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Assessment of the Extent to which Managers Apply User-Generated Content (Monitoring and Response) Among 3-5-Star Hotels in Kenya

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Abstract:

Purpose: The study purposed to assess the extent to which managers apply user-generated content (monitoring and response) among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

Methodology: The study adopted a quantitative approach and survey design. The population entailed 441 hotel managers, including general, guest relations, and marketing managers from 147 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. Multistage sampling was used to select a sample of 252 hotel managers, and data were collected using self-administered questionnaires. The extent of the managers' application of UGC and their perception of hospitality service experience was assessed through mean ranking and standard deviation.

Findings: The results indicate that hotel managers primarily apply UGC to a large extent by checking the number of unfavorable sentiments ($M=4.523$, $SD=1.584$) and checking positive content generated by customers about their hotels ($M=4.958$, $SD=1.454$).

Recommendations: The study recommends that further studies be conducted on low-end hotels with a focus on their extent of application of UGC and service experience enhancement. Low-end hotels may comprise one- and two-star hotels. Moreover, further research may look into hotel managers' motivation to apply UGC across different hotel ratings.

Keywords: User-generated content, managers, monitoring, response 3-5-star hotels

1. Introduction

There is barely a standard definition of user-generated content (UGC). UGC can be considered the fastest and richest online channel of information for sharing tourism experiences (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). According to Chanchaichujit, Holmes, Dickinson, and Ramkissoon (2018), the experiences entail content initiated, created, circulated online, and used by the end-user. Furthermore, the experiences aim to educate people and give information about services, brands, personalities, and products, to mention a few (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004). Blackshaw and Nazzaro articulate the author of UGC, whom they state is the customer. Moreover, they regard UGC as a reaction to various experiences with other customers online to share and educate them. Therefore, their definition is considerably employed in this study. Agreeably, UGC entails reviews, blogs, videos, images, and other textual content authored by customers after experiencing services or products either directly or indirectly (Lu & Stepchenkova, (2015); Chanchaichuljit et al. (2018); Blackshaw & Nazzaro, (2004)).

Given its prominence, researchers have attempted to conceptualize UGC application differently based on the definitions. For instance, Burgess et al. (2015) conceptualized the application of UGC into proactive and reactive strategies. Their operationalization showed that UGC's proactive (promotion) aspect comprised discounts, value addition, and new offerings relative to the posted UGC. In contrast, the reactive or response strategy constituted UGC monitoring, response, and improvement of offerings (Burgess et al., 2015).

UGC can be traced back to the development of the web in the 2000s. The web developed progressively from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. Web 1.0 was a read-only platform, and the website information was the only link between web users (Aghaei, Nematbakhsh, & Farsani, 2012). Web users could strictly read web content without interacting with one another (Nakamura, Samuels, & Soloveichik, 2018). On the other hand, Web 2.0, a development of Web 1.0, encourages the website users' interactivity through the generation of content on the Internet (Lugmayr & Dal Zotto, 2015; Xie et al., 2016). In this case, web users are the primary link to other web users' accessibility to UGC. The accessibility of UGC is the result of the concept of Web 2.0, which is an evolution of Web 1.0 and advances into Web 3.0. Most importantly, UGC has since spurred researchers' interest in understanding its impact on the hospitality industry.

Earlier, UGC was minimally recognized before the 2004 Web 2.0 summit. Later, it drew researchers' attention after the 2004 Web 2.0 Summit by Tim O'Reilly, which inspired the concept of Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2009). The concept entailed user-to-user interaction on the web, which would further draw researchers' attention, especially in travel (Gurung & Goswami, 2017) and journalism industries (García Avilés, 2018; Palomo, Teruel, & Blanco-Castilla, 2019). Nonetheless, web users in hospitality have ever since gained wielding power on the web, influencing other web users' behaviour, which entails prospective, previous, and in-house guests in hotels (Cheong & Mohammed-Baksh, 2021).

Scholars, far and wide, have conducted analyses of online reviews to provide feasible, influential, and responsive marketing strategies based on UGC in social media. UGC can be a useful source of data for managers, marketers, and scholars to obtain a clear picture of customer experiences due to the target market's subjectivity (Baek, Choe, & Ok, 2020) and to make critical decisions pertaining to the hospitality service experience before the guests' arrival. On the contrary, managers do not recognize the meaningfulness of UGC.

1.1. Application of UGC by Hotel Managers

Hotel managers tend not to understand the importance of using UGC to enhance the service experience. Improving the experience, consisting of service failures, service gaps, service evaluations, dissatisfaction, compliments, and critics, requires a clear understanding of each service experience component through the UGC application. However, managers' ignorance is evident in how prospective hotel customers easily access user-generated content on social media and travel sites and utilize it in decision-making. On the contrary, hotel managers ought to access UGC earlier than the prospective customers to monitor, respond and improve the hospitality service experience in the hotel. Nevertheless, customers acquire predispositions from previously posted service experiences and previous customers' reactions, therefore, influencing their behavioural intentions.

Moreover, exposure to UGC influences customers' attitudes, satisfaction, and perception (Demba, Chiliya, Chuchu, & Ndoro, 2019; Tsiakali, 2018; Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Regardless of the exposure, hotel guests continue to post UGC despite managers' ignorance of the content that already exists in the online space. In fact, as of 2017, Trip advisor recorded a substantial amount of user reviews summing to over 500 million, with a trend of 290 reviews per minute daily (TripAdvisor, 2017).

Meanwhile, scholars regard UGC as the fastest and richest online channel of information for sharing tourism experiences (Baek et al., 2020; Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). With this alarming trend, hotel managers are only surmised to understand the importance of these tonnes of user-generated content, with no verifiable evidence of the same. However, through these tonnes of UGC, prospective guests gain their predispositions from existing reviews before booking a hotel. The existing reviews create predispositions, which might lead to the customer developing a good or bad perception depending on the content they view on travel and social media sites. As such, this content has notably been proven to influence the satisfaction and behavioural intentions of customers in several studies (For example, Demba, Chiliya, Chuchu, & Ndoro, 2019; Tsiakali, 2018; Bahtar, & Muda, 2016), with minimal attention to managers' application of UGC.

Earlier studies documented minimal managers' application of UGC. The studies alluded that managers had little knowledge of the application of UGC in monitoring and response. For instance, Barsky and Frame (2016) cited a 2009 Market Metrix and Trip advisor survey, indicating that 85% of hotels do not have guidelines for monitoring or responding to UGC. Only 4% respond to negative reviews; at the same time, research indicates that only one response is notable out of every five reviews. While the survey attempts to determine the extent of UGC application among the managers, Market Metrix and Trip Advisor carried it out thirteen years ago. Several studies have therefore been conducted in the same area, with none addressing the extent to which managers apply UGC among hotels, thus leaving the area neglected with no reliable knowledge of the extent of application of UGC among managers.

Recent studies, such as Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, & Buultjens, (2015) and Sparks & Bradley, (2017) discuss the frameworks and models on how managers respond to UGC and correlations with various variables. Barsky and Frame (2016) recommend the managers' application of UGC in monitoring, response, and action based on the appropriate guidelines. According to Deng et al. (2021), managers responded to reviews by acknowledgment, accountancy, affection, or action. They measured managers' UGC response through the response volume, review and response length, acknowledgment, accountancy, action, and positive and negative affection. In a meta-analytic review, Babić Rosario, Sotgiu, De Valck, and Bijmolt (2016) affirm two significant UGC measures: volume and valence. Although they deduce other UGC measures, including variance and composite valence volume, this study adopted a reactive UGC application approach. It conceptualized UGC application into monitoring and response with considerations such as (Burgess et al., 2015; Barsky & Frame, 2009 and Babić Rosario et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, studies have failed to address the managerial aspect of UGC usage sufficiently. This study is cognisant of the wielding power of customers in UGC creation and access. At this point, assessing the extent to which managers apply UGC was deemed necessary. Notwithstanding, the study sought to delve into the neglected managerial application of UGC and, therefore, aimed to assess the extent to which managers apply UGC among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1. UGC Application Framework and Theories

Various theories have been used in different studies to explain customers' participation in online review sites and their adoption of UGC. For example, Babić Rosario et al. (2016) were guided by the social impact theory and the herding behavior of customers. They argued that the reliance on the volume of peer-generated information in customer decision-making is guided by people tending to follow the behavior of others in avoidance of risks in an environment. On the other

hand, Deng et al. (2021) adopted the service recovery and affect theories in developing the 'AAAA' typology. This study adopted the 'AAAA' UGC response framework by Deng et al. (2021), an advancement of a triple 'A' typology in Sparks and Bradley (2017). The typology comprises acknowledgement, account, and action. Deng et al. modify this typology by adding the concept of affect with reference to the affect and service recovery theories.

2.2. Managers Monitoring and Response to UGC

Hotel managers need detailed information about customers' journeys to manage hospitality service experiences effectively. The information in this context, referred to as user-generated content, comprises service experiences posted online as reviews, comments, videos, and photos, thus, a rich information source (Williams et al., 2010; Smyth, Wu & Greene, 2010; Alcázar, Piñero, & de Maya, 2014; Pattison, Venter & Chuchu, 2016; Demba et al., 2019). Effective management of hospitality service experience requires conversance with the content customers post as reviews, videos, photos, and other forms of information online.

Most importantly, customers post their previous experiences on various travel sites, review sites, and social media as UGC. Other customers have been noted to depend on these UGC to get a prior experience of experiential goods, for example, services (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2015). As a result, much explicit information about hotels is readily available as UGC, thus influencing other customers differently. This information can help manage hospitality service experiences in hotels.

Customers have been found to apply UGC before visiting a hotel to inform their behavioral intentions. In their article, Cheek, Ferguson & Tanner (2013) argue that local and international social media sites receive millions of posts. This argument is supported by Trip Advisor (2017) statistics, which record over 500 million reviews daily, potentially giving information about the hotel style and amenities, service, value, cleanliness, and price, among others. Moreover, Ipsos Media CT and CrowdTap noted that 1% of Millennials trust a brand through an advertisement.

Arguably, authors have stated that professionals lack knowledge of managing UGC successfully (e.g., Barsky & Frame, 2009; Burgess et al., 2015; Babić Rosario et al., 2016). More important, though, is that prior studies have extensively deepened the knowledge base on consumer application of UGC, unlike the management of UGC. Several studies corroborate the positive relationship with factors around hotel choice; however, there is a scarcity of studies investigating the managerial application of UGC. Existing studies do not indicate how and intensity managers monitor UGC and its influence on the hospitality service experience.

On the same note, scholars have widely acknowledged the relevance of managerial UGC response as a substantive factor in several parameters, with slight variation and no evidence of its effect on hospitality service experience. These parameters include service recovery, customer satisfaction, perception, and customers' review behaviour, to mention a few. This argument is supported in the ongoing scholarly conversation on managerial response to UGC.

In an article, Lanz, Fischhof, and Lee (2010) discussed how hotels embraced social media, where some hotels noticed decreased negative comments after customer engagement via Trip Advisor. Others, like the HK Hotels in New York, shifted their attention from a one-on-one conversation with guests to Trip Advisor comments, where even the politest guest who would hardly share their issues commented explicitly.

A recent study by Wang and Chaudhry (2018) investigated the effect of managers' public response to online reviews on popular travel websites on subsequent reviews. The findings show that managers' responses significantly influence subsequent customer opinions, indicating that managers' response to reviews positively affects subsequent reviews.

From the foregoing, there is wide recognition of the fact that UGC affects various aspects of hotel operations, including marketing, customer response management, and guest relations, among others, within the hospitality industry. Despite this and the growing popularity of UGC among various hospitality establishments, there is little study, if any, that addresses the extent of managerial UGC monitoring and response among hotels in the recent past within the Kenyan context. This study, therefore, sought to address the gap in the extent of managers' monitoring and response to UGC among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach and Design

This research adopted a quantitative research approach. A quantitative approach served well based on the researcher's philosophical underpinnings, which dictate a deterministic philosophy. A deterministic philosophy aims to establish the truth behind UGC usage by managers towards enhancing the hospitality service experience. This study employed a survey design. It encompassed the collection of quantitative data from a sample using a questionnaire.

3.2. Study Area and Population

This study was conducted on randomly selected 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. According to the Tourism Sector Performance report (2019), 73.9% of tourists visit Kenya for a holiday. Besides, the tourism sector's performance has grown for various reasons, including digital marketing.

The study population comprised general managers, guest/customer relations managers, and marketing managers from 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. This group of managers was considered because they are among the key players in hospitality service experience management and connect with customers online by monitoring or responding to UGC.

According to the Tourism Regulatory Authority (2019), there are 147 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. The study population was estimated to be 441 hotel managers from Kenya's targeted hotels, considering at least three respondents from each hotel (general managers, guest/ customer relations managers, and marketing managers).

3-5-star hotels were considered luxury hotels because they are most inclined to create experiences apart from the regular provision of products and services. This study also covered 3-5-star hotels because their customers tend to have high expectations and not only look for the mere provision of products and services but also seek experience from the service (Cetin & Walls, 2016). Several studies indicated that hospitality service experience reactions are posted online as UGC expressing dissatisfaction, service gaps, and failures apart from satisfaction.

3.3. Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

According to Thornhill et al. (2009), the minimum sample size was determined at a 95% confidence level and a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error, using a z score of 1.96. An estimated proportion of piloted responses expected was assumed at 50% of the hotel managers' sample (Saunders et al., 2009; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Therefore, the sample was determined as follows:

$$n = p\% * q\% * \left\{ \frac{z}{e\%} \right\}^2$$

$$n = 50\% \times 50\% \times \left\{ \frac{1.96}{5} \right\}^2 = 384.16$$

Where n is the minimum sample size required, p% is the proportion belonging to hotel managers, q% is the proportion not belonging to hotel managers, z is the z-value of the corresponding level of confidence, and e% is the margin of error required.

$$n' = \frac{n}{1 + \left(\frac{n}{N} \right)}$$

$$n' = \frac{384.16}{1 + \left(\frac{384.16}{444} \right)} = 205.96$$

Therefore, the adjusted minimum sample size was 206 hotel managers. Where n' is the adjusted minimum sample size, n is the minimum sample size, N is the sample frame.

The study employed a multistage sampling technique to represent the widely dispersed population (Saunders et al., 2009). The first stage comprised a stratified sampling technique based on administrative boundaries and star ratings. Table 1 below shows classified hotel distribution based on administrative boundaries and star ratings drawn from the list of classified hotels in Kenya (TRA, 2019).

Population Strata	3 star	4 star	5 star	Total
Nairobi	14	19	11	44
Kajiado	2	1	0	3
Machakos	1	1	0	2
Mombasa	8	5	1	14
Kwale	1	5	4	10
Kilifi	2	3	1	6
Taita	2	0	0	2
Narok	4	15	3	22
Nakuru	5	7	2	14
Kisumu	5	1	0	6
Embu	1	0	0	1
Meru	1	0	0	1
Laikipia	2	1	2	5
Nyeri	5	3	0	8
Isiolo	1	2	0	3
Samburu	0	2	0	2
Uasin Gishu	1	1	0	2
Elgeyo Marakwet	2	0	0	2
Total	57	66	24	147

Table 1: Distribution of Hotels by Region and Ratings

The second stage entailed proportionate sampling such that each stratum representation comprised a relative proportion of strata to the whole population. The proportion was calculated using Dalen's (1962) formula below. The last sampling stage was simple random sampling, which drew the required number of hotels from each stratum. Three hotel managers were drawn from each of the sampled hotels.

$$\text{Actual sample} = \frac{\text{Population Strata}}{\text{Estimated Population}} \times \text{Adjusted minimum sample size}$$

For example, in the case of 3-star rated hotels in Nairobi, 14 is the population strata, 147 is the estimated population, and 206 managers, assuming that each hotel has all three managers, the general manager, front office or guest relations manager, and marketing manager. To get the number of hotels to draw the required minimum sample size = $206 \div 3 = 68.6667$ hotels.

Therefore, the minimum sample of hotels was 69 because hotels cannot be expressed in decimals; instead, they are expressed in whole numbers.

To get the proportionate sample size of 3-star rated hotels in Nairobi, Dalen's (1962) formula was used.

$$\text{Where, Actual Sample} = \frac{14}{147} \times 69 = 6.5714$$

Like hotels, humans cannot be expressed as fractions or decimals. It means 6.5714 would be rounded off to a whole number, 7. The same computation was done for all the strata in the sample. Table 2 below shows the actual sample size that was used to draw respondents.

Population Strata	3 star	4 star	5 star	Total
Nairobi	7	9	6	22
Kajiado	1	1	0	2
Machakos	1	1	0	2
Mombasa	4	3	1	8
Kwale	1	3	2	6
Kilifi	1	2	1	4
Taita	1	0	0	1
Narok	2	7	2	11
Nakuru	3	4	1	8
Kisumu	3	1	0	4
Embu	1	0	0	1
Meru	1	0	0	1
Laikipia	1	1	1	3
Nyeri	3	2	0	5
Isiolo	1	1	0	2
Samburu	0	1	0	1
Uasin Gishu	1	1	0	2
Elgeyo Marakwet	1	0	0	1
Total	33	37	14	84

Table 2: Sampled Distribution of 3-5-Star Hotels in Kenya

The researcher collected data from 252 hotel managers derived from the actual sample size of hotels after consideration of 3 hotel managers per hotel, as discussed above.

That is, = $84 \times 3 = 252$ hotel managers

3.4. Data Collection Instruments and Variable Measurements

The study employed self-administered questionnaires whereby the questionnaires were administered online and some delivered to hotel managers to respond. These two approaches were adopted due to the in-house hotel policies following the need to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Some hotels had put preventive measures in place to curb the spread of face-to-face interactions.

The questionnaires were composed of close-ended matrix questions designed to collect respondents' opinions, behaviour, and attributes (Saunders et al., 2009), addressing the study's specific objectives. Likert scales composed of numbers and their descriptions were used to rank or rate subjective and intangible aspects of the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), for example, the extent of a manager's application of UGC.

The scale was composed of 6 responses ranging from "large extent" to "not at all" to assess the extent of a managers' application of UGC. Where 1=not at all, 2=small extent, 3=quite a small extent, 4=some extent, 5=quite a large extent, 6=large extent.

Managers' application of UGC comprises monitoring and responding to UGC as the main concepts. Managers' application of UGC was operationalized in accordance with Babić Rosario et al. (2016), where monitoring comprised checking the volume and valence. Volume is the total amount of UGC elements posted by previous customers. Valence entails the positivity, negativity, or neutrality of the content generated by previous customers.

Response was operationalized in the words of Deng et al. (2021). Response is the acknowledgement, accountancy, affection, or action taken towards UGC. Acknowledgement is defined as recognition from the hotel to the reviewer to provide feedback concerning the hotel through apologies, appreciation, acceptance of responsibility, or disputing issues.

4. Findings and Discussions

The study's objective was to assess the extent of managers' application of UGC among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. The assessment was done by using mean scores, as shown in table 3. The cut-off mean was set at 3. Generally, the findings indicated that managers monitored the valence of UGC ($M=4.889$) to quite a large extent. Monitoring the valence comprised checking the positivity, negativity, or neutrality of UGC. Affection followed closely ($M=4.471$) and included the expression of regrets, embarrassment, or happiness in UGC responses. The account construct was the least applied ($M=3.467$) by hotel managers. It entailed the refusal, justification, and clarification of issues raised by customers in UGC.

Managerial monitoring of UGC was measured using the volume and valence constructs. The valence (positivity, negativity, or neutrality) of UGC had a higher mean score ($M= 4.889$), while volume had a lower mean score ($M=4.014$). Checking unfavorable sentiments generated by customers on the web about the hotel was ranked the highest in managerial monitoring ($M= 4.523$, $SD=1.584$). In contrast, checking the total number of previous contents generated by customers on the web ($M = 3.622$, $SD = 1.439$) was the least ranked.

Checking the positivity, negativity, and neutrality of UGC was more prevalent than the volume (number of UGC generated). This finding contradicts BabicRosario et al. (2016), who found the volume construct to have a stronger impact. The difference in findings is attributed to the difference in the dependent variable. BabicRosario et al. looked into how eWOM affects sales. At the same time, this study was primarily focused on the hospitality service experience, which to a great extent, relies on the composition of the content that customers generate rather than the number of contents generated. The composition of UGC can either speak positivity or negativity or be neutral as far as the hospitality service experience is concerned. Managers' utilization of UGC will purposely be to know the ideal customer needs, reduce histories of the low quality of service, and remould negative images.

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valence				
Positive content generated by customers	1.00	6.00	4.958	1.454
Negative content generated by customers	1.00	6.00	4.927	1.516
Neutral content generated by customers	1.00	6.00	4.782	1.589
Mean			4.889	
Volume				
Number of unfavourable sentiments about my hotel generated by customers on the web	1.00	6.00	4.523	1.584
Number of favourable sentiments about my hotel generated by customers on the web	1.00	6.00	3.897	1.340
Total amount of previous customer content generated	1.00	6.00	3.622	1.439
Average Mean			4.014	

Table 3: Mean Ranking (Monitoring)

The managerial response was measured using the "AAAA" typology comprising Acknowledgement, Account, Action, and Affection. The results are shown in table 4. The accounting construct had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.467$), while the affection construct had the highest mean score ($M = 4.471$).

In the accounting construct, there was a dismal performance in expressing refusal ($M = 2.049$, $SD=1.258$) and justifying ($M= 3.897$, $SD=1.572$) issues. Clarifying issues raised by previous customers had a comparatively higher mean score ($M = 4.455$, $SD=1.520$).

By affection, expressing happiness for a guest's satisfaction ($M=5.176$, $SD=1.444$) was ranked highest. It was followed closely by expressing regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers ($M=5.006$, $SD=1.598$). The least ranked was expressing embarrassment for an experienced service gap or failure ($M=3.230$, $SD=1.296$).

The action construct comprised inviting back customers to their hotels ($M=5.249$, $SD=1.471$) which was ranked highest, followed by promising previous customers future corrections of experienced shortfalls ($M=5.206$, $SD=1.438$). The least ranked was assuring customers of financial compensation after service failures or gaps ($M=2.078$, $SD = 1.116$).

In the acknowledgement, showing appreciation in responses was top-ranked ($M=5.178$, $SD = 1.414$), followed by apologizing for service gaps and failures ($M=4.979$, $SD = 1.596$). The least ranked was "response by disputing issues raised by previous customers" ($M=2.317$, $SD = 1.351$).

The results show that hotel managers primarily responded to UGC by expressing: happiness for a guest's satisfaction, regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers, and embarrassment for experiencing a service gap or failure. Furthermore, the acknowledgement was ranked with the second highest mean score. It showed that managers respond by showing appreciation, apologizing for service gaps or failures, and disputing issues raised by previous customers. Most managers seem to know the huge UGC audience and the importance of responding to guests' posts on the internet. Managerial response informs other previous and prospective customers of how the hotel handled a particular service failure or gap—as a result, influencing the hospitality service experience through the cognitive dimension.

Account was ranked the least, showing that hotel managers hardly responded to UGC by expressing refusal or justifying issues raised by their previous customers. Nonetheless, managers tend to give clarifications more than refusal or

justification. While the customer is always right, there could be instances when the hotel barely has control of the type of experience that a customer receives. For example, a bad experience caused by a customer-to-customer relationship, mistakes from the travel agent, billing issues from the customer's bank during bill settlement, noise from nearby clubs, or periodic maintenance procedures. Therefore, the hotel managers may neglect or clarify their position on the situation or the action taken.

The study findings are similar to Sparks and Bradley's (2017), with slight variations. For example, in Sparks and Bradley's work, acknowledgement, account, and action are the most prevalent responses. This study finds account to be the least applied type of response compared to acknowledgement, affection, and action. The difference in findings may be managers' reservations to express refusal or justify issues raised by previous customers. Instead, managers express their happiness for a great service experience or regrets for dissatisfaction after a service experience.

The study findings also align with Chen et al. (2016). According to Chen et al. (2016), managers adopt three primary approaches when handling customer criticisms in eWOM. They publicly respond to positive and negative UGC, privately contact customers ($M = 4.502$, $SD = 1.774$) or take no response. In their responses, hotel managers have been found to dismally justify or express refusal to issues raised by previous customers. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2016) support these findings.

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Affection				
Express happiness for the satisfaction of a guest in my responses	1.00	6.00	5.176	1.444
Express regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers when responding	1.00	6.00	5.006	1.598
Express embarrassment for an experienced service gap or failure in my responses	1.00	6.00	3.230	1.296
Mean			4.471	
Acknowledgement				
Show appreciation in my responses to customer-generated information	1.00	6.00	5.176	1.414
Apologize for service gaps and failures in my responses	1.00	6.00	4.979	1.596
Accept responsibility in my responses to customer-generated content	1.00	6.00	4.743	1.550
Respond by disputing issues raised by previous customers	1.00	6.00	2.317	1.351
Mean			4.304	
Action				
Invite customers back to your hotel in my responses	1.00	6.00	5.249	1.471
Promise previous customers future corrections of experienced shortfalls in my responses	1.00	6.00	5.206	1.438
Ask customers to contact the hotel management for further assistance	1.00	6.00	4.502	1.774
Assure customers of financial compensation after service failures or gaps	1.00	6.00	2.078	1.116
Mean			4.259	
Account				
Clarify issues raised by previous customers	1.00	6.00	4.455	1.520
Justify issues that previous customers raise	1.00	6.00	3.897	1.572
Express refusal of issues raised by previous customers	1.00	6.00	2.049	1.258
Average Mean			3.467	

Table 4: Mean Ranking (Response)

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study sought to assess the extent to which managers apply user-generated content among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. It was deduced that hotel managers in high-end hotels apply UGC to a large extent. Hotel managers primarily apply UGC by checking the number of unfavourable sentiments and checking positive content generated by customers about their hotels. In their responses, hotel managers express happiness for a guest's satisfaction and express regrets for dissatisfaction experienced by previous customers. Moreover, hotel managers appreciate their responses, apologize for service gaps and failures, invite customers back to their hotels, and promise future corrections of experienced shortfalls.

This study provides a critical understanding of how managers apply UGC and how it can be useful in enhancing the hospitality service experience among 3-5-star hotels in Kenya. However, further studies may be conducted in relation

to the study's limitations, findings, and methodology. First, while the study was limited to hotels that record an online presence and high-end hotels, further studies may be conducted on low-end hotels, more precisely starting from their extent of application of UGC and service experience enhancement. Low-end hotels may comprise one- and two-star hotels. Moreover, further research may look into hotel managers' motivation to apply UGC across different hotel ratings.

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