expenses for going to mall road; Road is little narrow; No free shuttle service to mall road, obviously coz of distance; The resort is not well marked on the way; Approach road not good; Road is narrow and damaged; The resort is good but the route is very narrow and the resort is 2;5 km from the library chowk</i></p>
Staff	<p><i>hotel staff were well mannered and good behaviour; even hotel owner was supervising the event all the time; The staff were very polite and obliged to any requests we made; Staff is</i></p>	<p><i>Housekeeping staff is the only saving grace in the hotel who try and match your requirements to the best of their</i></p>

	<p><i>very Courteous, helpful &amp; Always on time for your queries; Staff is friendly n they arrange games for you in evening; Front office team has a passion to handle the guest; Staff is very supportive and they guide you to whole process in a systematic and polite way; We were rendered speechless by the sheer dedication the hotel staff had to make us happy; The front desk staff all were professional and pleasant; Spa team is good; Well trained staff; Restaurant staff was great; warm welcome with smiling faces; Hospitality of the staff is the icing on the cake; Staff was good and loyal to his/her job; We were travelling with aged persons, so they provided us rooms on such floor, which has lift; My daughter was not well, they helped in every possible manner from arranging doctor, transport, medicines</i></p>	<p><i>abilities; Unprofessional managers and receptionist; Very unfortunate that they harass tourists like this; The hotel manager insisting for an immediate CASH payment for a service that is usually complimentary; The reception people made me talk to the owner who forced me to pay Rs 2000 as cancelation charges out of my pocket because I was leaving a day earlier; Most of the staff unprofessional; Staff is totally uncooperative; disgusting manager he dont have manners how to talk with the guest; the owner is a very rude person; Very worst experience, behaviour of staff was very bad ; Owner is sweet and kind-hearted but staff play the game"</i></p>
<p>Service</p>	<p><i>Ultimate service room dining services was also excellent; Starting from the check in process till the checkout everything looked perfectly planned; Fast track check-in; Superior service provider by IRD team; check in was also very comfortable; Room service was also good; The anniversary celebrations arrangement done by the resort was very</i></p>	<p><i>Room service is premium however every time you order room service, by the time your food will reach, your hunger would've died; Poor upkeep; very law quality services; No free shuttle service to mall road, obviously coz of distance</i></p>

	<i>good; The service is commendable; We have the finest hospitality and the world-class service; Room were serviced well in time; Service is the restaurant was very good; Warm welcome by front office team; Great service provided in the restaurant; Good recommendation by travel desk; excellent services if you travelling with kids</i>	
Facility	<i>Excellent spa experience provided by them; Well maintained, good service, excellent hygiene; Very kind and gentle masseuse; Spa is excellent; There is a lot to do inside hotel; Kids park, small kitchen were really helpful; Facilities are great; Good facilities; Activities are great in the evening; Stay was cozy; Well maintained and huge property; Plethora of adventurous activities; amenities are good; Enjoyed indoor activities; Good play zone; The resort is neat and clean; The resort has many activities; hotels having kids game area Specially liked the pahadi dance; Activity area and entire resort is well maintained.</i>	<i>Network issue; Atleast wi-fi should be free; zero network in the rooms; wi-fi is available at an exorbitant price; So a little unhappy with the wi-fi system as only 1hour is free even if you are staying for 3days; All activities at Hotel are paid so be ready to pay for all activities; Poor network facility; Wi-fi service is expensive; No internet connectivity.</i>

These positive and negative e-reviews about the themes can portray a wider picture to understand the consumer's perceived quality of the hotels which further affects the brand image of the hotels. For the foremost theme of the e-reviews, i.e., food, consumers explicitly expect the best quality and variety of food and local cuisines. They are also looking for affordable and economical prices for the same. Food quality is the key factor to sustaining a better customer base. If the food quality is not up to par, it will dissatisfy the consumers and impede the brand value of hotels. Moreover, chargeable food items and a limited variety of food the hotels offer may also upset the consumers. Making the food experience an exotic deal for the consumers is the major responsibility of the

hotels if they want to sustain a better inflow of consumers. The hotel's accommodation components, i.e., room, balcony, washroom, elevator, hotel location, terrace, view from the room, and other amenities and attributes associated with the stay, also make a big difference in creating a better brand image in the hotel. Consumers precisely shared their stay experiences in the hotel affected by these components. A spacious, cozy, and beautiful room takes the heart of the consumers; on the contrary, miserable aspects compel them to share negative e-reviews. Rooms must be accommodated to the customers' preferences and age groups to avoid inconvenience. A clean washroom, decorative room, amazing balcony, and beautiful view from the room act as the icing on the cake and make guests' stay delightful. Hoteliers can try to make the guest's stay pleasurable by focusing on the above-discussed key factors so that positive electronic word-of-mouth can be generated to build a good brand image for the hotel.

Consumers visiting a hill station in Uttarakhand like Mussoorie are precisely looking for a pollution-free, healthy, beautiful, and serene environment to enjoy a relaxing stay. Thus, the location of the hotel, its surroundings, and connectivity to the hotel are very important factors for the consumers affecting their hotel booking decision. A picturesque place and the perfect spot for a selfie near or in the hotel also drive the consumers booking decision. Narrow and steep roads; limited and highly-priced transportation modes; and large distances from the preferred visited places of the hill station like Mall Road — may create some hustle for the consumers and affect their booking decision adversely. Hotels may provide shuttle services to their guest to avoid such obstructions. Apart from the above themes of the e-reviews discussed above, consumers also ponder the human interface in the hotel as one of the crucial variables. An amicable, supportive, and well-mannered staff may enhance stay satisfaction to a different level. Extra courteous endeavours put in by the hotel staff for handling the guest's query were found to be a big help for the hotels in climbing the ladder of branding. Customers always consider their interaction with staff and their services as significant variables of the hotel industry. If a hotel staff is not polite and efficient in dealing with the customer's queries, then it may create a serious issue for the hotel's brand image and compel the customers to rethink their booking decision in the future.

The results of the qualitative data analysis also revealed the unavoidable influence of services and facilities provided by the hotels to make the guest's stay experiences enjoyable and comfortable. Hassle-free check-in and check-out, ultimate dining services, and best room services



increase the consumers' delight experiences and help retain them for their future stays. Other facilities like — a spa, restaurant, wi-fi, Kids Park, separate kitchen for the consumers, adventurous activities, cultural activities (e.g., folk dance or performances), hygiene, activity area, etc. also help the consumers in their hotel booking decisions.

Results obtained from the content analysis explicitly portrayed the imperative effect of e-reviews on hotel booking decisions. In addition to that, positive e-reviews about the top discussed themes in this study indicated a strong influence on the brand image of the hotels. In contrast, negative e-reviews about the hotels unfavourably affect the consumer's booking decision and the hotel's brand image.

**Table 2:** Suggestions extracted from the e-reviews for the hotels

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
Food	<i>The food is good but we want more spices; breakfast could have been better in terms of varieties; Only the buffet was mostly South Indian; Sweet Dishes in Buffet Breakfast to be more attractive; Bengali, Marathi sweet dishes to be included; Questionnaire to be circulated to the persons staying &amp; requested for their opinion / suggestion</i>
Room	<i>I think they should work upon the WASHROOMS; Please maintain the vanity as it was broken in almost many rooms.</i>
Internet	<i>Wi-fi should be complementary; wi-fi needs to be improved</i>

Results obtained from the content analysis of the e-reviews gathered from the Trip Advisor website also indicated some significant suggestions the consumers gave (Table 2). These suggestions directed some changes and alterations required in the food, room, and facilities. Consumers are looking for more variety of cuisines with different tastes in the food provided by the hotels. A most important point highlighted in the e-reviews is to get the proper feedback through a consumer questionnaire to understand their expectations from the hotel. Taking consumer feedback may provide a better understanding of the consumer's perspective. Continuous maintenance and gradation of the rooms and the hotel property may attract more customers and enhance their satisfaction level. Amenities provided by the hotels, like wi-fi services, must be very good to deliver better stay experiences to consumers as internet availability help the consumers to

access the information related to their stay. Moreover, consumers may enjoy the different facilities through the internet and stay connected with other people on their vacations.

Results acquired from the analysis done by RQDA revealed the most prominent positive and negative words used in the e-reviews. The result shows the frequency of those words used in the positive and negative e-reviews for the hotels of Mussoorie hill station. Among all the positive e-reviews gathered from the Trip Advisor website, we found good, food, nice, and great as the most used words (Table 3). Likewise, among all the negative e-reviews, hot, retreat, worst, problem, and poor were found as the words having a high frequency (shown in Table 4).

**Table 3:** Frequency of positive words used in e-reviews

Words	No.	Words	No.	Words	No.	Words	No.
Good	973	Comfortable	173	Wonderful	95	Spacious	55
Food	647	Clean	171	Cooperative	87	Fantastic	54
Nice	413	Enjoyed	163	Love	80	Recommended	52
Great	390	Thanks	160	Delicious	76	Library	51
Excellent	339	Beautiful	159	Quality	74	Better	50
Amazing	285	Breakfast	139	Perfect	65	Available	49
Visit	261	Fortune	134	Pleasant	65	Care	48
Best	259	Like	132	Thank	65	Dinner	48
Well	197	Recommend	121	Special	64	Loved	48
Helpful	189	Courteous	114	Superb	58	Warm	48
Awesome	176	Grace	100	Polite	57	Lovely	45
Hospitality	174	Friendly	99	Memorable	55	Worth	43

**Table 4: Frequency of negative words used in e-reviews**

Words	No.	Words	No.	Words	No.
Hot	24	Cons	12	Late	10
Retreat	24	Noise	12	Pathetic	10
Worst	23	Steep	12	Smell	10
Problem	22	Issue	11	Difficult	9
Poor	20	Issues	11	Disappointed	9
Pay	17	Limited	11	Stinking	9
Bad	16	Dirty	10	Chargeable	8
Cold	12	Expensive	10	Crowded	7

The analysis results done using the RQDA explained the frequency of both positive and negative words in the e-reviews. It provides a clear indication to hoteliers about the perspectives of their consumers. It is also revealed from the frequencies that the positive words are more than the negative words used in the e-reviews for the hotels of Mussoorie, which is a favorable sign for the hotel industry, yet some improvements are required by catering the best services to the customers. If the frequency of positive words comparatively increased by the frequency of negative words used in the e-reviews, then precisely it further helps generate more leads for the hotels and improves the brand image of the hotels.

### **Discussions and Conclusions**

The hotel industry can utilize this study to develop better managerial strategies for hotels to generate better customer leads. Hoteliers of mid-segment hotels may emphasize the themes discussed in this study to provide the best stay experience to the consumers, which may further urge the consumers to give positive reviews on the booking portals and finally aid in improving the brand image of the hotels. Tourism authorities and institutions may also consider the results of this study to make profitable and standardized policies for the tourism sector, specifically the hotel industry, that may lead to higher economic growth. Researchers and academicians may also utilize the inferences of this study to fill the research gap and to carry forward this research in the future by considering broader perspectives for the hotel industry.

This study has some limitations related to data collection and methodology. For this research, the qualitative data has been gathered only for the mid-segment hotels of Mussoorie and only from one website, i.e., Trip Advisor, and within the time frame of six months merely. Thus for future research for getting an extensive picture of the hotel industry, the data can be more versatile and extended in terms of hotel categories and time frame. The qualitative data used in this study has been collected manually so that any data mining tool can be used for more concise data. For the analysis of this data, manual content analysis and R software package for qualitative data analysis (RQDA) have been used, which are having its methodological constraints. Future research may also use other software and analytical techniques to get qualitative and quantitative insights.

The current research is meticulously able to provide pertinent inferences for the hotel industry by explaining the influence of both positive and negative e-reviews on the consumer's booking decisions and the brand image of the hotels. It is evident from the results of this study that positive reviews help in urging the booking decisions of the consumers and also improve the brand image of the hotels. In contrast, negative e-reviews hinder the hotels' brand image and impede hotel bookings. The top evolved themes from this study (i.e., food, room, hotel property, location, hotel connectivity, staff, service, and facility) explicitly directed the hoteliers to make better managerial strategies for the hotels so that higher customer satisfaction may get delivered. To accomplish the sustainable economic upliftment of the hotel industry and attract more tourists, hotels must focus on the themes mentioned earlier. In this era of digitalization, hotels may strengthen their brand image by developing positive and lucid communication with their customers through e-reviews.

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