



Tourists' Assessment of Ground Operators of Himachal Pradesh: Insights into Online Travel Reviews

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Abstract

Introduction: With the expansion of Travel 2.0, Online Travel Reviews (OTRs) are playing a prominent role for tourists and tourism suppliers. Researchers' attention toward OTRs is also gaining momentum, and studies have investigated numerous dimensions concerning online reviews. However, considering the tourism suppliers, the worth of OTRs still needs to be explored.

Purpose: This study is purposed to examine the insights into the OTRs about ground operators and to explore the emotions to understand their experiences.

Methodology: To achieve the objectives, 4096 online travel reviews of 218 ground operators in Himachal Pradesh (HP) were collected from TripAdvisor.com. The NVivo software and an online program, Linguistic Inquiry into Word Count (LIWC), were employed for the data analyses. Further, a custom dictionary was created in the LIWC program to examine the image of ground operators.

Finding: The findings highlighted that many tourists availing the tourism services evaluated the ground operators with positive emotions. The foremost emotional state towards the ground operators of HP was positive. However, there were very few OTRs on most suppliers, and most reviews did not get useful votes. Many reviewers reported their experiences in a few words, and only limited ground operators responded to the reviews.

Originality/Value: This study enhances knowledge about the OTRs of ground operators while analyzing the tourists' experiences and emotions.

Implications: This study provides implications and recommendations for ground operators and policymakers to promote tourism products and provide more satisfactory tourist experiences. The other qualitative factors of online reviews about other tourism can be studied in the future. Studies can also investigate their effect on review usefulness.

Keywords: Online Travel Reviews, Tourists, Ground Operators, Tourism Suppliers, Emotions, Word Frequency.



Introduction

In the tourism industry, 'Travel 2.0' is used for 'Web 2.0' along with the emergence of numerous new technological applications (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). With the development of Web 2.0, the online content generated by consumers has been enhanced. The online reviews generated by the consumer are one of the most effective forms of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) in the tourism industry. The actual and potential tourists post these on social networking and travel sites. The online reviews generated by the consumers are explained by Filieri (2016, p. 47) as "any positive, negative or neutral comment, rating, ranking of a product, a service, a brand, or a person supposedly made by a former customer and that is shared with other consumers in an unstructured format such as a blog post or a more structured format such as consumer reviews published on an independent consumer review website (e.g., TripAdvisor.com), third-party e-commerce website (e.g., Booking.com), or corporate website (e.g., Thomson.co.uk)." The Online Travel Reviews (OTRs) are striking in the tourism industry, being experience-based. The quality of tourism products and services cannot be known until tried, and these also do not have the provision to return if expectations are not met (Racherla & Friske, 2012; Ye, Law, & Gu, 2009). Unlike the official sources, which are business-driven, online consumer-generated reviews are considered more genuine and trustworthy (Dwyer, 2007). From deciding about going on the trip, during the tour, tourists use OTRs, and even post-tour, many tourists write their opinions and experiences online about the visited destination and tourism service providers (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012; Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens, 2009). The tourists post their travel experiences on various platforms like TripAdvisor (Lee, Benjamin, & Childs, 2022; Berezina, Bilgihan, Cobanoglu, & Okumus, 2016), Yelp (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2017; Park & Nicolau, 2015), Expedia (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2017). The OTRs not only assist the travelers in decisions and affect their attitude but also guide the tourism suppliers in evolving their travel offers for products and services more efficiently (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Tourism firms, businesses, entrepreneurs, and tourists benefit from these online platforms providing OTRs. These assist them in formulating their business strategies (Valdivia, Luzón, & Herrera, 2017).

With the expansion of Web 2.0, tourists prefer to generate, share, and discuss travel content on online travel platforms, and research toward OTRs is also getting momentum. The



researchers have also investigated numerous dimensions concerning OTRs, such as uses and impact of OTRs (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008), hotel booking intentions in reviews (Sparks & Browning, 2011), sentiment in the online text (Zhang, Yu, Li, & Lin, 2016), and reviews rating patterns (Banerjee & Chua, 2016). Further, the effect of OTRs on the information adoption of tourists and their travel decision makings (Liu & Park, 2015; Filieri & McLeay, 2014), motivations behind communicating online destination information (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), image disclosure through reviews (Hlee, Lee, Yang, & Koo, 2016), has been investigated.

The data collected from reviews generate more competitive advantages with a better understanding of the tourists' opinions and behaviors (Simeon, Buonincontri, Cinquegrani, & Martone, 2017). Tourism literature has clarified that most studies (around 60%) have focused on hospitality, while 18% paid attention to restaurants (Schuckert, Liu, & Law, 2015). However, the online travel reviews' worth still needs to be explored further (Simeon et al., 2017). There is still a need for more investigation into the reviews of attractions and other less explored tourism products, services, and suppliers. The significance of OTRs in guiding managerial strategies is yet at the initial point (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Henceforth, less evidence indicates the type as well as the extent of social media utilized by the destination manager organizations (DMOs) (Munar, 2012). The tourism suppliers are one of the very noteworthy parts of the tourism and hospitality field; while selecting these, the tourists also have to invest additional time and money to avail of their services.

This study aims to get insights into the OTRs on the ground operators of Himachal Pradesh (HP) and explores the tourists' experiences with these tourism suppliers by considering what the tourists post through online travel reviews. This research also examines the emotions of tourists associated with experiences. Further, this study delivers implications and recommendations for tourism suppliers and policymakers to build effective strategies to promote their products and services and provide more satisfactory tourist experiences. The findings of this study will make advancements in the OTRs of tourism suppliers.

The following section of this study elaborates on the literature review about the OTRs and ground operators, tourists' experiences, and emotions. Further, the research methodology is described leading to the results and discussion. This research paper is concluded after providing the managerial implications for the tourism service providers and the ground operators.



Literature Review

OTRs and Destination

Technology plays an essential part in the success of a destination and competitive destination (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015). A destination is an amalgamation of all tourism services, products, & experiences provided locally and is incorporated with the 6As, i.e., attractions, amenities, accessibility, activities, available packages, and ancillary services (Buhalis, 2000). The focus of the destination management companies relies on establishing their identity in the market, creating a favorable image, and building a brand along with differentiating themselves from their competitors (Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007). However, the content shared by the tourism destination managers is considered less credible as these are counted as marketing messages by many users, while the tourists' created reviews are perceived as more enjoyable and updated (Cannizzaro et al., 2007; Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013; Gretzel, Yoo, & Purifoy, 2007). In guiding and providing managerial strategies, the OTRs play an influential role for the tourism suppliers and DMOs (Simeon et al., 2017). Their effect on the image and reputation of tourism businesses and service suppliers has been addressed in the literature (Baka, 2016; Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). The tourism destination image highly affects the views and decisions of the tourists (Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, & Luk, 2008). With the generation of a positive destination image, the possibility of visiting the place is also enhanced (Lee & Gretzel, 2012).

Ground Operators

The destination will be less attractive without the ground operators who link the tourism demand and supply in a single package (Arnesson, 2014). For the tourism industry, these are the core component (Jensen, 2009). Without the ground operators, the tour operators and the tourists abroad will have to make more efforts in arranging and making the tourism products and services straightforwardly available (Arnesson, 2014). Considering Jensen (2009), the study by Arnesson (2014, p.2) explained that "ground operators are the ones planning and executing tour packages at the destination level, either using their resources or combining other resources of suppliers at the destination. These packages can be sold directly to consumers, but also to tour operators abroad. These tour operators sell holiday packages to the customers in their home country." They possess abstract and non-abstract resources such as human resources, knowledge, and equipment. They may have their guide licenses, transportation, and equipment and can also undertake the tours themselves (Arnesson, 2014). In this study, the online reviews on other local service suppliers in Himachal Pradesh are



considered apart from the hotels and restaurants. Considering Jensen (2009) and (Arnesson, 2014), these service suppliers can also be termed the Ground Operators. Through the OTRs, the tourism suppliers can learn about the requirements of the tourists and their knowledge. The analysis of the OTRs' content can assist them in understanding the pros and cons of the products and services created by them. Further, the destination image and status of service providers can be measured through this online content shared by the actual tourists. Based on these, they can formulate new tactics to improve their business and service quality and minimize flaws (Shea & Roberts, 1998; Fang, Ye, Kucukusta, & Law, 2016).

Tourists' Experiences and Satisfaction Reported through OTRs

Tourism is an experience that is required to be communicated. Vacationers share their experiences, discuss them, and compare them with other travelers (De Ascaniis & Cantoni, 2013). De Ascaniis and Cantoni (2013, p. 1) stated that "tourism is an experience of freedom," that is told. The unique experience of tourists is the contribution of many elements; however, there are always one or a few other elements that are generally fixed in the memory of the tourists, that form the experience different and special, that is further communicated with the other. Through the OTRs, tourists represent their destination assessment and reflect on their experiences (De Ascaniis & Cantoni, 2013). The way the tourists contemplate the condition, event, and product and their reaction to these become the base of their experience, which differ from the others (De Ascaniis, & Cantoni, 2013). Their experience will be grounded on how they distinguish and respond to the tourism service, product, and destination (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Further, Tung and Ritchie (2011, p. 1369) described the tourism experience as "an individual's subjective evaluation and undergoing (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) of events related to his/her tourist activities that begin before (i.e., planning and preparation), during (i.e., at the destination), and after the trip (i.e., recollection)."

In tourism and hospitality, examining tourists' satisfaction has been a prominent research area for scholars (Nilashiet al., 2019; Chi & Qu, 2008). The tourists' satisfaction is the attitude or psychological state of a tourist at a given period regarding the consumed tourism products and services that are defined by the individual assessment of overall tourism practices (Huang, Dai, & Xu, 2020; Han & Hyun, 2015). Researchers have used the traditional qualitative, quantitative, or mixed approach to collect data to examine the tourists' satisfaction and experiences. However, there are constraints on the small sample size and the



high-cost involvement (Guo, Barnes, & Jia, 2017). With the expansion of Web 2.0, the OTRs, a fundamental part of user-generated content, have been widely utilized as information sources by vacationers and scholars (Hou, Cui, Meng, Lian, & Yu, 2019). They have examined the users' actual behaviors through online reviews, using their qualitative and qualitative aspects. Online reviews assist in recognizing the reasons for the satisfaction of consumers (Ahani et al., 2019). To recognize the satisfied and unsatisfied tourists through OTRs, researchers have adopted different approaches, such as Berezina et al. (2016) examined users' satisfaction by considering whether the reviewers have recommended the product and service to others or not. Examining the hotels' OTRs ratings (Levy, Duan, & Boo, 2013) and review content (Farhadloo, Patterson, & Rolland, 2016), researchers inspected the tourists' satisfaction reported online. Zhou, Ye, Pearce, and Wu (2014) investigated satisfaction through negative and positive emotions. Kuhzady and Ghasemi (2019), by forming the word cloud, examined the dissatisfaction with the accommodation domain through the reviews posted on TripAdvisor.

Albarq (2014) pointed out that satisfied tourists are more likely to share their experiences and opinions with others; however, negative experience also drives tourists to speak up. To explain experiences, tourists write specific words when happy or unhappy with the tourism products (Xiang, Schwartz, Gerdes, & Uysal, 2015). Researchers in tourism and hospitality have considered the word frequency and highlighted the major significant segments of tourism products through the frequency of occurrence. Considering the hotel image through TripAdvisor reviews, O'Connor (2010) demonstrated that in the hotel context, the most frequently used words by the reviewers were room, hotel, London, good, breakfast, staff, small, clean, location, night, etc. The most common themes by rating, for instance, hotel location, room size, staff (good services), clean, breakfast (good), in-room facilities, etc. were also highlighted by the Author. Adding to this, through the online reviews, Levy, Duan, and Boo (2013) found the most frequent problem areas in hotels, such as front desk staff, cleanliness, bathroom, check-in, parking, noise, restaurant, etc. Moreover, Stringam and Gerdes (2010) analyzed hotel guests' online comments. The authors listed clean, staff, breakfast, bed, price, and restaurant as the top used words. Using survey responses, Ferrer-Rosell, Coenders, and Marine-Roig (2017) investigated the association between trip satisfaction and actual use of the internet pre-trip. However, the behaviors of reviewers vary across different websites (Xiang et al., 2017), and their satisfaction also varies by language (Antonio, Almeida, Nunes, Batista, & Ribeiro, 2018).



Tourists' Emotions Reported through OTRs

Travel experience creates unique emotional power (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). For motivating tourists, emotional marketing is a compelling approach that is adopted by firms and marketers (Min, Martin, & Jung, 2013). Munezero, Montero, Sutinen, and Pajunen (2014, p. 104) defined emotions as "preconscious social expressions of feelings and affect influenced by culture." The presence of positive emotions regarding the visited destinations in the memory of tourists is associated with the positive experience that is attained from the consumption of tourism services and products (Lee, Benjamin, & Childs, 2022). Researchers in tourism found a relationship between tourists' emotions, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013; Hosany, 2012; Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Chiappa, 2017). The destination image and satisfaction are directly affected by the tourists' emotional experiences (Prayag et al., 2017). The focus of studies based on tourists' emotions has stressed emotional experience management (Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010). However, considering emotions, studies focusing on a particular attraction and other tourism products of a destination are lacking (Lee, Benjamin, & Childs, 2022). Alaei, Becken, and Stantic (2019) highlighted that sentiment analysis would be one of the focal points in tourism studies. However, considering OTRs, the concentration of studies is on the accommodation sector and lacking in the attractions (Schuckert, Liu, & Law, 2015) and other components of destination such as tourism entrepreneurs, transporters, adventure tourism operators, car rental companies, etc.

Research Methodology

This study is purposed to get insights into the OTRs of the ground operators and examine the tourists' experience with ground operators in Himachal Pradesh, a North-Indian state, shared on the online review website. Further, this study examined the tourists' emotions to understand their experience. To achieve the objectives, the online reviews on Himachal Pradesh's tourism ground operators were investigated in this study. A total of 4096 online travel reviews of 218 ground operators at HP were collected from the reputed online travel review site TripAdvisor.com. The NVivo software and an online program, Linguistic Inquiry into Word Count (LIWC), were employed for the data analyses. The custom dictionary was also created in the LIWC program to examine the presence of the image of ground operators. Nowadays, studies utilize software like LIWC (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2016) and NVivo (Mate, Trupp, & Pratt, 2019) for examining online reviews. The results were presented through frequency, and percentage, in tables and figures.



Results and Discussion

Insights into OTRs on Ground Operators of Himachal Pradesh

Total Reviews and Ground Operators: There were 4096 reviews of 218 ground operators at HP that were studied.

Figure 1 clarifies that in the studied data, most (39) ground operators of HP had only one review, followed by 30 operators having only two OTRs. Further, 21 and 25 operators had three and four OTRs, respectively, while reviews of 53 operators ranged from five to twenty. Only nine ground operators had more than 100 reviews, whereas 308 OTRs were the highest number of posted reviews on an operator.

These results indicated that a much smaller number of OTRs were posted on the ground operators. The OTRs volume highlights the popularity and higher number of users. The number of reviews on hotels, restaurants, and other tourism suppliers indicates that more tourists visit these (Sparks & Browning, 2011; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Studies by Xie, Zhang and Zhang (2014) have observed that hotels with higher positive reviews have a better financial position. This study has found that most reviews contain positive statements about the ground operators and most tourists are happy with their services and products. The results in figure 1 indicated that these operators' attention is significantly lacking in how they are presented online and how many tourists post about them. Considering the OTRs in their marketing strategies can bring more opportunities for these.

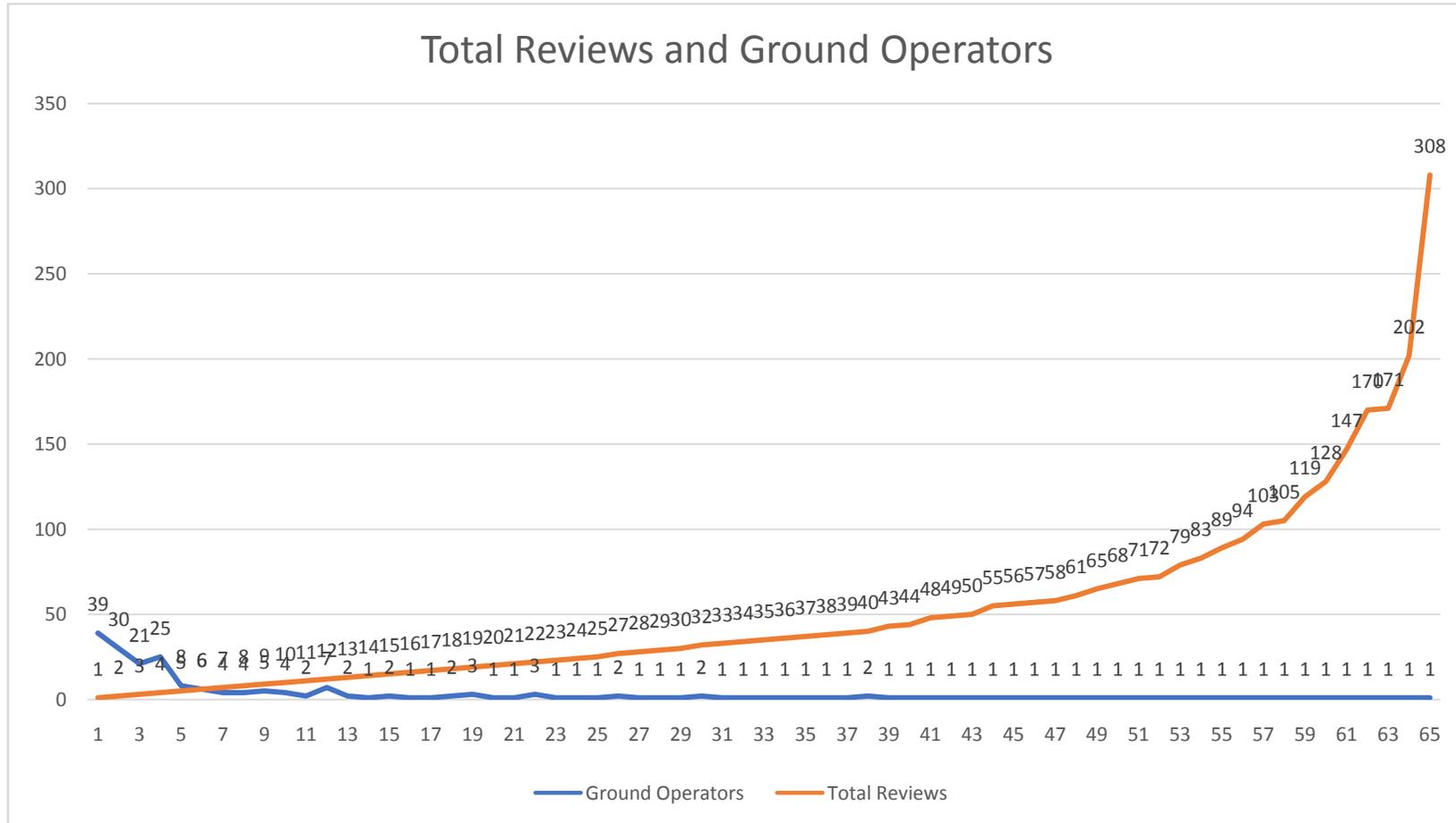


Figure 1 Total Reviews and Ground Operators



The Usefulness of OTRs: The usefulness of OTRs was calculated by counting the number of useful votes received by a review (Park & Nicolau, 2015). Figure 2 shows that only 854 OTRs had received useful votes while 3242 reviews had zero useful votes. Further, 619 reviews had only one useful vote, and 149 OTRs received two votes. Only a handful of OTRs (14) had more useful votes than five. The highest useful votes, i.e., seventeen, were given to three reviews. The higher number of reviews attracts more tourists, resulting in more readers, who may give a more significant number of useful votes (Cao, Duan, & Gan, 2011). However, the lack of reviews on the ground operators may have resulted in a lower number of useful votes. Though in developing a positive behavior of customers toward the online service suppliers, retailers, and online review platforms, useful reviews play a significant role (Connors, Mudambi, & Schuff, 2011; Kim & Gupta, 2012). Consumers' purchase intentions are influenced by useful information (Lee & Koo, 2015).

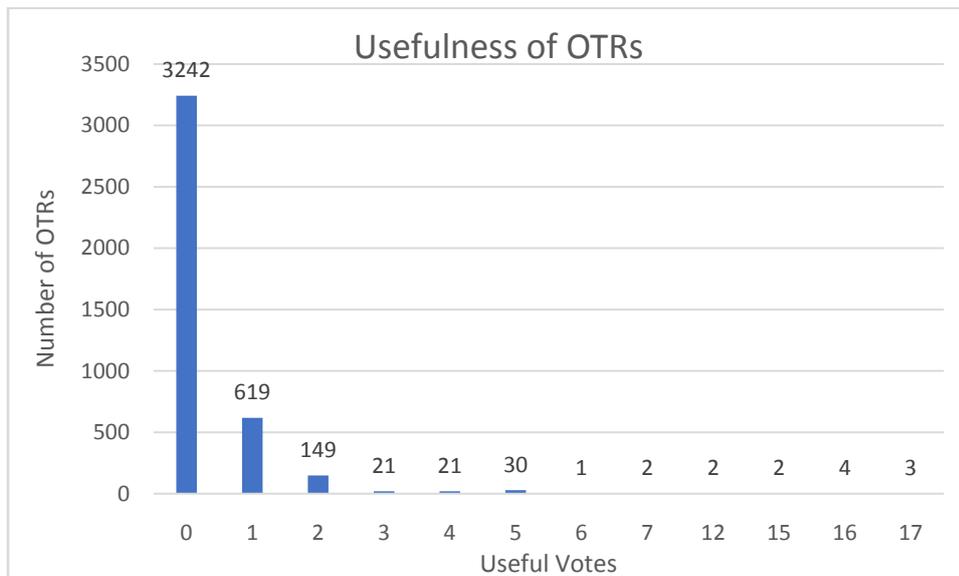


Figure 2 Usefulness of OTRs

Trip Type: TripAdvisor distributes the Trip Type in the five categories, i.e., friends, family, couple, solo, and business, while the sixth category that emerged is related to those reviewers who have not disclosed their type of trips, the details of who is accompanying the tourist during the travel.

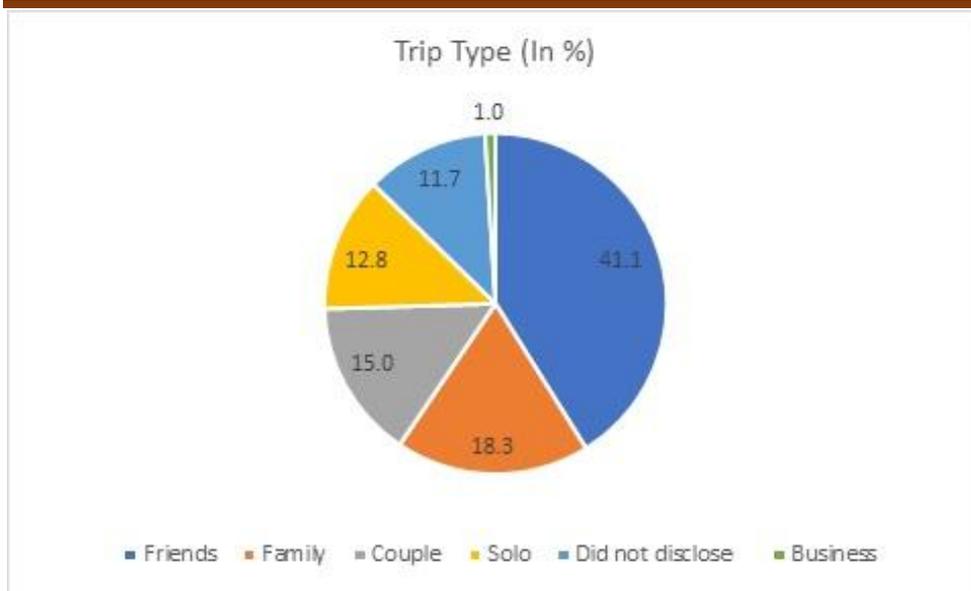


Figure 3 Trip Type

Figure 3 explains that 41.1% of tourists visit HP with their friends, followed by family, couples, and solo. Himachal Pradesh offers ample opportunities for nature-based tourism and adventure tourism. Tourists usually prefer to experience adventure activities with their family members and friends. The business purpose was not the choice of most tourists. However, 11.7% of tourists did not mention their trip type while writing reviews online.

Management Response: It was found that only in 853 (20.8%) reviews the management response was available, while in 3243 OTRs, no attention was paid by the service providers or managers providing the services and products. However, most of these responses (in 749 OTRs) showed gratitude for posting a positive review.

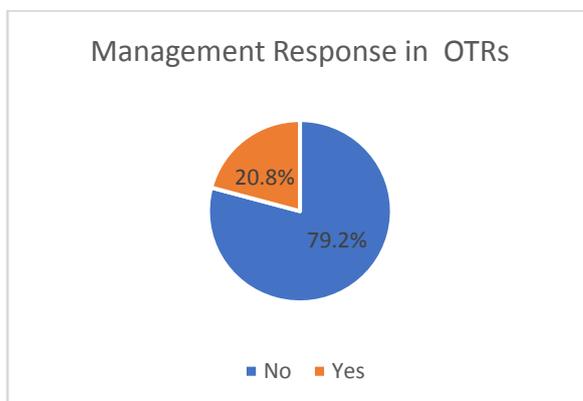


Figure 4 Management Response in OTRs



The management response affects the reviews rating and the tourists' experience, and the service providers should pay special attention to online reviews and provide effective responses (Kwok & Xie, 2016). The managers are indorsed to give reliable and instant responses as their effective response is positively linked with the consumers' loyalty behaviors (Levy,Duan, & Boo, 2013), resulting in high hotel booking intentions (Zhao,Wang, Guo, & Law 2015).

Length of OTRs:The length was calculated through the number of words in an OTR. It was observed that most of the OTRs had less than 100 words, followed by 200. From 200 to 400, many OTRs were scattered, while fewer OTRs had words between 400 and 600. Only five OTRs had words between 800 to 1000. Additionally, merely four OTRs had more than 1000 words in the dataset (Figure 5). The longer reviews have a high possibility of having more information about the products, services, attributes, and functionality (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010); however, the information overload may create confusion among the readers about the products.

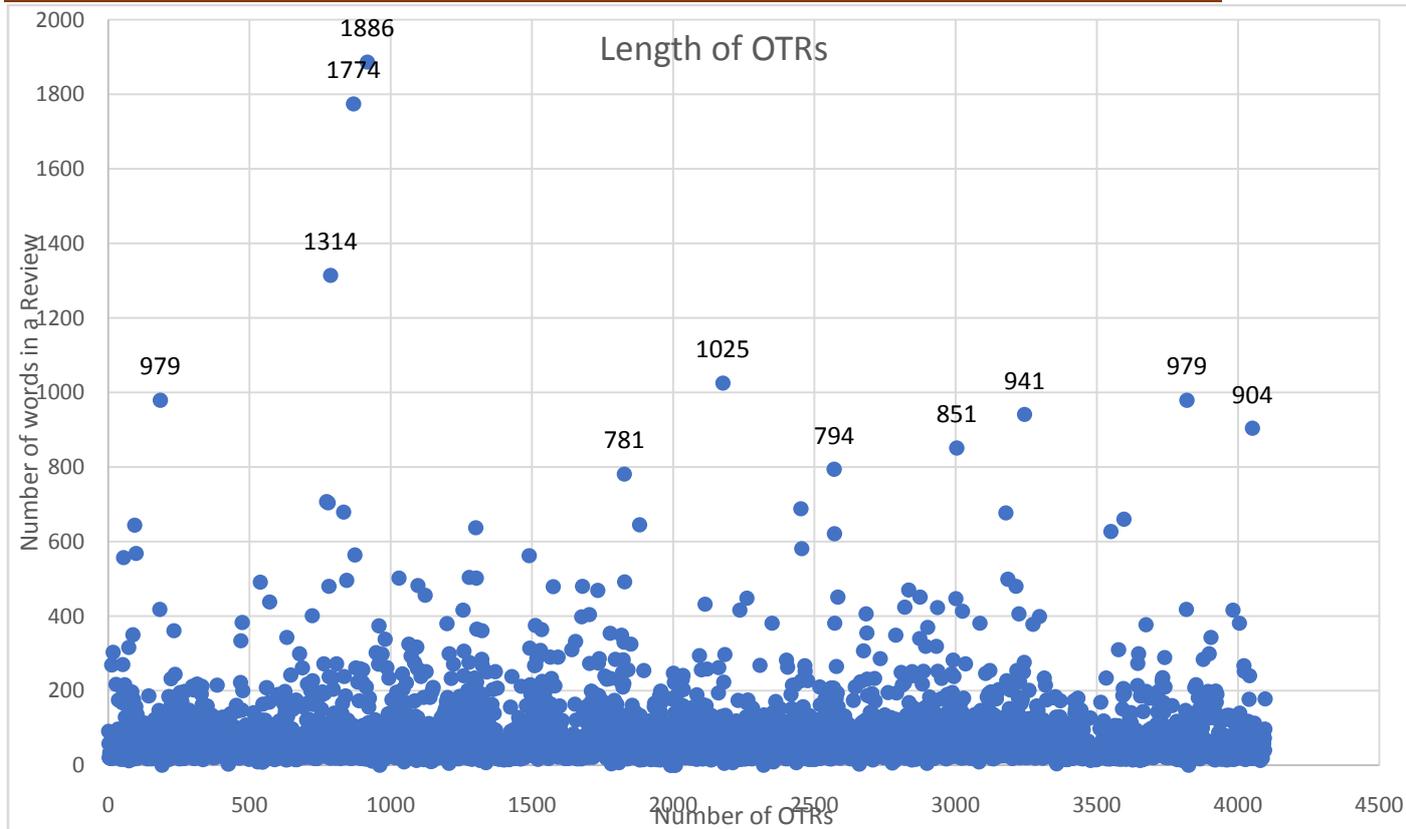


Figure 5 Length of OTRs

Presence of Image in OTRs of Ground Operators:Through the LIWC program, the dictionary was prepared based on the selected words representing the image of ground operators after reading every review. The dictionary presented the ground operators' cognitive, affective, and conative images.

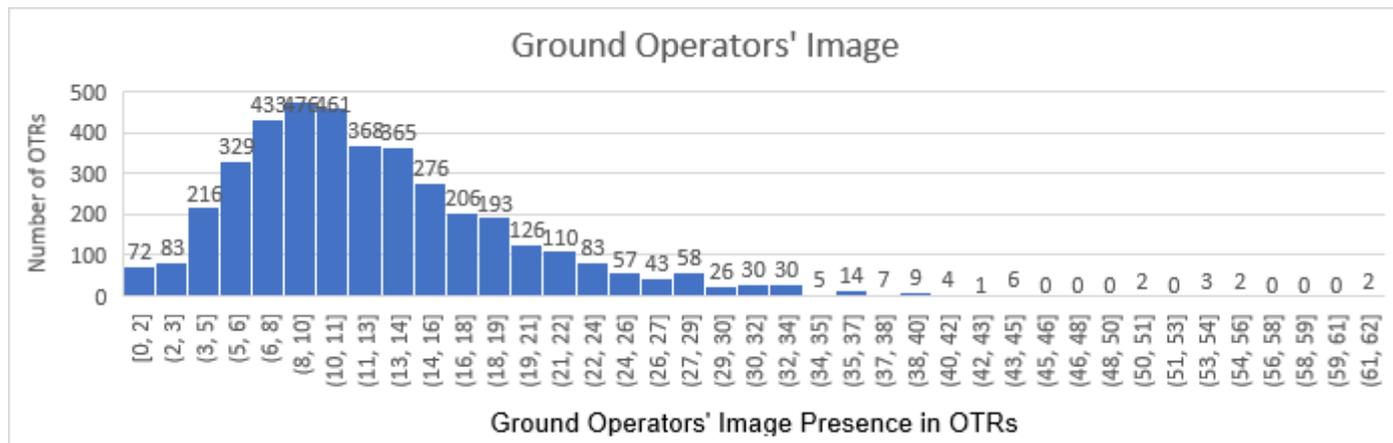


Figure 6 Image in OTRs of Ground Operators



misspelled the words, and considering these misspelled words can give more fair results in view of the review content. Table 1 below shows the word count along with their weighted percentage. The count explains the number of times the word occurred in the search. The larger fonts are words with high frequency. The Weighted Percentage highlights the frequency of the word in relation to the total counted words that the overall total of the group of words does not exceed 100%. These top 50 words had a weighted percentage ranging from 1.12 to 0.30.

The words 'experience, treks, trips, places, goods, and ones' were in the top category. The words, 'adventurous (adventurous) tours, riding, biking, guiding, tours, amazingly, best, great, thanks, and recommending' shows tourists' positive experiences using the services and products of HP's ground operators. The next set of words like 'mountains, snows, beauty, views, enjoy, team, helps, likes, and paragliding' was also written by tourists to explain their experiences online. 'Highly, service, bir, plans, around, peoples (people), camps, valley, Shimla, horses, golf, service, guys, driver, awesome, and professional' were other words the users commonly used. This study found that most of these top words were positive rather than negative. The tourists showed their positive experience and satisfaction by demonstrating their feelings using words like 'good, great, best, amazingly, lovely, beauty, thanks, excellently, awesome, professional, nice, and caring.' The experiences shared by the tourists represented their positive experience concerning the products and services of the ground operators in Himachal Pradesh, and most tourists were satisfied.

Table 1 Words Count and Weighted %

Word	Count	Weighted percentage (%)
experiences	1933	1.12
treks	1768	1.02
trips	1651	0.95
places	1564	0.90
goods	1476	0.85
ones	1349	0.78
days	1309	0.76



manali	1215	0.70
great	1183	0.68
best	1170	0.68
timings	1152	0.67
biking	1145	0.66
riding	1016	0.59
guiding	1008	0.58
visits	958	0.55
adventurous	943	0.54
amazingly	915	0.53
thanks	905	0.52
also	864	0.50
recommending	841	0.49
tours	836	0.48
well	809	0.47
beauty	802	0.46
paragliding	786	0.45
friends	782	0.45
helps	773	0.45
taking	747	0.43
travels's (Travels, travelers)	724	0.42
views	719	0.42
team	714	0.41
likes	713	0.41
enjoys	711	0.41
really	683	0.39
just	672	0.39
foods	671	0.39
passing	665	0.38

Cluster Analysis:In the two-dimensional diagram, similar category items were clustered together, while the different categories were further apart. The bubbles highlight the connecting words, and their size represents the words' frequency. The two-dimensional diagram shows up to hundred words in different font sizes.

There were a few connecting sets of words such as 'spring, mountain, and nature, area, making, great, and experience,' 'highly, surrounds, and activities, mall, temple, and snow,' 'worth, and view,' 'sees, and nearly,' and 'guiding, and tour.' Differently scattered words were 'beauty, enjoy, driving, location, water, hours, coming, peaceful, feels, and awesome.' These words were used in different travel contexts. This study highlighted the positive experience of users.

Star Rating:The reviewer's individual reviews' star ratings on the ground operators are presented in figure 9. It demonstrates that many reviews (78.5%) had a five-star rating, and 13.7% had a four-star rating. Merely 3.5% of reviews had a rating below three. The results indicated that the tourism suppliers at HP delivered satisfactory services and products. The maximum number of reviewers confirmed their positive statements posted in review content through their four- and five-star ratings.

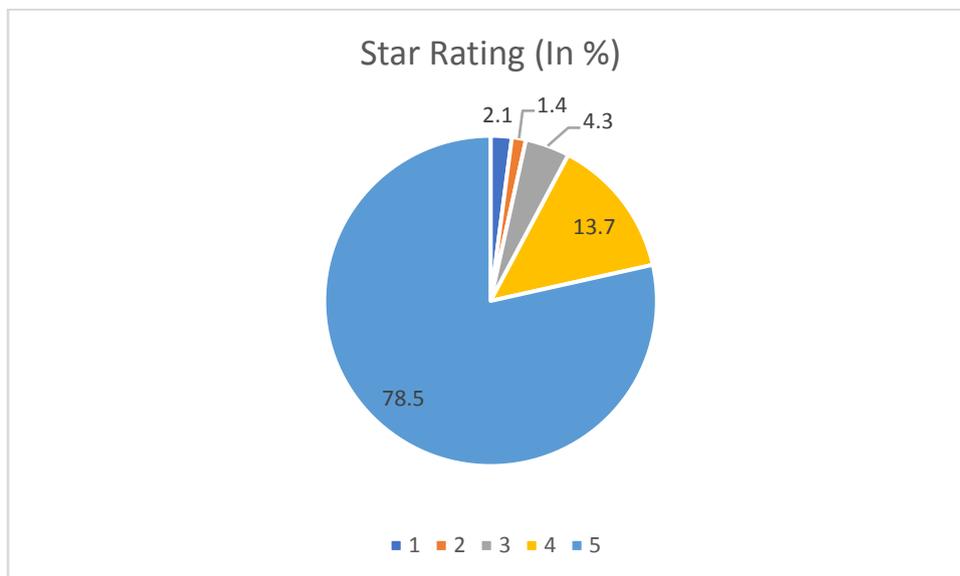


Figure 9 Star Rating of OTRs



Tourists' Emotions in OTRs on Ground Operators

Through the LIWC program, the emotional tone of OTRs was examined. The higher the number, the positive the tone was. The number below 50 proposed a negative emotional tone in the OTRs.

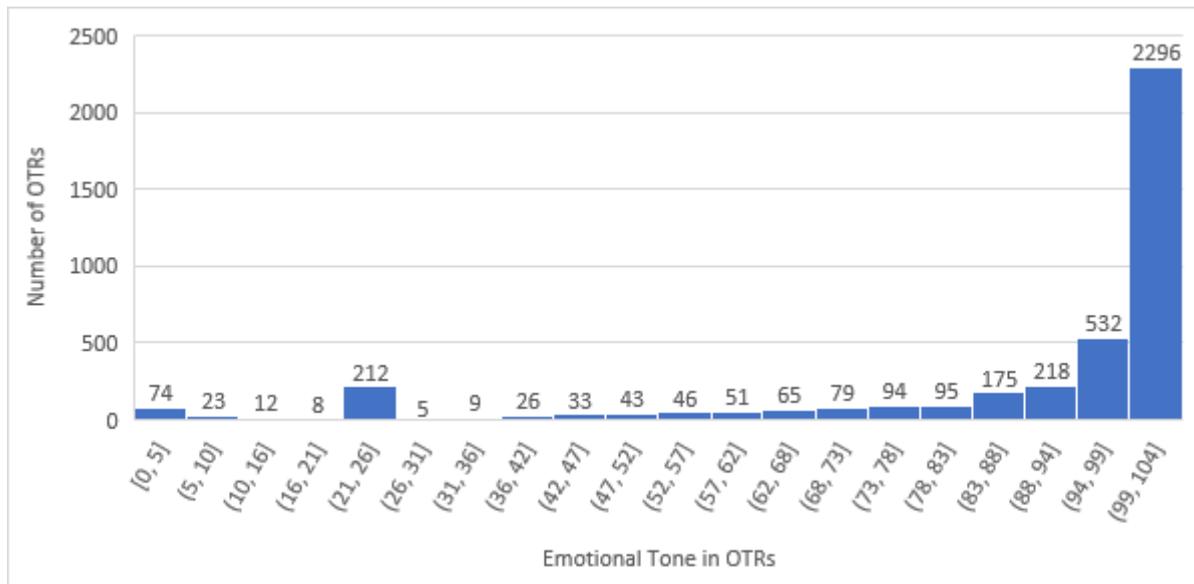


Figure 10 Emotional Tone in OTRs

This study found that compared to the negative emotional tone, the tourists presented more positive emotions while explaining their opinions and experiences on the platform. Figure 10 shows that only 74 reviews presented extreme negative emotions while 2296 presented extreme positive tone. More than 3651 OTRs had presented positive emotions of the tourists availing HP's ground operators' services and tourism products. These results demonstrated that the tourists were delighted with them.

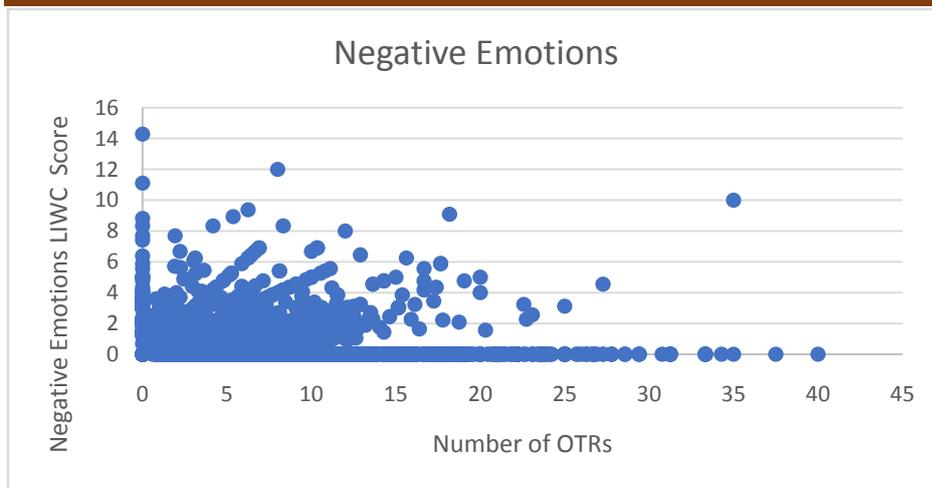


Figure 11 Negative Emotions in OTRs

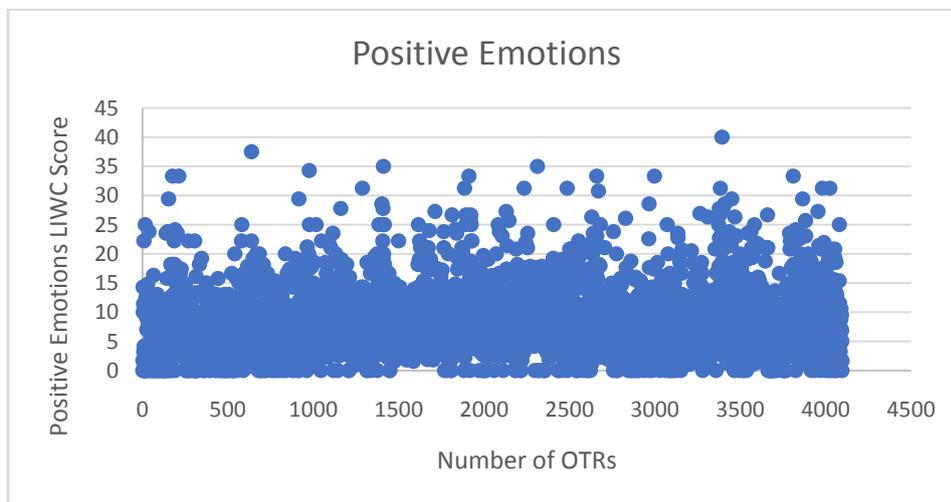


Figure 12 Positive Emotions in OTRs

Figures 11 and 12 show that negative emotions possess a small part of only a few OTRs. The highest negative emotions were 14% in a review. At the same time, the positive emotions ranged to 40% of the content of reviews. However, in 3354 OTRs, even the negative emotions were not present, while only 779 OTRs did not disclose any positive emotion. The reviews containing emotions are expected to affect the consumers' decisions and generate more useful votes for the review (Kim & Gupta, 2012; Yin, Bond, & Zhang, 2014; Ahmad & Laroche, 2015).

The findings concerning the emotions highlighted that most tourists availing the tourism services evaluated the ground operators with positive emotions. These results



summarised that the foremost emotional state of tourists towards ground operators was positive.

Conclusion

This study examined the OTRs of the tourism suppliers of HP and discovered insights into the online reviews about ground operators. This research also explored tourists' emotions to gain an understanding of their experiences. This study disclosed that the tourists were satisfied and happy with their travel experience with the ground operators, yet there were very few OTRs on most of the suppliers, and most reviews did not get useful reviews. Additionally, it was found that the tourism suppliers' attention was not on responding to the reviewers. Only a limited number of them provided feedback on the experiences shared by their consumed products and services. Many reviewers reported their experiences in a few words and indicated the suppliers' images in the review text. Through their content, they highlighted their experiences regarding different services and products. The findings concerning the emotions highlighted that a substantial number of tourists availing the tourism services evaluated the ground operators with positive emotion. These results summarised that the foremost emotional state towards the ground operators of HP was positive.

Implications

This study adds to the existing literature on OTRs addressing tourists' experiences with the tourism suppliers and highlights tourists' emotions concerning their satisfaction with the ground operators. The literature has focused on the reviews of hotels and restaurants, but the other tourism products, such as destinations, tour operators, transport operators, guides, outdoor activity operators, etc., are almost neglected. This study delivered insights into the online reviews regarding the tourism products and services suppliers at a destination. This study's findings will make advancements in the OTRs of tourism ground operators.

Based on the results of this study, implications and recommendations for the ground operators, the policymakers, and the management to build effective strategies to promote & develop tourism products & services and provide more satisfying experiences to the tourists are provided.



It was observed that the numbers of online reviews were very scarce on most ground operators. The online platforms providing OTRs can be an effective mechanism for promoting and marketing their products and services. The OTRs are the actual experiences of the tourists who have given feedback on their consumed products and services. The suppliers should monitor the online content to know what their consumers are reporting about them. Further, the feedback of their consumers can help them understand their pros and cons; based on these; they can formulate their strategies and eliminate the flaws.

Further, providing the management response to the reviewers can also enhance their trustworthiness and connection with their consumers, which can positively influence tourists' future courses. Additionally, it was found that the majority of the OTRs presented a positive experience for tourists, but the lack of OTRs can be a hurdle in attracting more tourists who may neglect the suppliers due to their lack of online popularity. They should motivate their consumers to post reviews and give feedback online. They can be given a discount or other benefits such as an extra night's stay, a free voucher, or a free dinner coupon. The higher number of OTRs will help the suppliers understand their strong and weak points, and based on those, they can adopt approaches to overcome the hurdles in making the tourists more satisfied.

This research has identified that business clients hardly visit HP, post reviews, or avail services of ground operators. They can focus on this segment of tourists and can provide services considering their specific requirements. One of the significant suggestions this study offers is providing a managerial response to the tourists posting online feedback. The ground operators should respond to the reviewers in the form of acknowledgment, gratitude, apology, and the promise of service recovery, etc. This will enhance the trust of tourists in the ground operators and attract potential tourists. Further, the suppliers should monitor the emotions and sentiments and stress the negative and extreme sentiments.

Further guidelines can be prepared to suggest the reviewers to timely post feedback, considering the qualitative elements of the message. Moreover, these ground operators can also provide space for consumers to post reviews on their websites. It will not only enhance their trustworthiness but also build their reputation. Online travel reviews are equally



beneficial for tourists and tourism suppliers. These should be monitored timely, and the ground operators should adopt these efficiently as a marketing tactic.

Limitation and Future Research

This study focused on the insights into the OTRs of ground operators of Himachal Pradesh and examined the tourists' emotions and their experiences. However, this study has some limitations that should be addressed. This study neglected reviews on hotels and restaurants and focused on only reviews about tourism products of single destinations. Further studies can examine reviews of other tourism products and services considering more than one destination. Additionally, the sentiment and other qualitative factors of review content can be examined through machine learning, and future studies can also investigate their effect on review usefulness.

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