

Hotels are missing vital marketing messages

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Hotels are losing customers because they aren't using the most effective marketing messages for their ratings, reveals new research from King's Business School (<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/business/index.aspx>).

The researchers have created a model that exposes the truth about hotel performance using text from online customer reviews on websites such as TripAdvisor.

Using a big data set of more than a quarter of a million online reviews for more than 25,000 hotels in 16 countries, a total of 19 controllable factors were found to be vital for hotels to manage in their interactions with visitors. These included checking in and out, communication, homeliness, room experience and accommodating pets.

The research further identified the most important dimensions according to the star rating of hotels, with homeliness and events management being important for five-star hotels, while room experience and communication were basic requirements at one-star level.

"However, not all factors are considered by hotels and hotel comparison websites, like homeliness and natural beauty which the research revealed to be important for top-rated hotels and older consumers," says Professor Stuart Barnes, "and so key marketing messages are being missed that would target the ideal customers. Hotels need to position themselves carefully."

Clear differences were also found according to demographic segments. For example, men are more sensitive to price than women, while female hotel customers place greater significance on the standard of the bathroom.

The results, recently published in the journal *Tourism Management*, have clear implications for how hotels effectively market their offerings to different customers.

The application of advanced, mathematical machine learning techniques has provided an important development in marketing as Barnes, in collaboration with Hohai University, used them to develop a new model, which was compared with traditional numerical ratings. The approach provides a potential solution for many businesses seeking to understand the voice of their customers.

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For more information, a copy of the study, or to speak to Professor Barnes, contact Stephanie Mullins at BlueSky PR on smullins@bluesky-pr.com or call +44 (0)1582 790 706.