AN ANALYSIS OF ONLINE REVIEW COMMENTS OF THE USES AND
GRATIFICTIONS SOUGHT BY USERS OF HOTELS.COM

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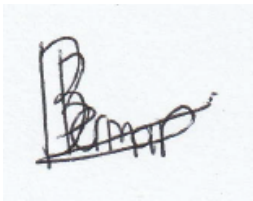
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STUDY LEADER: Dr. A. Nelmapius

October 2019

DECLARATION

I Gabriella Kirsty Berman hereby declare that:

- the work in this treatise is my own original work, in combination with that of my co-researcher(s), Stephanie Louise Smith;

- all sources used or referred to have been documented and recognised; and

- this treatise has not been previously submitted in full or partial fulfilment of the requirements for an equivalent or higher qualification at any other recognised educational institution.

Gabriella Kirsty Berman
October 2019

DECLARATION

I Stephanie Louise Smith hereby declare that:

- the work in this treatise is my own original work, in combination with that of my co-researcher(s), Gabriella Kirsty Berman;

- all sources used or referred to have been documented and recognised; and

- this treatise has not been previously submitted in full or partial fulfilment of the requirements for an equivalent or higher qualification at any other recognised educational institution.
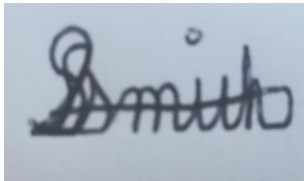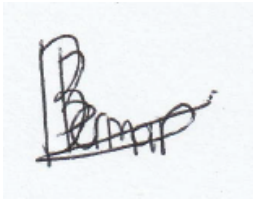
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ABSTRACT

The experience economy allows memorable experiences to be created for consumers. This is apparent in the tourism industry as unique offerings are required for the various market segments. The tourism industry is a valuable source of income for South Africa's economy (Vos, 2016:1). Poudel (2013:1) explains that a primary factor of the tourism industry is accommodation, and as the tourism industry has expanded so has the demand for accommodation. Ketter (2018:333) adds that consumers are focusing more on intangible 'extras' they stand to benefit from utilising a products or service rather than on just the physical offering itself. As a result, a multitude of accommodation types and offerings have come into existence, all offering different services, facilities and amenities in relation to their specific target audience, such as hotels, self-catering accommodation, backpackers, and B&B's (Poudel, 2013:1).

The aim and primary objective of this study was to identify the uses and gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa (SA), based on their online review comments. Following the literature review, primary research was conducted, whereby 10, 000 online review comments from individuals who had utilised Hotels.com to book a hotel in the Western Cape, were collected, coded, categorised and commented on. From the findings, conclusions and managerial implications were drawn. The managerial implications were considered in conjunction with the literature in order to provide managerial recommendations.

This study made use of a content analysis research design as well as a hybrid research paradigm. The qualitative aspect of this study related to the review of the extant literature to identify uses and gratifications sought by hotel users, while the descriptive aspect of the study relates to the presentation and analysis of the data collected. For this study, probability sampling was utilised for this study, where the sample population consisted of users of Hotels.com that utilised a hotel in the Western Cape, SA and made an online review of their experience.

The findings of this study identified the facilities of the hotel as the most sough gratification by users of Hotels.com. Additionally, the location of the hotel, human resources employed by the hotel, amenities offered by the hotel, monetary value

perceived by customers and entertainment provided by the hotel were also identified as being a significant gratification sought by users of Hotels.com.

Some of the more significant recommendations made to stakeholders of the hotel sector was to: establish a transport system to nearby transport hubs and tourist attractions; to conduct research, either primary or secondary, to gain a better understanding of the specific needs and wants of the target audience; employ a good screening, hiring and training program to attempt to standardise the service performance throughout the hotel; partnerships can be formed with nearby attractions to improve perceived customer value of the hotel; both in-room and communal entertainment should be provided, and; an increased focused should be placed on the hotels online presence. The constraints of this study included; a lack of time; finding a content analysis program; collecting a large enough sample, and; sourcing current information.

CHAPTER 1

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUD OF THE STUDY

1.1   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to McDonald (2018), four billion people have been recorded in the 2018 Global Digital Suite of Reports to be using the internet. This constitutes over half of the world's population, indicating the rise of the fourth industrial revolution (McDonald, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2019). Statistics further indicate that Africa was the country that experienced the fastest growth in the number of internet users in 2017, materializing in a 20 percent year-on-year increase in users (McDonald, 2018). Matangira (2018) for Eyewitness News reports that in South Africa (SA) alone, 60 percent of the population has access to the internet or makes use of the internet.

As explained by Skae (2018), SA is experiencing minimal economic growth as well as a growth in the unemployment rate. Statistics support this, indicating that SAs' economic growth in 2018 was only 0.8 percent, with the unemployment rate being 27.1 percent, compared to the 1.3 percent growth in the previous year (2017) (Carvalho, 2019a; Carvalho, 2019b; Carin, 2018). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2018:1) travel and tourism in SA constitute one of the most substantial economic sectors that contributes to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country, projected to rise to 598.6 billion by 2028 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018:1). Adding to this, Tourism South Africa (2019) states that tourism helps to alleviate the high unemployment rate in the country and assist in the transformation of the country. The Western Cape specifically has been highlighted as the most popular area for tourism (Western Cape Info, 2018; Western Cape Government, 2017). The tourism industry is made up of numerous different elements and, as defined by Dutt (2019), accommodation is a key element, which includes hotels (Wilson-Mah, 2012:44). There are thousands of different types of accommodation that all serve a purpose and are directed at the needs of a specific type of tourist, therefore it is essential that the establishment differentiates themselves in the market (Wilson-Mah, 2012:44; Berman, Potgieter & Verity, 2019:1).

In the service industry, such as with accommodation, it is harder to differentiate the offering because of its intangibility and consumers have become more demanding, having raised expectations from the service provider (Bhasin, 2017; Hunter, 2017). Therefore, establishments have had to find new ways to reach and persuade their potential customers to support them. A growing trend, that has been made possible by the advances of technology, is utilising smart tourism (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2015:244). "Smart tourism" incorporates the use of technology into the tourism industry and includes platforms that give consumers the opportunity to compare thousands of similar offerings in order to make a decision (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang & Koo, 2015:180). Examples of such a platform include Bookings.com, Tivago, AirBnB and Hotels.com.

The integration of technology and Information Communication Technologies (ICT) into the tourism industry brought many benefits for both the suppliers and the consumers, including lowered costs, discounts, time saving and access to information and knowledge (Amaro & Duarte, 2015:64). The decision that a tourist makes can be determined through the use of the Uses and Gratifications (UG) Theory, which explains the motives behind a consumers' choice to use a specific media platform to satisfy their need (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy & Goodman, 2016: 262). Therefore, a consumer will select a media platform that can best satisfy their need.

If a consumer's expectations are met or exceeded then then they will be satisfied, as explained by Bhatt (2015:2). Pinto, Gurerreiro and Silva (2010) add to the research done by Bhatt (2015:2) by stating that when a consumer is satisfied then they will communicate it via word-of-mouth. Consumer satisfaction is explained by two theories of satisfaction, namely; The Disconfirmation Theory, and; The Expectancy Value theory (Plante, O'Keefe & Thèorêt, 2012; Fripp, 2018). Service providers, such as hotels, must therefore understand what they need to offer to satisfy their targeted tourists' accommodation needs.

In the accommodation industry, as indicated by the extant literature (Annexure A), gratifications that are highlighted by tourists include: Location of the hotel; t tourists'

personal experience; The price, promotion and value for money offered; The type of hotel; The quality of the service provided; Availability of technology; Intangible service hospitality provided; Amenities available; The hotels ratings and reviews; Entertainment provided; Online information available, and; Social interaction. Following the theories of satisfaction then, if a service provider can meet the expectations of tourists with regards to these gratifications, then the tourist will be satisfied.

Numerous researchers, such as Baek, Holton, Harp and Yaschur (2011:2243), Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2006:3), Whiting & Williams (2013:362) and Sangwan, (2005:8), have conducted studies on the UG theory in relation to the hospitality industry, however, as far as could be determined, there is limited or no research that has been done on uses and gratifications sought by users of Hotel.com when selecting a hotel in the Western Cape, SA. Therefore, the aim of this study is to contribute to the literature by identify the gratifications sought by users of Hotel.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA.

The study will be completed through the use of secondary research (online sources, journals, books and conference papers) as well as primary research, which will be discussed in the sections that follow. The structure of the study will consist of six chapters, namely; Introduction and orientation of the study; Literature review and conceptualisation; Research methodology; The Proposed hypothetical framework; Reporting's and findings, and; Synopsis, conclusions, implications and recommendations.

For this study, the research problem relates to a lack of information on the gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online reviews, which is discussed in detail in the section to follow.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

As defined by Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:64) a research study should aim to solve a problem, known as the research problem. Du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al.* (2014:64) further state that the research problem is the 'golden thread' that the research report is built around. It is therefore essential to ensure the research problem is clearly defined.

It is apparent that extensive research has been done on the uses and gratification theory and its application in the hospitality industry. However, as far as could be determined, no research has been done on this unique combination of gratifications, which have been derived from a review of the extant literature, with reference to Hotels.com in SA, specifically in the Western Cape. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature, and it is important that this current study identifies gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting a hotel in the Western Cape, based on their online comments.

1.3   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

According to Farrugia, Petrisor, Farrokhyar and Bhandaria (2010:280) primary objectives describe what the aim of the study is, while secondary objectives indicate how the researcher plans to achieve the primary objective (Struwig & Stead, 2015:52) Du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al.* (2014:99) add that objectives indicate whether or not the research questions can be answered. The objectives of this study are given in the following sections.

1.3.1   Primary Objective

The primary objective of this study is to   identify the key gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting a hotel in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online review comments. Secondary objectives to support this are the following.

1.3.2 Secondary Objectives

Secondary objectives of this study include:

SO^1: To identify whether the facilities of the hotel are a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO^2: To identify whether the location of the hotel is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO^3: To identify whether the human resources are a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO^4: To identify whether the amenities of the hotel are a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO^5: To identify whether the monetary value offered by the hotel is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO^6: To identify whether entertainment being provided is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO^7: To identify whether the type of traveller is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO^8: To identify whether the promotional effort by the hotel is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO^9: To identify whether the integration of technology into the hotel processes is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

SO[10]: To identify whether the brand name of the hotel is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

To accomplish these objectives, the following methodological objectives are set out.

1.3.3 Methodological Objectives

To achieve the above-mentioned primary and secondary objectives, the following methodological objectives have been identified:

MO[1]: To undertake a theoretical investigation into the uses and gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com in SA, specifically in the Western Cape, based on their online review comments;

MO[2]: To determine the appropriate research methodology to address the identified research problem and research objectives;

MO[3]: To source primary data from online reviews of users of Hotels.com in the Western Cape, and to statistically analyse the data, as well as test the proposed hypotheses; and

MO[4]: To provide conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this research, which could assist hotel owners to better their offering, attract, satisfy and retain clients and ultimately improve their business's financial performance through gaining an understanding of what gratifications tourist want most.

1.3.4 Research Questions

From the research problem, the primary research question has been formulated as; what are the gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com in SA, specifically in the Western Cape, based on their online review comments? Secondary research questions include:

SRO[1]: Is the facilities of the hotel a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com based on their online comments?

SRO[2]: Is the location of the hotel a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

SRO[3]: Are the human resources of the hotel a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

SRO[4]: Are the amenities offered by the hotel a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

SRO[5]: Is the monetary value offered by the hotel a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

SRO[6]: Is entertainment provided a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

SRO[7]: Is the type of traveller a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

SRO[8]: Are the promotional efforts of the hotel a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

SRO[9]: Is the integration of technology into the hotels processes a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

SRO[10]: Is the brand name of the hotel a gratification sought by users of   Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments?

1.4   LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Worldometers (2019), the global population is at an all-time high, and with an expected annual growth estimation of 1.2%, it can be concluded that that the Earth is becoming overpopulated (Baus, 2017:vi). Furthermore, all 7.6 billion inhabitants of the Earth have needs and wants, which are unlimited (Hoeschele,

2016:1). The nature of unlimited needs and wants paired with limited resources has resulted in the economic problem (Hoeschele, 2016:1). The economic motive is driven by the fact that humans will strive to fulfil those unlimited needs and wants (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014:20). Kotler and Armstrong (2014:234) go further to explain that businesses exist to efficiently, effectively and productively design offerings, which will satisfy consumer needs and wants. Digital platforms and online databases provide the ability to individually customise market offerings and thereby has great potential to provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Shimp & Andrews, 2014:118; Kotler & Armstrong, 2014:117).

According to the managing director of LG Electronics, South Africa, Mr CY Kim, the world is becoming a smaller place with technology as a driver of the evolution of mankind, which has led to the fourth industrial revolution (Kim, 2018). Technology has become a part of everyday life with 4.2 billion people having access to the internet, Africa constituting 464 million of that amount (Internet World Stats, 2018). Furthermore, the internet has given businesses expansion opportunities and buyers increased information, leaving them with heightened expectations, intensified demands, and increased purchasing power (Rezabakhsh, Bornemann, Hansen & Schrader, 2006:4). An industry, which has been transformed by the internet and relies upon various ICT systems, is the tourism industry, where service providers share information and value propositions and consumers can access it to make informed decisions (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015:180). While developed countries are at the forefront of technological advancements, less developed, third world countries, such as South Africa (SA) are also utilising the internet to share information and conduct business (Haggerty, 2018; Redor & Saadi, 2011:3).

The South African economy constitutes 16% of the continents Gross Domestic Product (GDP), due to its abundance of agricultural resources, as well as accounting for the majority of the economic and industrial infrastructure (Jaars, 2018). Furthermore, SA is known for its picturesque landscapes, perfect weather, copiousness wildlife and hospitality of its citizens, which makes it a popular destination for tourism (Africa Geographic Travel, 2017). However, the unemployment rate is still

at 27.1% and, in a report issued by the World Bank, South Africa was rated the most unequal country in the world (Stats SA, 2019b; Gous, 2018). The tourism CEO, Sisa Ntshona, claims that the tourism industry largely contributes in aiding the dire state of the South African economy (Stats SA, 2018b).

Tourism in SA has been recognised as a major facilitator of job creation, the development of societies and economic growth and therefore, the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa was created in 1996 (South African Government, 2019; Smith, 2018). The National Development Plan ensures the promotion of both domestic and international travel in the country, for tourists as well as business events (South African Government, 2019). The tourism industry accounted for 1.5 million jobs in 2017, which is expected to grow to 2.1 million jobs by 2028, and tourism contributed R412.5 billion to the GDP in 2017 in SA, which increased in 2018 by 2.9% (Smith, 2018; South African Government, 2019). Therefore, it can be deduced that tourism results in real economic and social change for SA citizens.

According to Statista (2018), over 16 million tourists visited SA in 2017, and this number is expected to grow to 19.5 million by 2022. The statistics indicate that the popularity of the Western Cape, which is formed by Cape Town, the West Coast, the Cape Wine-lands, Overberg, Eden and Central Karoo, has increased, and is now, according to Winde (2018), the most popular tourist destination in the country (Annexure B) (Western Cape Info, 2018; Western Cape Government, 2017). Poudel (2013:1) explains that a primary factor of the tourism industry is accommodation, and as the tourism industry has expanded so has the demand for accommodation. Ketter (2018:333) adds that consumers are focusing more on intangible 'extras' they stand to benefit from utilising a products or service rather than on just the physical offering itself. As a result, a multitude of accommodation types and offerings have come into existence, all offering different services, facilities and amenities in relation to their specific target audience, such as hotels, self-catering accommodation, backpackers, and B&B's (Poudel, 2013:1).

As defined by Zaremba (2019), a hotel is an establishment that offers tourists temporary board and lodging, meals and other amenities. Hotels have been around since the 17th century, but originally only offered basic amenities, while modern hotels have been forced to expand their offerings to stand out in the market (Cameron, 2018). Hotels need to therefore identify their target audience to understand what they want, and how to cater for them. In a study done by TripAdvisor (2013) it was found that the amenities which were most sought after included Wi-Fi, free parking, breakfast included, credit card facilities, laundry services available, flexible check in/out, and the location of the hotel (Gould, 2014). There is now a range of different types of hotels to accommodate the varying needs of traveller, which include; Budget and value hotels; Inns and B&Bs; Mid-range hotels and business hotels; Family hotels and resorts; Beach and vacation hotels; Holiday condo resorts; Boutique hotel properties; Luxury and high-end hotels; Hotels on private islands, and; Hotels that float (Read, 2019). The hotel category that a tourist selects will depend on their own personal needs, budgets and length of stay (Zaremba, 2019).

According to Berman, Potgieter and Verity (2019:1) the modern marketplace is rapidly expanding and changing and it has therefore become essential for businesses to differentiate themselves in the mind of their potential clients. Berman, Potgieter and Verity (2019:2) further state that this differentiation is easily seen in the product market as it is materialised through product development and advertising. However, because of the intangibility of the service market, such as accommodation, it has become increasingly difficult to differentiate oneself in the market (Berman *et al*, 2019:2). This difficulty is highlighted by the growth in online or internet-based platforms, where tourists have access to thousands of options, which all satisfy the basic psychological need for accommodation. Online shopping offers consumer's numerous benefits, which includes; Convenience; Better prices; Increased variety; Accessibility; Increased control; Comparability; Decreased sales pressure, and; Privacy (Jain, 2018).

The reason for people choosing to book accommodation online, or make other purchases, can be described by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains

the social and psychological reasons for individuals choosing to utilise a certain media to fulfil a psychological need (Mendes-Filho & Tan, 2009:5). Other theories of motivation which can be used to explain an individual's reason for purchasing are; The Disconfirmation Theory; The Expectancy Value Theory; Cognitive Dissonance Theory; The Contrast Theory and; The Uses and Gratifications Theory. It has been recorded that there has been a significant increase in the number of tourists utilising the internet to book accommodation, due to the fact that they can gain more useful information then from other platforms (Mendes-Filho & Tan, 2009). Adding to this, Ukpabi, Karjaluoto and Onyenucheya (2017:604) state that tourists are connecting via online platforms to share knowledge, which is impacting their decision making. The tourist will therefore select the media platform that can assist in satisfying their needs most efficiently, such as Hotels.com.

Hotels.com is a media platform that presents thousands of worldwide accommodation deals to tourists, and is an affiliate of Expedia, who also own numerous other media platforms, including; Trivago; Orbitz, and; Travelocity (Jet, 2014). Hotels.com boasts having one of the largest bases of accommodation on the internet and has become known as one of the leading providers of hotel accommodation, both chain and independent (Hotels.com, 2019). According to the Expedia Group (2019) Hotels.com was founded in 1991 as a hotels reservation network and has grown to constitute 90 local websites in 41 languages. The reservation platform now has over 25 million verified guest reviews, giving tourists the opportunity to share their experiences, learn from previous guests, which enables them to find a deal which suits them perfectly (Expedia Group, 2019). Furthermore, Hotels.com is known for their loyalty programs and for providing accommodation during the 'sold-out' periods of the year (Expedia Group, 2019; Hotels.com, 2019). Hotels.com has grown in popularity due to their variety in offerings, the ease with which tourists can find information relating to the hotel's amenities, services and pricing, and the ability to book online, all enabling them to satisfy their accommodation needs efficiently (Hotels.com, 2019). For example, in the case of accommodation, tourists will then match the facilities, services and amenities with their personal wants to satisfy their needs. Therefore, it is essential for businesses to understand what their customers want and how to cater for these needs in order to attract and build customer loyalty.

In the accommodation industry, uses and gratifications that are highlighted by tourists include; the hotel facilities; the location of the hotel; the human resources of the hotel; the hotel amenities; monetary value that the client perceives to gain; entertainment provided; the type of traveller; the promotional efforts of the hotel; the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel, and; the brand name of the hotel. Following the theories of satisfaction then, if a service provider can meet the expectations of tourists with regards to these factors, then the tourist will be satisfied.

1.5   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Struwig and Stead (2015:54) the research design and methodology indicates how the research questions of the study will be answered. For this study, the research is twofold, namely secondary and primary research.

1.5.1 Literature Review

The secondary research for this study will include an extensive review of the existing literature to gain an understanding of the changing nature of the tourism industry and its growing dependency on technology, investigate theories, which explain the behaviour of tourists as well as their satisfaction, and determine whether there is a gap in the literature that this study can full. Furthermore, a list of gratifications sought by hotel users will be compiled from the extant literature. By doing this, the researchers will have a clear indication as to which gratifications have been highlighted in pre-existing literature. Therefore, the gratifications sought by users of hotels will be based on the extant literature. The secondary research of this study will be completed by consulting a variety of relevant books, journals, conference papers and online sources. Additionally, the library services of Nelson Mandela University will be utilised to gain access to a broader variety of data basses, both national and international, such as Emerald, Springer, and Sabinet.

1.5.2 Empirical Investigation

The primary research of this study will constitute four parts, namely; an explanation of the research design, paradigm and methodology of the study; a description of the population, sampling and data collection utilised; a discussion on the design of the measuring instrument of the study, and; an indication of how the data will be analysed.

1.5.2.1 Research design, paradigm and methodology

The research paradigm that was used for this study was a hybrid, which indicates that both a qualitative and a quantitative approach is utilised. A hybrid research design allows the researcher to utilise data collection methods related to both qualitative and quantitative research designs (Armitage, 2007; Haf, 2017; Dudovskiy, 2019). In this study a content analysis research design will be utilised, indicating that text was gathered and analysed, which explains how the researchers compiled their empirical data (Struwig & Stead, 2015:12). However, a quantitative, descriptive research design will be utilised to measure size, frequency and quantity of phenomena, and analyse the relationships between variables, by utilising structured methods of data collection and statistical techniques, indicating the method of data analyses for this study (Collis & Hussey, 2014:42).

1.5.2.2 Population, sampling and data collection

For this study the population constitutes all users of Hotels.com who booked a hotel in the Western Cape, SA and made an online review of their experience. Therefore, probability sampling was utilised for this study, where the sample population consisted of users of Hotels.com that utilised a hotel in the Western Cape, SA and made an online review of their experience. A total of 10, 000 participants will construct the sample of this study.

The data collection technique for this study will be a content analysis. This will be done by utilising a program (ATLAS.ti). The researches copy pasted 10 000 online review comments, selecting every 5th listing on Hotels.com. These comments were then cleaned to match the format required by Atlas.ti, so that the program could then

analyse the online reviews of users of Hotels, and identify each word mentioned in every comment and how frequently it was mentioned. This spreadsheet is then provided, which the researches can code and sort into categories and then analyse, to determine which gratifications appear most frequently. The researchers will program ATLAS.ti to exclude sentence words (e.g.; and; but; of). Therefore, there is no sample frame for this study.

1.5.2.3 Design of the measuring instrument

The measuring instrument for this study is ATLAS.ti, which analyses the online reviews of users of Hotels.com to construct a list of the gratifications which are mentioned frequently. The gratifications categories that the results of ATLAS.ti will be sorted into, are based on those identified from the extant literature on similar topics. The area is based on the literature which indicates that the Western Cape has become the most popular tourist destination in SA (Western Cape Info, 2018; Western Cape Government, 2017; Annexure B). The participants will remain anonymous and their online reviews were made with full knowledge that anyone could access them. Therefore, there are no ethical infringes on the participants and full ethical clearance was obtained prior to collecting the primary data for this study.

1.5.2.4 Data analysis

The primary data obtained from ATLAS.ti will be analysed, coded and sorted into the 10 gratification categories identified in this study. Following this, the data will be placed into graphical representations such as pie charts, tables and figures. Lastly, conclusions and managerial recommendations will be made based on the findings

1.6 SCOPE AND DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The delimitations or demarcation of research describes the parameters and limits for this study. The delimitations for this study were;

- The lack of time to conduct the research;

- A minimal budget, due to the researchers being full time students;

- Access to recent relevant information was limited as the subject involves relatively new information;

- The study only included online review comments for hotel in the Western cape, as this was identified as one of the most frequently visited areas by tourists;

- The primary research is only based on gratifications for hotel users and does not include users of other forms of accommodation, as a large portion of the accommodation industry is attributed to hotels;

- The primary research is based on only those hotels which are listed on Hotels.com, and does not include those that are not, as Hotels.com was selected as the subject of the study, and;

- The study identifies only the 10 most frequently mentioned categories of gratifications and excludes any others mentioned by users of Hotels.com, as these were the most popular gratifications sought in other studies with a similar scope.

1.7   CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the uses and gratifications sought by users of Hotel.com in the Western Cape, South Africa. In addition, based on the findings of the research, recommendations could be made to stakeholders of the accommodation industry.

The importance of this research was based on the following factors. There is an increase in the trend of tourists seeing South Africa as a premium holiday destination, specifically in the Western Cape (Western Cape Info, 2018:1; Western Cape Government, 2017:1). Furthermore, as stated by Poudel (2013:1), accommodation is an important element of the tourism industry and an increase in tourism leads to an increase in the demand for accommodation. The significance of the research is therefore that it adds to the literature on gratifications sought by tourists when selecting a hotel, with reference to the Western Cape specifically. While there is prior research done on the uses and gratifications sought by tourists, there is no or limited research done on the uses and gratifications specifically sought by hotel users in the Western Cape, South Africa.

1.8   DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

For this research study, a number of concepts are identified (Table 1.1) which applied to the research question of this study, namely: What are the gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com in SA, specifically in the Western Cape, based on their online review comments?

TABLE 1.1

DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS RELATED TO THE STUDY

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	REFERNCE
FACILITIES	The facilities of the hotel are the tangible attributes of the hotel and can include all equipment or infrastructure.	Shanka and Taylor (2004:119) Lai and Yik (2012:141-157)
LOCATION	The location of a hotel is the geographical location.	Brotherton (2004:944)
HUMAN RESOURCES	Policies and practices within a business, which attempt to ensure that all personnel contribute positively to the organisation and behave in a standardised manner.	Guo *et al*. (2011:3)
AMENITIES	Amenities include those services, or products, which are not essential to the operations of the hotel, but rather act as a differentiator.	Jayapalan (2001:41)
MONETARY VALUE	With regards to monetary value, customer value relates to whether the prices quoted are of a suitable level and if the customer perceives the services given to be worth what they paid.	Bindu, Rajendran & Sai (2008:471)
ENTERTAINMENT	Entertainment can be conceptualised in terms of an individual's desire for need fulfilment, including lower-order and higher-order needs.	Oliver and Bartsch (2011:3)
TYPE OF TRAVELLER	The type of traveller relates to the fact that people travel for different reasons and therefore, expect different benefits from their experiences. This can include; backpacking; business tourism, educational tourism, and all-inclusive tourism.	Sharpley (2018:58)
PROMOTIONAL EFFORT	Promotional efforts in tourism includes all marketing activities and marketing tools, which have the ability to create awareness, attract and retain potential customers.	Jayapalan (2001:131)

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	REFERNCE
INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY	The integration of technology refers to the incorporation of technology systems, self-help kiosks, websites and mobile apps.	Cobanoglu *et al.* (2011:277) Bilgihan, Okumus, Nusair and Kwun (2011:140).
BRAND NAME	A businesses brand name is a company's identity.	Cheung, Kong and Song (2014:1165)
HOTEL	An establishment that provides transient lodging for the public and often meals and entertainment.	Venter and Cloete (2013:225)
E-TOURISM	Technology within the tourism industry.	Pantano and Pietro (2013:212)

Source: Own construction.

1.9   STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of this study, the treatise is divided into five chapters and the structure of the research study contains the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation of the study

The chapter provided an introduction and orientation of the study. This included the gap of the study and from this the research question was identified. Thereafter, the aim and objectives of the study were set. A literature review was conducted and definitions applicable to the study were identified. The significance of the study was expanded upon and the research methodology applicable to the study was given.

Chapter 2: Literature review and conceptualisation

In this chapter the literature pertaining to this study is conceptualised, focussing on the elements that impacting the uses and gratifications sought by users of hotels in the Western Cape, South Africa. An introduction to the topic was given and the gratification categories identified for this study expanded on, namely; the hotel facilitates; the location of the hotel; the human resources of the hotel; the amenities offered by the hotel; the monetary value the user perceives to gain; the entertainment provided by the hotel; the type of traveller; the promotional efforts by the hotel; the

integration of technology into the processes of the hotel, and; the brand name of the hotel.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter will identify the research methodology employed for this study. The research methodology included the research design, paradigm, data collection techniques and instruments, sampling and the problems encountered during the compilation of this study.

Chapter 4: Reporting the findings

This chapter will present the findings from the empirical section of the study. These findings will be presented in the form of graphical representation and the data interpreted.

Chapter 5: Synopsis, conclusions, implications and recommendations.

This chapter will provide the synopsis of the study. Following this, the findings of the study will be utilised to draw conclusions and managerial implications of the study. This chapter conceptualises the literature with relation to this specific study and from this, recommendations will be made to stakeholders of the accommodation industry, more specifically the hotel sector, in the Western Cape, South Africa, and future research.

1.10   STUDY TIME FRAME

The study time frame for this specific study is as follows:

DUE DATE	SECTION OF THE TREATISE REQUIRED
25 MARCH 2019:	Treatise Proposal
8 APRIL 2019:	Chapter 1- Introduction and Orientation of the Study

15 APRIL 2019:   Ethical Clearance Forms

6 MAY2 019:   Chapter 2- Literature Review

27 MAY 2019:   Chapter 3- Methodology

5 AUGUST 2019:   Chapter 4- Results and Findings

9 SEPTEMBER 2019:   Chapter 5- Synopsis, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

14 OCTOBER 2019:   Draft Submission of Completed Treatise

28 OCTOBER 2019:   Final Submission of Completed Treatise

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUALISATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one provided a brief overview of the study. The chapter included the background of the study, highlighted the aims and objectives of the study and provided a summary of the literature review that included conceptualisation and definitions of key concepts related to this study. The significance of the study was explained, which emphasised the importance of the research. Chapter one also identified the research methodology used in this study, pertaining to the research design and paradigm, data collection methods, sampling procedures, data analysis techniques and the delimitations of the study.

In chapter two a literature review of this study is provided. This constitutes an in-depth literature review, which examines technological advances, the South African economy, the South African tourism industry, accommodation as a commodity of the tourism industry, technology in the tourism industry, the uses and gratification theory, Hotels.com, theories of satisfaction, and gratifications sought by users of hotels. The following section expands upon the literature relating to this study.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Statistics presented by Worldometers (2019) indicate that the global population has reached an all-time high of 7.6 billion people, with an annual growth expectancy of 1.2% (Baus, 2017:vi). This number is constantly changing and when considered in conjunction with the capacity of Earth, it can be deduced that the planet is becoming overpopulated (Baus, 2017:vi). Furthermore, all 7.6 billion inhabitants of the Earth have needs and wants and, as explained by Hoeschele (2016:1), human needs and wants are unlimited.

Hoeschele (2016:1) is supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, which aims to prove that humans will satisfy their personal needs according to a hierarchy of importance (Drotsky, 2014:143) (Refer to Annexure C for a graphical representation of the theory). According to the hierarchy of needs, an individual will satisfy their most basic needs first, and then progress to higher levels, such as self-actualisation. This provides a theory of motivation, which explains that human needs will progress, and are therefore unlimited (Drotsky, 2014:143; Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016:63). The unlimited nature of needs is the reason for the planet's resources being deteriorated (Baus, 2017:vi). As a result, there will constantly be a lack of resources and a surplus of consumer demand, which is the economic problem (Hoeschele, 2016:1). In a traditional view of economics, it is accepted that human wants, and needs are unlimited, resources are limited, and it is therefore the economists concern to allocate resources to satisfy consumer demands (O'Boyle, 1993:13).

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014:20), consumers will search for products and services that best satisfy their needs or wants, which explains the economic motive. Kotler and Armstrong (2014:234) go further to explain that businesses exist to efficiently, effectively and productively design offerings, which will satisfy consumer needs and wants. An offering can constitute a product, service or hybrid of the two. It is therefore important for businesses to gain an understanding of their customers' wants and needs, through conducting market research, to be able to match individual needs to customised offerings and thereby satisfy their needs and wants optimally. Digital platforms and online databases provide the ability to individually customise market offerings and thereby has great potential to provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Shimp & Andrews, 2014:118; Kotler & Armstrong, 2014:117).

2.2.1 Technological Advances

According to the managing director of LG Electronics, South Africa, Mr. CY Kim, (Kim, 2018), the world is becoming a smaller place, due to the world-wide-web. The web, as explained by Naik (2009:1), is an interconnected network of software which allows interaction and communication between computer users, meaning that people from around the globe can connect to one another. The development of the web can be

divided into three distinct eras, with the first being known as web 1.0 emerged in 1996 and was characterised by static websites with the sole purpose of information sharing (Naik, 2009:6). In 2006 web 2.0 emerged, which became known as the social web as it allowed interactivity as individuals could upload and download content (Naik, 2009:6). Numerous platforms arose from web 2.0, such as; Blogging; E-mail; Wiki; Images; Games; E-commerce; E-learning, and; Mapping (Naik, 2009:4). A decade later in 2016, web 3.0 emerged, which became known as the semantic web. Web 3.0 was characterised by transformation of a web page into a database as well as two-way-communication between providers and buyers, as well as between different buyers (Steiner, 2018; Naik, 2009:4).

In the modern business marketspace, information sharing, and communication is essential, with increased emphasise being placed on the dependency on technology. Technology is a driver of the evolution of mankind, which has led to the fourth industrial revolution, denoted by individuals connecting mainly via digital domains with Information Communication Technologies being utilised to manage lives (Xu, David & Kim, 2018:90; Kim, 2018). Adding to this, Hanson, Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2016:10) emphasise that there have been immense technological advances and changes in information communication technology, materialising in mobile phones, massive databases, artificial intelligence and online information sharing platforms or sites. Globally, 4.4 billion people have been recorded using the internet, Africa constituting of 10.9% (464 million) (Internet World Stats, 2019). Evident from statistics, 60% of South Africans have access to the internet and, in the Western Cape specifically, 68.5% have access (StatsSA, 2016; Matangira, 2018).

As a result of the increased dependency on the internet, businesses are presented with expansion opportunities that would not have been possible before. Buyers have increased access to information, leaving them with heightened expectations, intensified demands, and increased purchasing power (Rezabakhsh, Bornemann, Hansen & Schrader, 2006:4). A large benefit of the use of technology in business is the ease with which information can be shared by the organisation and found by the target audience, which has become a source for competitive advantage (Hanson et

al., 2016:11; Bethapudi, 2013:69). Other benefits that result from the use of technology and the internet (online shopping/selling), such as in the tourism and hospitality industries, include; consumer convenience; better prices; increased variety; accessibility; increased control; comparability; decreased sales pressure, and; privacy (Al-Debei, Akroush & Ashouri, 2015:708). While developed countries are at the forefront of technological advancements, less developed, such as South Africa, are also utilising the internet to share information and conduct business (Redor & Saadi, 2011:3).

2.2.2 The South African Economy

As stated by Roux (2017:1), the state of the economy in South Africa has dramatically changed in the past two decades. South Africa was known for having a steady economy with a strong currency, which materialised in continuous growth for over 17 years (National Treasury, 2009:17). However, in 2008 the world faced a major economic recession and after years of economic growth, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shrank by 2% in the first quarter, which had negative connotations for all South Africans (National Treasury, 2009:17). The National Treasury (2009:17) estimated at the time that the recovery process would be slow and unstable globally, and especially in less developed countries such as South Africa. The recession of 2008 was finally declared over in 2010, which led to an improved macro- economic environment in South Africa, however, the effects of the recession are still felt by all South Africans. The remnants of the 2008 recession along with the effects of the 2018 recession can be seen in the high unemployment rate (27.1% in 2019), high levels of poverty (with 49.2% of the adult population living below the upper-bound poverty line in 2019) and, in a report issued by the World Bank, South Africa was rated the most unequal country in the world (Stats SA, 2019a; Gous, 2018; Stats SA, 2019b).

Despite the negative economic indicators in South Africa, the country displays promising potential. The South African economy constitutes 16% of the continents GDP, with the GDP growth rate being 0.8% in 2018 and 1.4% in 2019 (Trading economics, 2019). The expansion of the GDP, according to Jaars (2018), can be attributed to the abundance of agricultural resources in the country, as well as to the

fact that South Africa accounts for the majority of the economic and industrial infrastructure in Africa. Major contributors to the South African GDP include; agriculture, forestry and fishing; mining; manufacturing; electricity, gas and water; construction; transport storage and communication; government services; personal services, and; trade, catering and accommodation (StatsSA, 2018a). Adding to this, as stated by tourism Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sisa Ntshona, the tourism industry is an important contributor to the growth of the South African economy (StatsSA, 2018b).

2.2.3 The South African Tourism Industry

Tourism, on a global scale, is being recognised as a tool for poverty reduction and economic development by institutions such as the World Bank, especially in underdeveloped countries, such as South Africa (Seetanah, Durbarry & Ragodoo, 2010:717; Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013:138). South Africa's' amplitude of cultural heritage, natural scenery, temperate climate, abundance of wildlife, array of unique activities and hospitality of citizens make it a top-rated tourist destination (Africa Geographic Travel, 2017; Burns & Novelli, 2008:192). Moreover, tourism in South Africa facilitated the creation of 1.5 million jobs in 2017, or 1 in 23 people, which is expected to grow to 2.1 million jobs by 2028, and tourism contributed R412.5 billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017 in South Africa, which increased in 2018 by 2.9% (Smith, 2018; South African Government, 2019). Furthermore, in the Western Cape specifically, the tourism industry accounted for 300 000 jobs (South African Government, 2018). These statistics emphasise the importance of the tourism industry to the country, and therefore, the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa was created, which ensures the promotion of both domestic and international travel in the country, for tourism as well as business events (South African Government, 2019). However, research by Perry and Potgieter (2013:101) and Frenzel (2013:199) reveal that the tourism industry in South Africa is under threat as tourists are perceiving the country to have a low level of personal safety.

In spite of the high crime levels, Statista (2018) published that over 16 million tourists visited South Africa in 2017, and this number is expected to grow to 19.5 million by

2022. The Western Cape constitutes a large portion of this number, apparent in a report by WESGRO (2016), which found that the Western Cape specifically constituted 15.6% of all tourist arrivals and 23.9% of tourist expenditure in South Africa (Western Cape Government, 2019). The Western Cape constitutes Cape Town, the West Coast, the Cape Wine lands, Overberg, Eden and Central Karoo. Winde (2018) supports these statistics, stating that the Western Cape is now recognised as the most popular tourist destination in the country and will therefore be the area of focus for this research study (Refer to Annexure B for a map of the Western Cape area) (Western Cape Info, 2018). As the interest in tourism is increasing, so is the demand for competencies within the tourism industry. As explained by Lickorish and Jenkins (2007:1) a core competency, which is experiencing an increase in demand, is accommodation, which forms part of the hospitality industry.

2.2.4 Accommodation as a Commodity of the Tourism Industry

As reported by StatsSA (2019c), the accommodation industry is the third largest contributor with regards to employment in South Africa and in 2017, the overall room revenue expanded by 2.7%, which is forecasted to increase at a 5.6% compound annual rate, equating to R21.8 billons in 2022 (PWC South Africa, 2018). As with any service or product offering, accommodation consists of both tangible and intangible aspects.

As explained by Kotler and Armstrong (2014:20), an offering consists of three levels, as seen in Figure 1. The first level constitutes the core product, which is the direct benefit the consumer stands to gain when purchasing and using the product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014:20). The second level constitutes the actual product, which includes aspects of the product, such as the brand, quality and features (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014:20). The third and final level constitutes that augmented product, which refers to the supporting services or features which enhance the attractiveness of the offering to the consumer and increase the competitive advantage of the provider (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014:20).

Figure 2.1

The Levels of an Offering
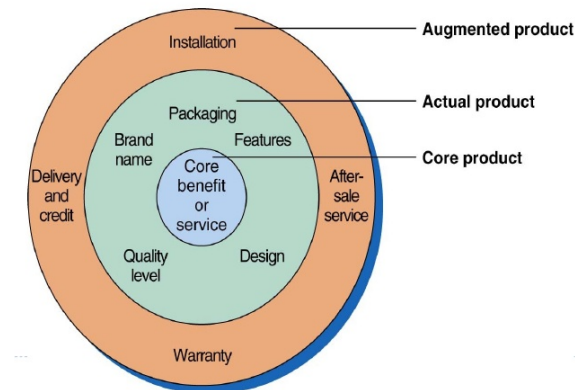
Source: Gadekar, 2012

The accommodation industry is a service, which utilises products to enhance the attractiveness of the offering and therefore, has both service characteristics (heterogeneity and lack of ownership) as well as product characteristics (tangibility and separable with ownership) (Boshoff, 2014:5). These characteristics imply that a unique marketing strategy must be employed to differentiate the offering in the minds of the potential customers (Boshoff, 2014:5).

Ketter (2018:333) states that as consumers are focusing more on intangible 'extras' they stand to benefit from utilising a product or service rather than on just the physical offering itself. This in conjunction with the acceleration of change in the modern marketplace, has led to an increase in the importance for organisations to differentiate their offering in the mind of their potential customers (Berman, Potgieter & Verity, 2019:1). The measure of quality in the product market, according to Boshoff (2014:39), is objective as it can be measured in accordance with set standards and the product is furthermore assessed in adherence to these standards, making a product easier to differentiate (Berman et al., 2019:2). However, the same does not apply to the services market, where there is no physical product for the consumer to see and feel, such as with accommodation, making assessment of quality completely subjective (Boshoff, 2014:39). The core function of accommodation is to satisfy a traveller's need for a bed

to sleep in, however, as the demand has grown, so have the expectations of the consumers (Andrews, 2007:30). The form of accommodation offering that a traveller selects will therefore depend on their personal needs, budgets, length of stay and availability of information (Van Heerden & Drotsky, 2011:52).

Accommodation is hard to define as there are vast number of types, including; motels; lodges; guest houses; furnished apartments; camps; resorts; B&Bs; hostels; backpackers, and; hotels (Andrews, 2007:30; Inkson & Minnaert, 2012:29). Furthermore, because each type of accommodation caters to the specific needs of different target audiences, they all encompass different features or attributes, such as luxury facilitates, amenities, and services (Andrews, 2007:30; Inkson & Minnaert, 2012:29). A broad definition, as given by Andrews (2007:30), is a service, whereby the provider supplies lodging in return for payment. However, this definition cannot be used to accurately describe all forms of accommodation, as they all cater to a different type of travellers and therefore, provide an offering which is tailored to a certain target audience. For example, backpacker hostels provide cheap, basic accommodation with no added facilities or amenities, catering for budget friendly travellers. Whereas hotels provide accommodation with added amenities, services and facilities at a higher price, which caters for travellers who are willing to pay for comfort.

A hotel, as defined by Venter and Cloete (2013:225), "is an establishment that provides transient lodging for the public and often meals and entertainment." Venter and Cloete (2013:225) further state that the amenities and facilities offered will be determined by the primary function of the hotel, which will depend on the type of hotel. Within the hotel industry, there are various types of hotels, which include; full-service hotels; limited-service hotels; al-suite hotels; boutique hotels; all-inclusive hotels, and; aparthotels (Inkson & Minnaert, 2018:104). Hotels are somewhat of a hybrid between a service and a product as the hotel service, as explained by Venter and Cloete (2013:225), is a mix of benefits, amenities, services and products, which can be sub divided into three categories. These categories include; the core benefit (which relates to the core purpose of the hotel, that is to provide lodging); essential facilitating services (which relates to the services that make the running of a hotel possible, such

as a front desk and housekeeping), and; supporting services (which relates to services which do not affect the ability to run the hotel but rather add value for the customers and aids in the differentiation of the hotel, such as restaurant and reservation services) (Venter & Cloete, 2013:225).

It can be deduced that while the core function of a hotel is a service, the supporting amenities can be products. Therefore, for a hotel to be successful, it must deliver a service offering, and product offering, which will satisfy the customer (Venter & Cloete, 2013:225). Hotels need to therefore identify their target audience to understand what they want, and how to cater for them. Moreover, it is not enough to just offer the benefits, as if no one is aware of the benefit being offered, they mean nothing. This is why it is essential to ensure that the public is aware of the offering, and the benefits attached to it, and an increasingly popular medium of communicating with travellers, is through the use of the technology and the internet.

2.2.5 Technology in the Tourism Industry

The speed of technology diffusion has rapidly increased in the past decade and at the core of this phenomena is knowledge, which, in the modern competitive market space, is essential (Hanson et al., 2016:11). It can therefore be deduced that technology is completely changing the way in which businesses operate as well as the nature of competition, apparent in industries such as the hospitality industry, which relies upon technology and Information Communication Technology (ICT) systems (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang & Koo, 2015:180). Technology and ICT systems are essential in the development of the tourism and hospitality industries. The advances in technology and ICT software have made it possible for travellers to utilise online or internet-based platforms, where they have access to thousands of options, to select an offer to best satisfy the basic psychological need for accommodation (Bethapudi, 2013:67,69). An important benefit enjoyed by service providers in the tourism and hospitality industry when making use of online platforms is word-of-mouth, which is materialised as online review comments or testimonial (Birkett, 2016). Statistics show that 77% of online shoppers consult online review comments before making a purchase, indicating the importance of social proof (Rodela, 2017). Birkett (2016) further explains that social

proof or other people's opinions, have a huge influence on the perceptions the researcher has about an offering. In the case of South Africa, this could assist in the resolution of the negative perception travellers have regarding the safety of the country.

Specifically, in the tourism industry, the digitalisation of all aspects linked to the tourism industry and the integration of technology and the internet into the operations of the organisation has been abbreviated to "e-tourism". E-tourism has allowed service providers in the tourism industry to reach customers they would not have had access to before, increase levels of efficiency in their operations, and effectively share information at a relatively low cost (Pantano & Pietro, 2013:212; Buhalis & Deimezi, 2004:130). E-Tourism encompasses online transactions as well as all business operations which can be revolutionised by ICT. Furthermore, the internet has given service providers the opportunity to better satisfy their customers by increasing the ease of searching, comparing, and booking an offering, such as a hotel (Pantano & Pietro, 2013:212). A customer's motivation to purchase and behave in a certain manner can be explained by numerous theoretical models.

2.2.6 Theories of Motivation

There are many theoretical models which aim to explain customer motivation, all of which are grounded in consumer satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction is a result of whether or not an experience disappoints (leading to dissatisfaction), meets or exceeds (leading to satisfaction) an individuals' expectations (Corte, Sciarelli, Cascella & Gaudio, 2015:40). Malik, Yaqoob and Aslam (2012:488) conceptualise satisfaction within the hospitality industry by stating that the satisfaction felt by a guest is the combined feelings of satisfaction from numerous attributes, which make up the experience. Customer satisfaction is important as it leads to customer retention and brand loyalty (Malik et al., 2012:488). Theoretical models of motivation include; The Disconfirmation Theory, and; The Expectancy Value Theory; Cognitive Dissonance Theory; The Contrast Theory and; The Uses and Gratifications Theory.

2.2.6.1 Disconfirmation theory

The Disconfirmation Theory is grounded in tourist expectations, based on their perceived value, meaning an individual will make presumptions based on past experience (Piercy & Ellinger, 2015:51). Therefore, once an individual has utilised a product or service, they will compare their actual experience with their perceived expectation, resulting in either a positive (satisfied), negative (dissatisfied) or neutral indifferent) difference (Piercy & Ellinger, 2015:51; Bravo, Montes & Moreno, 2017:435) (Figure 2).

Furthermore, the Disconfirmation Theory recognises that a traveller's expectation can be influenced by inputs and interactions, and as explained by Berman, et al. (2019:14), these interactions can be grouped into three broad categories. The first category includes, advertising and the service providers brand image, which can be controlled by the service provider and they will therefore try to create realistic and positive expectations for the tourists (Berman et al., 2019:14). The second category consists of word-of-mouth and external media sources, which are less controllable (Berman et al, 2019:14). The last category relates to a tourists' previous experiences with the service provider (Berman et al., 2019:14). A tourist's perceived value received is influenced by; the offerings quality; the interaction with personnel; the service encounters; the value for money, and; the brand image of the service provider (Berman et al., 2019:14). The tourist then measures whether the experience met their expectations. If they have been met then they are confirmed, if they are exceeded, they are positively disconfirmed and if they are not met then they will be negatively disconfirmed (Berman et al., 2019:14).

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Figure 2.2

The Disconfirmation Theory
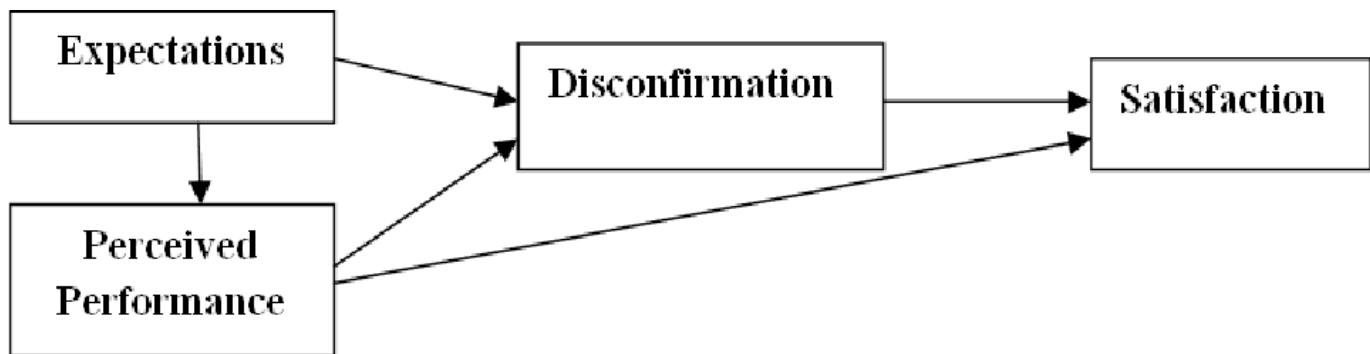
Source: Elkhani and Bakri (2012:96)

2.2.6.2   Expectancy value theory

The second theory, The Expectancy Value Theory, is based on the idea that an individual will form an opinion prior to the purchase of an offering on the benefits and outcomes they stand to achieve from it (Plante, O'Keefe & Thèorêt, 2012:3). It goes further in stating that consumers will then select the option that they perceive to have the highest benefits (Figure 3). Sigaard and Skov (2015:713) supports this in stating that the motivation of a consumer to purchase is based on a mix of factors, namely the strength of the motivation, the benefits they stand to achieve from purchasing the offering, and how much the individual values the outcome of the purchase. Therefore, this theory is based on subjective measures and will vary between individuals as they have different attitudes (Plante et al., 2012:3). In the case of accommodation, tourists will match the gratifications offered by a hotel with their personal wants to satisfy their needs.

Figure 2.3

The Expectancy Value Theory
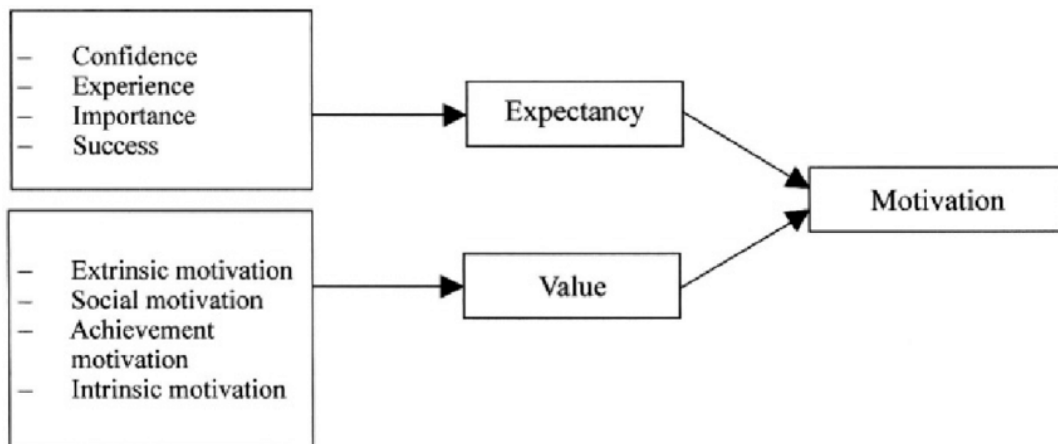
Source: Goodyear, Asensio, Jones and Hodgson (2004:181)

2.2.6.3 Cognitive dissonance theory

As explained by Joy (2018:142), the cognitive dissonance theory aims to eliminate dissonance between actions and beliefs. This is necessary as it is a human tendency to want consistency throughout their cognitions (Joy, 2018:142). In the case that there is inconsistency between actions and belief (Figure 4) then the individual will change either their beliefs, action or action perception to eliminate the dissonance (Joy, 2018:142).

Figure 2.4

The Cognitive Dissonance Theory
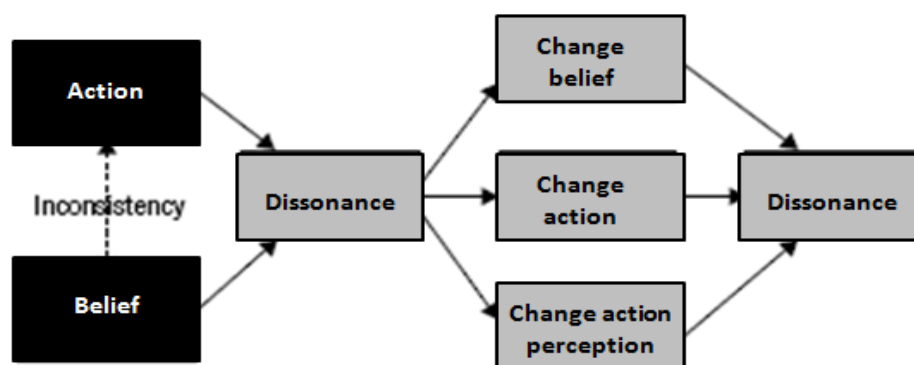
Source: Joy (2018:142)

The changing of beliefs, as explained by Joy (2018:142), is the simplest way to eliminate dissonance, however an individual's beliefs are normally stable, and they will therefore struggle to change them. The second option is for the individual to change their actions, which entails never performing the action again. To be able to do this, the individual must acquire new information that surpasses the dissonant belief (Joy, 2018:142). The last option is for the individual to change the action perception, which is the most difficult and complicated method to eliminate dissonance. This involves the individual reducing the importance placed on the action or belief or validating their behaviour (Joy, 2018:143). Cognitive dissonance within the tourism and hospitality context relates to both post-purchase and pre-purchase dissonance (Kah & Lee, 2015:375). Post purchase dissonance refers to the travellers feeling of satisfaction after experiencing the service, which is important as satisfaction levels have a huge influence on loyalty and word-of-mouth (Kah & Lee, 2015:375). Pre-purchase dissonance is especially important in the hospitality and tourism industry. This is due to the fact that before a traveller makes any reservations, they will conduct planning, which includes research. During this time, it is possible for service providers to influence the beliefs and therefore the actions of the traveller by providing information. (Kah & Lee, 2015:375). If a service provider can understand the beliefs and actions of their target audience, they can eliminate the dissonance felt and therefore, motivate the traveller to purchase their service.

2.2.6.4   Contrast theory

The Contrast Theory, as explained by Yuksel and Yuksel (2008:98), depicts that when an individual is unsatisfied with an offering, due to the fact that their expected value surpasses their perceived value, there will be a negative gap in the consumer's level of satisfaction. Furthermore, the contrast between the expected value and the perceived value, because it is negative, will be exaggerated by the individual. Therefore, when the offering delivers at a below satisfactory level, then the individual will rate the offering worse than what it really is (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008:98). The contrast theory also works in vice versa. In other words, when perceived value surpasses expected value, then it will be rated higher than it should be (Figure 5).

Figure 2.5

The Contrast Theory
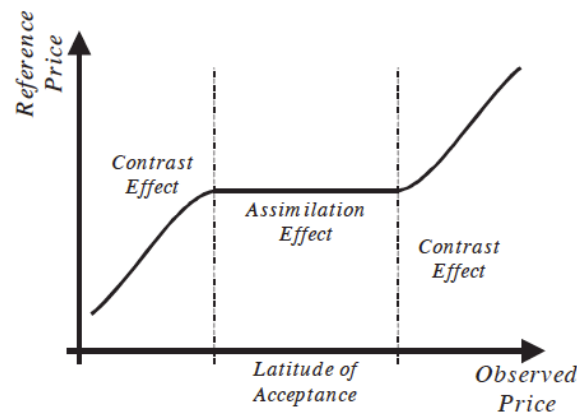
Source: Ferrer (2002:55)

With specific reference to the tourism and hospitality industry, the Contrast Theory would materialise in high or low ratings by travellers. For example, if a traveller experiences a satisfactory service, they may rate the establishment very high, even though the actual experience was only satisfactory, and vice versa. This is important for service providers in this industry to understand, as one of the most important means of advertising is word-of-mouth. Adding to this, because of the availability of online platforms, travellers can share their experiences with thousands of other travellers as well as rate the establishment. Therefore, providing a service which is unsatisfactory is detrimental to an accommodation establishment, whereas a just satisfactory experience can bolster their credibility tremendously.

2.2.6.5   Uses and gratification theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) aims to explain that for an individual to satisfy their needs, they will make use of a media that results in the highest level of gratification and is founded in literature pertaining to communication (Whiting & Williams, 2013:362) (Figure 6).

Figure 2.6

The Uses and Gratifications Theory
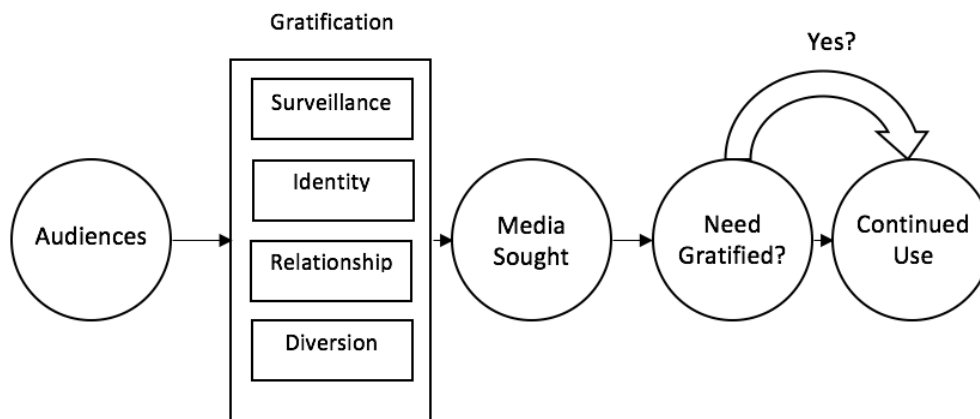
Source: Adapted from Dyring (2017)

The UGT has been utilised extensively and in studies by Baek, Holton, Harp and Yaschur (2011:2243) as well as Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2006:3). The Uses and Gratification Theory was utilised to determine information sharing and to explain customer satisfaction based on the fulfilment of needs in an online community (Sangwan, 2005:8). In the UGT, it is assumed that consumers are in control of the media they choose to use, and what they use it for. Therefore, it relates to how individuals deliberately seek media to fulfil their needs or wants. The UGT is therefore relevant and appropriate for this study. Within the tourism and hospitality industry, it is notable that there is an upward trend of travellers utilising the internet to book accommodation, which can be attributed to the ease in accessing information on online platforms, in comparison to alternative methods (Mendes-Filho & Tan, 2009; Ukpabi, Karjaluoto & Onyenucheya, 2017:604). These online platforms represent the media selected by travellers, which they believe will effectively and efficiently satisfy their apparent need for accommodation. Example of such a platform include; Trivago; Bookings.com; AirBnb; Expedia; Agoda, and; Hotels.com.

2.2.7 Hotels.com

Hotels.com is an internet-based electronic-distribution site of accommodation, which is altering the way in which travellers compare and select accommodation and boasts

having one of the largest bases of accommodation on the internet (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003:40; Hotels.com, 2019). For this reason, Hotels.com has become known as one of the leading providers of hotel accommodation, for both chain and independent establishments. As the case with many of the other online platforms, such as Travelocity, Trivago, and Orbitz, Hotels.com is an affiliate of the Umbrella company, namely Expedia Group (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003:44; Hotels.com, 2019). According to the Expedia Group (2019) Hotels.com was founded in 1991 as a hotels reservation network and has grown to constitute 90 local websites in 41 languages. The reservation platform now has over 25 million verified guest review comments, giving tourists the opportunity to share their experiences, learn from previous guests, which enables them to find a deal which suits them perfectly (Expedia Group, 2019). The statistics with regards to the amount of users in the Western Cape specifically is unavailable at this time and efforts to obtain this information from Hotels.com were unsuccessful. Furthermore, Hotels.com is known for their loyalty programs and for providing accommodation during the 'sold-out' periods of the year (Expedia Group, 2019; Hotels.com, 2019). The largest portion of revenue generated by Hotels.com and Expedia constituted hotel reservations (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003:44).

Online platforms, such as Hotels.com, preform the act of disintermediation by making traditional means of booking accommodation null and void (Law, Leung, Lo, Leung & Fong, 2015:433). Online intermediary platforms take part in anonymous auctions, where algorithms are utilised to purchase the right to list an offer, which is how they obtain their low-price specials (Toh, Raven & Dekay, 2011:185). Hotels.com makes use of algorithms to determine which listings appear in what order, which implies that the merchants will not appear in a specific order according to price or quality. However, Hotels.com does allow users to filter their search, which alters the listings to suit what the users finds most valuable (price lowest to highest; rating; no cancellations fees; availability for selected travel dates) (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003:40). Hotels.com has grown in popularity due to their variety in offerings, the ease with which tourists can find information relating to the hotel's amenities, services and pricing, and the ability to book online, all enabling them to identify the gratifications offered by a hotel and, therefore satisfy their accommodation needs efficiently (Hotels.com, 2019).

The determinant of whether or not a hotel will be successful, is if they have the ability to provide an offering which has the potential to truly satisfy their customers accommodation needs (Venter & Cloete, 2014:225). To be able to do this, the service provider must gain an understanding of the customer's expectations and then focus on delivering services and products which will meet or surpass these expectations. Bhatt (2015:2) supports this in saying that if a service provider exceeds the expectations of a tourist, then that tourist will be satisfied and the evaluation of the

Customers' satisfaction levels are essential for the service provider to be able to improve, and therefore maintain their competitive position (Pavlic, Perucic & Portolan, 2011:1).

2.2.8 Gratifications Sought by Users of Hotels

As indicated by the above literature, accommodation types cater for the needs of different target audiences who are all motivated by different gratifications. The researchers conducted a review of the extant literature by consulted 60 journal articles, from which 77 gratifications sought by users of hotels were identified and listed (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel spreadsheet indicating the review of the extant literature).

As apparent from the extant literature, there are simply too many gratifications for hotels to specifically focus on. Therefore, for this study, the 77 gratifications identified were grouped into ten factors and none of the gratifications identified from the extant literature were excluded. The ten factors, are: the hotel facilities; the location of the hotel; the human resources of the hotel; the hotel amenities; monetary value that the client perceives to gain; entertainment provided; the type of traveller; the promotional efforts of the hotel; the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel, and; the brand name of the hotel. These factors were created as they appeared most frequently in the extant literature and can therefore be deemed key gratifications sought by users of hotels (Refer to Chapter 1: Section 1.8 for a condensed table of definitions. Refer to Chapter 4: Section X for the framework). Definitions as well as exhaustive lists comprising of all gratifications in each category are provided in the sections to follow.

2.2.8.1   Hotel facilities

As explained in the above literature, the hotel industry constitutes both tangible and intangible products and therefore, the assessment of the importance of certain attributes is of utmost importance, as it provides the service provider with a means to benchmark themselves as well as better their offering (Shanka & Taylor, 2003:119). Shanka and Taylor (2003:119) further conclude that the physical facilities of a hotel are perceived by customers as important and have an influence on the rating of the hotel. Lai and Yik (2012:141-157) support Shanka and Taylor (2003:119) by stating that customers are placing emphasis on the importance of the upkeep of the building with regards to the grounds, furniture, general maintenance and building fabric of the hotel.

For this study, hotel facilities can be defined as any infrastructure or equipment of the hotel that enables them to cater for the guests. This factor includes; the type of hotel; the functionality of the hotel; the size of the hotel and the rooms; the availability of a restaurant and bar; the availability of a gym; whether the hotel is disability friendly; access to a swimming pool; showers in the bathrooms, and; whether there is a spa available to customers (See Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; See Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.2   Location of the hotel

As stated by Popovic, Stanujkic, Brzakovic and Karabasevic (2019:49) the location of a hotel is amongst one of the most important considerations, as it has numerous ripple effects which stem from it, such as safety and accessibility. Adding to this, in a study by Chu and Choi (2000:365) it was found that the convenience of the location of a hotel was rated very important. Moreover, in similar academic research pertaining to gratifications sought by hotel users, the location of a hotel referred to the geographical location (Brotherton, 2004:944).

For this study, the location of the hotel can be defined as the geographical place of the hotel. This factor includes; safety and convenience of the location; if there are transport hubs in the close vicinity; if the hotel has an aesthetically pleasing view, and; the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.3   Human resources

In a traditional sense, as explained by Guo, Brown, Ashcraft, Yoshioka and Dong (2011:3), human resources have been treated as an administrative function of a business. However, over time the definition has adapted, and now includes policies and practices within a business, which attempt to ensure that all personnel contribute positively to the organisation and behave in a standardised manner (Guo et al., 2011:3). It can be concluded that the human capital of a hotel is important as they become a part of the brand and can either assist in growing it, or destroy it Cheung, Kong & Song, 2014:1165). In a survey performed by the Mariott Corporation, which aimed to identify hotel attributes that resulted in customer satisfaction, it was concluded that friendliness of the personnel was a key attribute (Shanka & Taylor, 2004:124).

For the study, human resources will refer to the customer service provided by the personnel associated with the hotel. This factor includes; the personal experience generated for the customer; the quality of the service provided; the intangible service hospitality of the personnel; the responsiveness of the hotel, and; the ability and efficiency of communication (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.4   Hotel amenities

According to Jayapalan (2001:41) hotels constitute numerous components, one of which are amenities. Amenities include those services, or products, which are not

essential to the operations of the hotel, but rather act as a differentiator (Jayapalan, 2001:41). Jayapalan (2001:41) further explains that they are an aid to the service provider in delivering a service which will satisfy their customer and if the customer perceives the given attribute as important, it will affect the purchasing decision (Chu & Choi, 2000:365). Additionally, Tran et al. (2019:14) and Rhee and Yang (2015:577) state that there is no standard set of amenities for all hotels, as they will each cater for a different target audience and will therefore have to analyse what their customers specifically value.

For this study, hotel amenities can be defined as extra additional features or items provided by the establishment to enhance their guest's enjoyment, satisfaction, comfort and convenience. Amenities of the hotel can be within the room or in the communal areas of a hotel. Within a room, amenities include; hair styling tools; stain remover wipes; lint rollers; exercise gear; electronic charges; adaptors; toiletries; complimentary breakfast; Wi-Fi; air conditioning; premium bedding; daily housekeeping; mattress type, and; a mini refrigerator. In the communal areas of the hotel, amenities include; secure parking; 24- hour front desk service; smoke free areas; the availability of coffee/tea in the lobbies, and; the cleanliness of the hotel (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.5   Monetary value that the client perceives to gain

Customer value in the tourism industry constitutes many different attributes, such as level of service received, internal transport quality and standard of the accommodation. However, with regards to monetary value, customer value relates to whether the prices quoted are of a suitable level and if the customer perceives the services given to be worth what they paid (Bindu, Rajendran & Sai, 2008:471). Moreover, customers are willing to pay higher premium if they feel that the level of quality is also high, which implies that customer value will be high when the perceived quality received surpasses that of the perceived cost (Oh, 2000:142). The price of any given offering is regarded by the majority of customers as important (Liu & Zhang, 2014:72). Adding to this, the findings of Bindu et al. (2008:469) indicated that, value

for money is a key contributor to customer satisfaction within the tourism industry, and if the customer feels they have overpaid for a service they will be dissatisfied. Monetary value is further defined by Kallis, Gomez-Baggethun and Zografos (2013:97) as any activities or tools, through which money is transferred.

In this study, monetary value will refer to whether the guest feels that they have received sufficient value for what they have paid, or value for money, which includes; discounts on longer stays; child payment policies, and; loyalty programs (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.6 Entertainment provided

According to Oliver and Bartsch (2011:3), entertainment is the product of enjoyment, which is the standard by which an individual will rate an experience. Oliver and Bartsch (2011:3) further state that entertainment can be conceptualised in terms of an individual's desire for need fulfilment, including lower-order and higher-order needs. Pine and Gilmore (2011:45) offer another definition of an experience, being that it is an experience which creates enjoyment or fulfilment (Mastery, 2017). Therefore, the standard of entertainment is subjective as not everyone will experience the same enjoyment level, due to it being based on their personal preference.

Entertainment refers to an entertaining experience, which is enjoyable, such as social interactions, and pass times, for this study. This factor includes; sports and recreational activities; indoor entertainment; kids' entertainment, and; entertainment for adults (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.7 Type of traveller

As explained by Sharpley (2018:58), there are numerous types of tourism or reasons that individuals travel, which include; backpacking; business tourism, educational

tourism, and all-inclusive tourism. Each type of tourism will constitute different attractions and values and will therefore each appeal to a different type of traveller.

For this study, the types of travellers include; holiday makers; business people; tech-savvy travellers; backpackers or budget friendly travellers, and; retreaters (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.8   Promotional efforts of the hotel

As stated by Jayapalan (2001:131) promotional efforts in tourism is a marketing tool, which has the ability to create awareness, attract and retain potential customers. Jayapalan (2001:131) further explains that promotional efforts in the tourism industry is essential and includes all marketing activities, which are focused on informing customers and persuading them to use their service over that of the competitors. Therefore, the core function of tourism promotion is to ensure that there is good communication between the service provider and the customer. Furthermore, Swarbrooke and Horner (2007:7) insist that an advertising campaign in tourism is important as it allows the service provider to design an offering which is tailored to that of their intended audience, through an understanding of consumer behaviour. Adding to this Tran, Ly and Le (2019:13) insist that the digital market is the new marketing landscape, with online platforms becoming more popular, as they have the ability to be tailored to match the needs and wants of the target audience. Moreover, in their study, Tran, Ly et al. (2019:13) concluded that online review comments, which is the digital form of word-of-mouth, had a large influence on a consumers' decision to purchase, which is supported by the findings of Liu and Zhang (2014:72).

For this study, promotional efforts will refer to all the marketing efforts of the hotel and includes; social media platforms utilised; the availability of information online (such as through the use of a website); word of mouth generated; advertising seen, and; reviews of the hotel (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.9   Integration of technology into the operation of the hotel

In a fast-changing business environment, that is placing increased focus on the integration of technology into businesses, it is important to understand how technology impacts a business. Within the hospitality industry, information technology is utilised to manage the establishment, aiding in increasing productivity, decreasing cost, and therefore bettering the value proposition offered to customers (Bilgihan, Okumus, Nusair & Kwun, 2011:140). Technology has been identified as key contributor to customer satisfaction within the hotel industry, as it is utilised to differentiate the establishment and it facilitates the expansion of guest services offered (Cobanoglu, Berezina, Kasavana & Erdem, 2011:277). Furthermore, Cobanoglu et al. (2011:277) add that customer have become increasingly capable of using self-service portals or websites, which is resulting in companies utilising Information Communication Technology systems to reinvent the way in which the business operates.

In this study, the integration of technology will include any IT systems in place, such as a website, mobile app, portal or self-check-in kiosks (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

2.2.8.10   Brand name of the hotel

A businesses brand name is a company's identity, and as explained by Cheung, Kong and Song (2014:1165), it is how a customer can recognise, and therefore differentiate, the company from its competitors. Therefore, building and promoting a brand is a key determinant of success and should be used to gain competitive advantage (Cheung et al., 2014:1165). Furthermore, brand awareness positions the company in the minds of the consumer and influences their perception of pricing and quality (Oh, 2000:142). Wang and Chung (2015:567) conclude that consumers utilise brand names to make judgements of a given service, so what they deem acceptable from one service provider, they may not from another.

For this study, the brand name of the hotel will include; the trustworthiness of the establishment; how well known or established the hotel is, and; if the establishment is operating in an environmentally sound manner (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel Spreadsheet, indicating the sources of the gratifications identified for this factor; Refer to Table 1.1 for the definition of this factor).

Following the theories of satisfaction, if a service provider can meet the expectations of customers with regards to the factors specified in this study, then they will be satisfied. The proposed theoretical framework of this study, which will be discussed in chapter 4, was based on the Uses and Gratification Theory as well as the Disconfirmation and Expectancy Value Theories. These theories will be utilised to explain the relationship between the selected gratifications sought by users of hotels and their overall satisfaction. From the review of the extant literature it can be concluded that, as far as could be determined, there is no research done on gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com, specifically in the Western Cape, South Africa, based on their online review comments. Therefore, the aim of this study is to contribute to the literature by identifying the gratifications sought by users of Hotel.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, South Africa.

2.3   SUMMARY

The world is being revolutionised by technology, which is affecting the way business operate as well as the purchasing behaviour, expectations and way in which consumers are choosing to satisfy their needs. While more developed, 1st world countries are at the forefront of technological advancements, less developed countries, such as South Africa, are taking advantage of the benefits technology offers in businesses, such as in the tourism industry.

In South Africa, tourism has been recognised as a key contributor to the country's Gross Domestic Product, with the Western Cape being identified as the most popular destination. Within the tourism industry there are numerous sectors, with accommodation being identified as the largest commodity. Accommodation, which previously was considered to be homogenous offerings in the market, has evolved to

meet the needs of different travellers, which has resulted in many different forms of accommodation coming into the market, one of which is a hotel.

Technology within the tourism industry has become an industry norm and has been named 'e-tourism. Furthermore, it is allowing companies to adapt to the changing demand of customers, maximize the efficacy and effectiveness of operations and reach a target audience which it could not in the past. The choice consumers make to select accommodation online is explained by the Uses and Gratification Theory.

The Uses and Gratification Theory is grounded in communication and explains that consumers will utilize a platform which best allows them to satisfy their needs. An example of such a platform in the tourism industry is Hotels.com, which allows travellers to search, compare and purchase hotel offerings in a convenient and easy manner, therefore increasing customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction can be explained by two theories of satisfaction, namely the Disconfirmation Theory and the Expectancy Value Theory, both of which aim to identify how customers form expectations. If customers' expectations are met or surpassed, then they will be satisfied. In the hospitality industry customers form expectations based on the gratifications they expect to receive from purchasing the service. For the this study the ten gratifications were selected, which were based on a review of the extant literature, namely; the location of the hotel; the promotional efforts of the hotel; monetary value that the client perceives to gain; the hotel facilities; the hotel amenities; entertainment provided; human resources; the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel; the brand name of the hotel, and; the type of traveller. It can be concluded that if the service provider provides these gratifications, they will meet the expectations of the customers, and therefore satisfy their accommodation needs.

The aim of this study is to identify gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting a hotel in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online review comments.

Chapter three elaborates on the research methodology, including the research design and paradigm, data collection and analysis and sampling method of this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two a literature review was conducted on uses and gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com in the Western Cape, South Africa, based on their online review comments. This constituted an in-depth literature review of the extant literature available, which examined; technological advances; the South African economy; the South African tourism industry; accommodation as a commodity of the tourism industry; technology in the tourism industry; theories of motivation; Hotels.com, and; gratifications sought by users of hotels.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, design and paradigm employed in this study. Following this, a description of the secondary research collection is given. Thereafter, a discussion regarding the primary research of this study is provided, including the sampling, target population, sampling methods and sampling size as well as the data collection instrument and method, data analysis, preparation of the data and the data analysis process. Furthermore, the statistical analysis techniques employed for data assessment are introduced. Finally, any problems encountered during the research are elaborated upon.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

To gain insight and understanding with regards to a research topic, a research paradigm should be utilised (Collis & Hussey, 2014:42; Babbie, 2006:34). Collis and Hussey (2014:43) further state that the research paradigm of a study defines how the researcher interprets their surroundings and the nature of the knowledge. Struwig and Stead (2015:268) add that, when conducting research, there are two main research paradigms, including; a positivistic paradigm, and; an interpretivist paradigm.

According to Collis and Hussey (2014:44), a positivistic paradigm is associated with quantitative data, which is numerical data, and is based on the assumption that human behaviour should be observed and analysed in the same way that non-human behaviour is. Contradicting this, an interpretivist paradigm is concerned with qualitative data, which is non-numerical data, and is closely linked to the ideology that the world is constructed socially (Collis & Hussey, 2014:45; Struwig & Stead, 2015:12). In this study, the positivistic paradigm will be interchangeable with quantitative, and the interpretivist paradigm with qualitative.

As explained by Hair, Wolfinbarger, Ortinau and Bush (2009:77), quantitative research is constructed on the utilisation of formal questions as well as a selection of set answers. Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2013:134) further state that quantitative research collects primary data through conducting an empirical investigation and then analyses of the collected data by means of interpreting numerical data. As quantitative data is reliant on statistics and is structured, descriptive data is produced, making it easier to analyse and measure the response of the respondents (Wiid & Diggines, 2015:95).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, refers to the collection and textual analysis of literature to gain deeper insight of a topic and come up with an explanation thereof (Zikmund, et al., 2010:133). Qualitative research is unstructured or semi-structured and involves a thorough detailed description from respondents to attain an in-depth understanding into a specific problem (Wiid & Diggines, 2015:95). Within qualitative research, as stated by Struwig and Stead (2015:10), there is a variety of data collection, and data analysis procedures. Table 3.1 provides a comparison between the two research paradigms.

Table 3.1

A Comparison between qualitative and quantitative research

Research aspect	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Common Purpose	Discover ideas, used in exploratory research with general research objectives	Test hypotheses or specific research questions
APPROACH	Observe and Interpret	Measure and test
Data Collection aPPROACH	Unstructured, free form	Structured response categories provided
RESEARCHER INDEPENDENCE	Researcher is intimately involved. Results are subjective.	Researcher uninvolved observer. Results are objective.
Samples	Small samples – often in natural settings	Large samples to produce generalizable results (results that apply to other situations)
MOST OFTEN USED	Exploratory research designs	Descriptive and causal research designs

Source: Zikmund et al. (2010:136)

In some cases, qualitative research can provide researchers with ability to achieve certain aims that quantitative cannot and vice versa (Zikmund et al., 2010:134). Zikmund et al. (2010:134) further explain, that in order to select the most appropriate research process for a study, the researcher needs to successfully match the research paradigm with the research context. It is notable that when appropriate, both qualitative and quantitative research can be employed, also known as hybrid research (Zikmund et al., 2010:134). For this study, a hybrid research paradigm will be utilised. In a hybrid research paradigm, the research approach is based on the research questions asked and the nature thereof (Armitage, 2007). An advantage offered by a hybrid research paradigm is that it allows the researcher to utilise data collection methods from both a qualitative and quantitative research paradigm (Dudovskiy,

2019). Within any given research paradigm, there are research design which researchers can make use of to answer their research question.

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Struwig and Stead (2015:7), a research design is referred to as a master plan, which aims to assist the researcher in answering the research question by providing a clear and concise description of the research problem. Zikmund et al. (2010:54), further state that research is a procedure whereby data is interrelated to a certain scenario. Within a quantitative research paradigm, the three types of research designs are; descriptive; exploratory, and; casual research designs (Struwig & Stead, 2015:6). In a qualitative research paradigm common research designs include; content analysis; discourse analysis and; ethno-science and structural ethnography (Struwig & Stead, 2015:12).

The research done by Wiid and Diggines (2015:67) states that a descriptive research design intends to answer the research questions by providing a clear description of the research problem and the processes put forth to address these questions. These questions include; what the study is about; when and how the study will be carried out and who the respondents will be. The exploratory research design is referred to by Zikmund et al. (2010:55), as a design utilised to elucidate unclear circumstances and how these specific areas of uncertainty can be addressed. Furthermore, Zikmund et al. (2010:55), states that this form of research design is only employed in a study when there is a concern that more insight and information is necessary or to pinpoint the issue or phenomenon in a particular study. The last type of research design is known as causal research design which is utilised to detect whether the independent variable is affected by the dependent variable and vice versa (Wiid & Diggines 2015:68). Furthermore, the designs main purpose for use is to test and distinguish variables by means of cause and impact connections.

The first research design in a qualitative research study is content analysis, which refers to gathering literature and analysing the content (Struwig & Stead, 2015:12). This content can either be written, spoken or visual and the main aim of this design is

to categorise the content so that fewer words are used (Struwig & Stead, 2015:12). The second type of qualitative research design is discourse analysis, which investigates the impacts of particular discourses (ways of behaving and talking) on specific contexts (Struwig & Stead, 2015:12). Discourse analysis may focus on either; detecting the discourses used; the effects of them in the content, or; describing the broader context in which the content functions (Struwig & Stead, 2015:12). Discourse analysis tries to discover trends of communication that are purposeful to people. The third, and last, type of qualitative design is ethno-science and structural ethnography. Research done by Struwig and Stead (2015:13) denotes that ethno-science and structural ethnography places great prominence on reduction as an analysis principle, whereas structural ethnographers focuses more attention to the gist behind the language.

For this study, content analysis will be utilised, indicating that text was gathered and analysed, which explains how the researchers compiled their empirical data (qualitative research) (Struwig & Stead, 2015:12). However, a descriptive research design will be utilised to measure size, frequency and quantity of phenomena, by utilising structured methods of data collection and statistical techniques, indicating the method of data analyses for this study (quantitative research) (Collis & Hussey, 2014:42). This study employs a hybrid paradigm, as two research designs are identified, namely; a descriptive research design, and; content analysis. According to Struwig and Stead (2015:54) the research design and methodology indicates how the research questions of the study will be answered. For this study, the research will utilise two sources of data, namely secondary- and primary research.

3.3.1   Secondary research

Secondary research can be defined as pre-existing data which can be collected from a readily available variety of sources (Andrei, 2018:93). The secondary research of this study has been completed by consulting a variety of relevant books, journals, conference papers and online sources. Additionally, the library services of Nelson Mandela University have and will be utilised to gain access to a broader variety of data basses, both national and international, such as Emerald, Springer, and Sabinet.

The secondary research for this study included an extensive review of the existing literature. Firstly, the changing nature of the tourism industry and its growing dependency on technology was researched, followed by an investigation on theories of motivation, which explained the behaviour of tourists as well as their satisfaction. Following this, 60 journal articles were consulted, which included those that investigated gratifications highlighted by consumers. From the 60 journal articles, the researchers compiled an extensive list of gratifications sought by consumers, constituting 77 gratifications. This was done by developing an Excel spreadsheet, indicating the gratifications identified in each journal article (Refer to Annexure A for the Excel spreadsheet indicating the review of the extant literature). From this, the researchers were able to gain a clear indication of all gratifications highlighted and proved to be significant in pre-existing literature as well as which gratifications occurred most frequently. This extensive list was utilised as a base for the factors developed in this study.

For this study, the 77 gratifications identified were grouped into ten factors or categories, which was done as it was apparent from the extant literature that there are simply too many gratifications for hotels to specifically focus on. Additionally, many gratifications identified were very similar in nature. Furthermore, none of the gratifications identified from the extant literature were excluded. By not omitting any of the identified gratifications, the researcher ensured that the results obtained from the empirical research of this study were all inclusive and not biased, therefore making the results more valid and reliable. The ten factors, are; the location of the hotel; the promotional efforts of the hotel; monetary value that the client perceives to gain; the hotel facilities; the hotel amenities; entertainment provided; human resources; the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel; the brand name of the hotel, and; the type of traveller (Refer to Annexure D for a summary of how all the identified gratifications have been divided into each factor/category). Following this, Hotels.com was utilised to access online review comments of hotel users in the Western Cape, South Africa. In the section to follow, the primary research of the study will be provided and explained in detail.

3.3.2 Primary Research

According to Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014:17), primary research is conducted to collect and compile original information and data, which the researcher utilises to answer their specific research question. Primary research, as explained by Struwig and Stead (2015:89), can be gathered via various techniques with reference to both qualitative and quantitative research and the technique selected will depend on the specific purpose and aim of the study. Traditionally, techniques included; questionnaires; interviews; observation, and; unobtrusive measures. However, because of technological advances, a new avenue of primary data collection has arisen, namely; primary data collection using the internet, which encompasses online or internet-based surveys, observation and online interviews (Struwig & Stead, 2015:106). In this study, the primary data was collected via the internet, where online review comments of users of Hotels.com in the Western Cape, South Africa, were obtained. The Western Cape as selected as this is a familiar area to the researchers. The research of any given study can be broken down into three sections, namely; target population; sampling and sampling method, and; data collection and analysis, which constitutes, data collection instruments, data collection methods, preparation of data and data analysis.

3.3.2.1   Target population

A population, as defined by Babbie (2012:206), is "the theoretically specified aggregation of the elements in a study "and comprises of various factors, which form part of a whole population, such as individuals, and objects (Wiid & Diggines, 2015:86).For the researcher to conduct a thorough research study, a certain portion or sample of the population must be targeted to provide accurate data for the study, known as a target population. A target population or sample is utilised when it is not possible to use the entire population or if the population it too large to include in entirety. In this study, the target population constitutes all users of Hotels.com that utilised a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa and made an online review of their experience. The Western Cape was selected as the target area as it has been identified by Booysen (2017) as being the most popular tourist destination in the South Africa. This is supported by statistics in a report by WESGRO (2016), indicating that

the Western Cape constitutes 15.6% of all tourist arrivals and 23.9% of tourist expenditure in South Africa. Researchers consult a sample frame, which is a list of all components in a population, to identify and select the sample of the study. However, for this study, there is no sample frame, as reviewers have the option to remain anonymous, and each hotels' reviews are contained to their personal website.

3.3.2.2 Sample and sampling method

According to Zikmund et al. (2010:386) sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals from an entire population to represent the whole population. If a sample population is properly defined, it will have identical characteristics to the entire population and therefore, will provide an accurate representation of the whole population (Sreejesh, 2014:19). Sampling is important as it allows the researcher to make accurate conclusions for the entire population, based on only a small segment of it (Kothari, 2009:152). An important consideration when selecting a sample population is the sample size, as it signifies the amount of the entire population that will be tested and is influenced by the level of accuracy and confidence needed by the researcher (Wiid & Diggines, 2015:89). Moreover, sampling benefits the researcher by simplifying the data collection process, costs involved are reduced and the researcher can predict and make conclusions, which will lead to a dependable generalisation for the population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:235). For this study a sample of online review comments from users who booked a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa on Hotels.com were selected. The sample size of this study is constructed from 10 000 online review comments from users of Hotels.com in the Western Cape, South Africa. Such a large sample size was needed by the researchers to ensure the results given by ATLAS.ti were not skewed. There was not a specific number of reviews chosen from each area in the Western Cape, but rather collected from the province as a whole.

There are three different methods in which sampling can take place, either probability, non-probability, purposive or purposeful sampling. Each sampling method is further subdivided into various categories, which are depicted in Table 3.2 (Struwig & Stead, 2015:116).

Table 3.2

Sampling methods

NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING (QUANTITATIVE)	PROBABILITY SAMPLING (QUANTITATIVE)	PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING (QUALITATIVE)
Convenience sampling	Simple random sampling	Critical case sampling
Judgment sampling	Cluster sampling	Theory-based sampling
Snowball sampling	Stratified sampling	Purposeful random sampling
Quota sampling	Systematic sampling	Homogeneous sampling

Source: Struwig and Stead (2015:120)

Non-probability sampling uses a non-random method, which involves the researcher's point of view and the probability that a component of the population will be selected is undefined as the choice is grounded on the subjective researcher's judgment. This method offers benefits to the researcher, such as time efficiency, convenience and cost effectiveness (Wiid & Diggines, 2015:189). Judgment or purposive sampling consists of seven types, one of which is maximum variation sampling. In maximum variation sampling method, a wide variation of cases relevant to a certain topic are selected to give the researcher as much insight as possible into the topic under investigation (Crossman, 2018). The benefit of this method is that it allows the researcher to develop a complete understanding of the topic, based on the opinions of different people's perspectives (Crossman, 2018).

Probability sampling uses random sampling methods to create a sample, which allows for each component within the entire population to have a positive and equal chance of being selected as a sample and to be represented within the research study (Wiid & Diggines, 2015:189). This method poses various benefits, including high internal and external validity, and easy to access data that is easy to exanimate (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam, 2013:331). Systematic random sampling is cost effective,

the validity is high, and the selection of a target population is made easier (Acharya et al., 2013:331).

Lastly, purposeful sampling is used for qualitative research, to select and gain in depth and rich data in the implementation of research (Harsh, 2011:4). Purposeful sampling consists of; Critical case sampling; Theory-based sampling; Purposeful random sampling, and; Homogeneous sampling.

For this study, probability sampling was used to ensure the equal chance of the population to be selected, due to the large volume of online review comments on Hotels.com in the Western Cape, South Africa. Probability sampling techniques include stratified, cluster, simple random and multistage area sampling which were not applied to this study. The probability sampling technique used in this study was systematic sampling, this refers to the researcher's decision to select every 5th listing on Hotels.com, from which all comments listed were included and represented in the study. This sampling technique was found to be the most suitable and economical for the researchers.

3.4   DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The following step in the data collection process, is the collection of primary data (Struwig & Stead, 2015:90). Data collection can be defined as the methodical process of gathering and analysing information to measure and respond to research questions, test hypothesises and provide recommendations and possible solutions based on the outcomes (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:158). Data collection and analysis constitutes; the data collection instrument of the study; the data collection method utilised; how the data was prepared for analysis, and; analysis of the data.

3.4.1 Data Collection Instrument

Primary Data was collected manually by the researchers by copy pasting online review comments from every 5th listing on Hotels.com. To identify uses and gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com who booked a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa,

a program, ATLAS.ti, was employed to analyse the online review comments and highlight frequently occurring gratifications sought.

ATLAS.ti is a computer software, used to systematically analyse large volumes of data. In the case of this study, ATLAS.ti was utilised to analyse 10 000 online review comments of users of Hotels.com who booked a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa. The program provides researchers with analytical and visualisation tools to enable locating, coding and to interpret the findings of primary data (Scales, 2013:134). The program further evaluates and highlights the complex relations between the data and creates new interpretative perspectives on the material (Scales, 2013:134).

Weaknesses associated with utilising ATLAS.ti can include; difficulties when using the program for the first time; incorrect code label naming, and; the software does not contribute to the full analysis of the data, but rather assists the researcher in the handcraft analysis (Chandra & Shang, 2017:95). However, ATLAS.ti also provides strengths, such as; assisting the researcher to analyse several types of research material at the same time; increased consistency and transparency of the analysis process, and; increased cost and time efficiency (Chandra & Shang, 2017:95).

3.4.2 Data Collection Method

Due to the study employing a hybrid research paradigm, data collection methods from both a quantitative and qualitative research paradigm can be utilised. Primary data collection instruments include; questionnaires; interviews; observations; protocol development, or; a combination of the different methods (Abawi, 2013:1).

According to Abawi (2013:2), a questionnaire obtains information by presenting a set of standardised questions to respondents, with the assumption that the questions will mean the same thing to every respondent. Similarly, an interview, as indicated by Abawi (2013:10), collects data through asking questions to respondents, where data can be collected through recordings, listening to respondents' answers, observing

body language or a combination of the above. In questionnaires and interviews, the respondent is aware of the researcher's presence, whereas with observation, which relates to observing significant trends and frequency in behaviour in a true-to-life context, the researcher doesn't make them self-known to the respondent (Struwig & Stead, 2015: 104). Lastly, protocol development is a set of rules that allow electronic equipment to work with each other to determine which data and commands to use to send and receive data that will be transferred and confirmed (Christensson, 2019).

As a computer software was utilised for this study, the protocol data collection method was employed. The data collection method of the researchers was as follows;

- Firstly, the researchers conducted a review of the extant literature, to identify gratifications identified in previous studies that were proven to be significant.

- These sources were listed in an excel spreadsheet, and the gratifications that had been identified in each given study were indicated.

- All 77 uses and gratifications items identified in the review of the extant literature, were grouped into ten factors or categories based on common characteristics and none of the uses and gratifications identified were excluded. The factors used to group together the gratifications, are: the location of the hotel; the promotional efforts of the hotel; monetary value that the client perceives to gain; the hotel facilities; the hotel amenities; entertainment provided; human resources; the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel; the brand name of the hotel, and the type of traveller.

- Following this, the researchers logged on to Hotels.com and performed a search for accommodation, for one adult person, in one room, on the 5th of August 2019. The search results were refined by only including search results in the Western Cape, South Africa.

- The researchers were careful to include hotels from various price categories. Expensive, Average and below average price ranges were sought after by adjusting the price filter on the website, to make the sample more representative of the population.

- Thereafter, the researchers followed every 5th listing provided on the Hotels.com platform to the given hotels and selected to view the online reviews.

- The online reviews were then copied and pasted onto a word document, containing all information given by the reviewer. This step was repeated until the researchers had collected a total of 10 000 English online review comments.

A step-by-step graphical representation of the data collection procedure bulleted above can be found in Annexure E.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

The progression of obtaining information from data, is known as data analysis (Edx, 2018:1). There are numerous steps in the data analysis procedure, namely; classifying a data set, adjusting the data for processing, determining the important findings and constructing reports to ensure for accuracy and appropriate findings (Edx, 2018:1). However, before data can be analysed, it must be prepared to suit the format of analysis.

3.4.3.1   Preparation of the Data

For this study, ATLAS.ti was utilised to identify how frequently certain gratifications were mentioned in online review comments of users of Hotels.com in the Western Cape, South Africa. However, before this could commence, the collected data was prepared so that it was compatible with the format needed by ATLAS.ti.This process constituted the refining of the "copy and pasted" online review comments (as explained in section 3.4.2) that were collected. Once the 10 000 online review comments had been copy pasted into the word document, the data was prepared by erasing all irrelevant information, including; any profile images; names; catch lines; dates; responses, and; ratings. Furthermore, each review was numbered and separated by an individual line, so as the researchers could keep track of the amount of online review comments collected.

Following this, the document was subjected to the 'word crunching' function offered by ATLAS.ti, to identify an extensive list of all words used in the online review comments as well as the frequency with which they appeared. ATLAS.ti then provides an Excel spreadsheet, which tabulates the results. Once the Excel spreadsheet had been completed and provided, related words were grouped into the ten factors identified in this study. This indicated the gratifications that are most sought by users of Hotels.com, when booking a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa, by depicting which were most frequently mentioned in the online review comments. To report on the findings, further analyses will be conducted and visual aids as well as descriptive statistics will be used to make interpretations and draw conclusions.

3.4.3.2   Data Analysis Process

Textual analysis of the data can assist the researcher in analysing and describing the content, structure, and purpose of data contained in text, through the use of specific computer software (Pollach, 2012:1). Adding to this, statistical analysis of the data can assist the researcher to compare and describe the data (Unite for Site, 2015:1). Due to the fact that this study is a hybrid, both textual analysis and statistical analysis will be utilised.

The computer software utilised to conduct the textual analysis for this study was ATLAS.ti, a powerful systematic tool, which is used to analyse large volumes of data using coding and annotating methods. In this study, the researcher will use the software to search through 10 000 online review comments for similarities, categories, themes and synonyms based on the ten factors identified. Upon the commencement of the analysis the data is divided into smaller units of repetitive data (Scales, 2013:137-138). The researcher uses comparisons to refine categories and define patterns to ensure accuracy. A unit with a significant count indicates high importance and vice versa. The findings are then tabulated in the form of an Excel spreadsheet, this ensures reliability throughout the evaluation phase (Scales, 2013:137-138). Therefore, the gratifications which are identified as appearing most frequently on the online review comments by ATLAS.ti, can be regarded as having a high level of importance to the users of hotels.

Following the textual analysis process, descriptive statistics will be utilised to report on the findings. To demonstrate the descriptive set of data, a measure of central tendency will be used to illustrate the data in whole numbers, which signifies the midpoint of distribution (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018:1). The measure of central tendency consists of three main elements, the mean, the mode and the median calculations. Following this, the data will be placed into graphical representations such as pie charts, tables and figures. Finally, conclusions and managerial recommendations will be made based on the findings.

The gratifications that the program will be used to identify are based on those identified in the summaries of the extant literature on similar topics and the area is based on the literature which indicates that the Western Cape has become the most popular tourist destination in SA (Western Cape Info, 2018; Western Cape Government, 2017; Annexure B). As seen in Annexure B, the Western Cape is divided into several areas, but as this study includes all areas of the Western Cape, this has no effect on the research or findings. The participants will remain anonymous and their online reviews were made with full knowledge that anyone could access them. Therefore, there are no ethical infringements on the participants and full ethical clearance has been obtained prior to the collection of primary data from the ethics board of research. In addition, the software further benefits the researcher to excerpt, compare, discover and analyse large amounts of data at the same time, this saves time and decreases the chance of mistakes occurring, as consistency and transparency is apparent in the process. Furthermore, it builds relationships and networks by creating a graphical interpretation of the data (Ngalande & Mkwinda, 2014:3-4).

3.5   PROBLEMS ENCOUNTED

One of the problems that was encountered during this study was finding a program to conduct the textual analysis of the online review comments collected. Furthermore, collecting a large enough sample of online review comments and editing them so as they are compatible with ATLATS.ti proved to be time consuming. Another problem encountered was finding recent sources of information as technology in the use of the tourism industry is relevantly new.

3.6   SUMMARY

This chapter discussed and outlined the research design, paradigm and methodology that was utilised through this study. Furthermore, the difference between quantitative and qualitative were explained. A detailed explanation of the research paradigm, design and methodology that were utilised in this study, was discussed. Subsequently, the secondary research collection of this study is discussed as well as the primary research, which constitutes; the target population, and; the sample and sampling method of the study. Thereafter, the data collection and analysis of the study was expanded upon, constituting the preparation of the data as well as the data analysis process. Lastly, problems encountered during the study are provided.

In summary, the research paradigm of this study is a hybrid, meaning both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms are utilised. Furthermore, content analysis as well as descriptive research designs are employed. The secondary research of this study constituted a review of the extant literature to identify gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com who booked hotels in the Western Cape, South Africa. Additionally, the primary research of this study identified that; the target population are users of Hotels.com that utilised a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa and made an online review of their experience; the sample selected included online review comments from users who booked a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa on Hotels; that the sample size was 10 000 online review comments, and; that the sampling method utilised was probability sampling.

Furthermore, it was identified that the data collection instrument utilised for this study as ATLAS.ti, the data collection method constituted the development of a protocol, and the data analysis was done through the use of textual analysis as well as statistical analysis to report on findings. In chapter four, the data collected from the participants of this study is edited, analysed, interpreted and discussed and presented in the form of tables and figures.

CHAPTER 4

REPORTING THE FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter (Chapter 3) started by identifying and discussing the research paradigm relevant to this study. Secondly, the research design and methodology, which included; the secondary and primary research; target population, as well as; the sample and sampling methods, were identified and explained. Thirdly, the concept of data analysis and the process used to prepare the data for statistical analysis were discussed, constituting the data collection instrument and method and process of analysis. Lastly, problems encountered during this study were given.

In chapter four, the data collected through content analysis was sorted, analysed, interpreted and discussed, presented in the form of tables and figures. For this study, the results were obtained through the content analysis of 10 000 online review comments, made by users of Hotels.com in the Western Cape, South Africa. This chapter reports on the findings for each factor identified in chapter 2 separately, as well as providing a comparison between the findings of the different factors.

4.2   RESULTS AND FINDINGS

According to Cant, Gerber-Nel, Nel and Kotze (2008:237), a researcher must aim to present the empirical data of their study in such a way that the reader is able to easily interpret the information. Furthermore, the researcher must provide conclusions and recommendations based on their finding in order to substantiate the data. Cant et al. (228:237) add that an important part of any research study is to validate the reliability of the research project, so as to provide a reference point for future studies.

The empirical data of this study constitutes an extensive list of all the words identified by ATLAS.ti in the 10 000 online review comments collected and includes total number of times each word appeared in the review comments. This list included a total of 9100

different words, which collectively appeared 187613 times (Annexure F). The researchers then sorted this list, eliminating all words which were deemed irrelevant to this study, based on the thesaurus created for each identified factor and not on the amount of times mentioned, resulting in a   total of 1064 words remaining, that collectively appeared 56699 times (Refer to Annexure G and Annexure H Respectively). The researchers did not exclude words which did not appear frequently as they formed part of the sub-factors of this study and are not reported on individually. Therefore, when refining the list all relevant words, according to the thesaurus created for each identified factor, were kept and then further grouped into each factor and sub-factor. Once this was completed, the remaining words were then coded to fall within the operationalisation of the ten different factors of this study (Annexure H). Figure 4.1 depicts the distribution of the 1064 remaining words from the list across the 10 identified factors of this study.

FIGURE 4.1

THE DISTRIBUTION OF LISTED WORDS ACROSS THE 10 DIFFERENT FACTORS OF THE STUDY
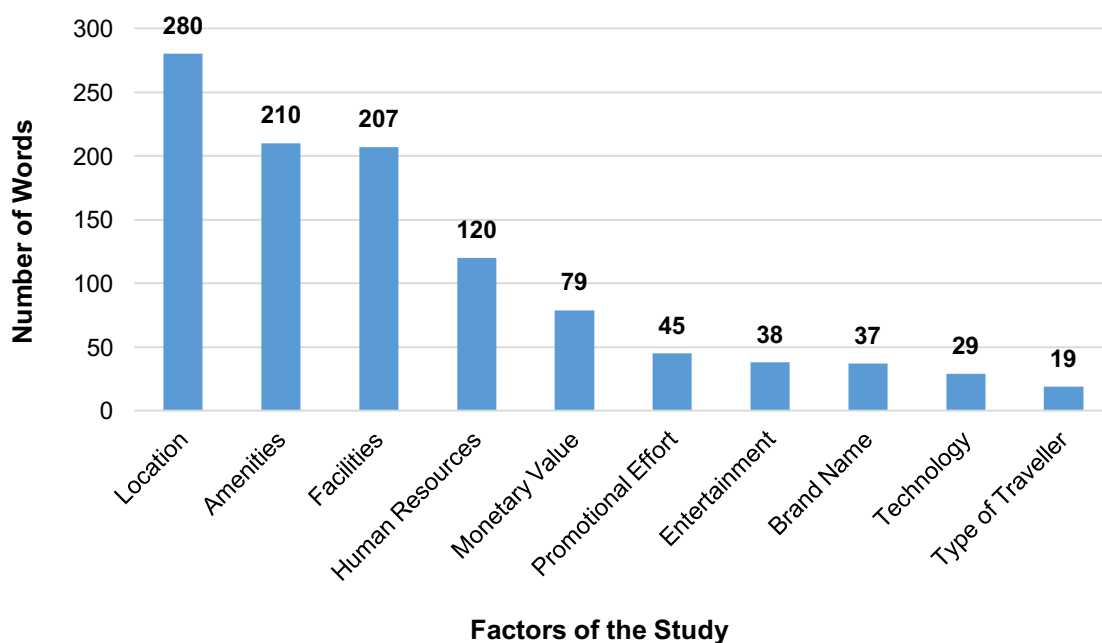
From Figure 4.1, it appears that the location of the hotel is the most significant factor, followed by amenities facilities and human resources, with the remaining factors having less significant mentions. However, as can be seen in Table 4.1, this is not the case. Table 4.1 provides an indication of the total number of times the words that have been grouped together under a factor appeared in the reviews.

TABLE 4.1

THE DISTRIBUTION OF WORDS BETWEEN EACH FACTOR, FREQUENCY OF MENTION AND THE FACTOR AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MENTIONS

FACTORS	AMOUNT OF WORDS	FREQUANCY MENTIONED	PERCENT OF TOTAL (%)
LOCATION	280	15834	28
AMENITIES	210	7852	14
FACILITIES	207	19351	34
HUMAN RESOURCES	120	9343	16
MONETARY VALUE	79	1833	3
PROMOTIONAL EFFORT	45	370	0.7
ENTERTAINMENT	38	849	2
BRAND NAME	37	425	0.7
INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY	29	412	0.7
TYPE OF TRAVELLER	19	431	0.8

From Table 4.1 it can be deduced that the most mentioned factor was the facilities offered by the hotel, followed by the location of the hotel, human resources and amenities. Moderately, mentioned factors constituted the monetary value perceive by the reviewer as well as the entertainment provided by the hotel. Less mentioned factors included the promotional effort, the integration of technology, the brand name

and the type of traveller. Whether the comment collected was of a positive or negative nature, the reviewer still felt it was important enough to mention, therefore, the mention of a word relating to these factors can be regarded as an indication of importance of the factor to the reviewer. The findings of this study are presented and discussed in the sections that follow, the raw data from which the finding are derived can be found in Annexure A, Annexure F, Annexure G and Annexure H.

4.2.1 The Hotel Facilities

Hotel facilities, for this study, constituted the type of hotel; the functionality of the hotel; the size of the hotel and the rooms; the availability of a restaurant and bar; the availability of a gym; whether the hotel is disability friendly; access to a swimming pool; the bathrooms, and; the décor of the hotel. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 207 words, which were mentioned 19351 times collectively. This indicates that a relatively high percentage (34%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.2 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.2

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF THE HOTEL FACILITIES

Sub-Factor of Facilities of the Hotel
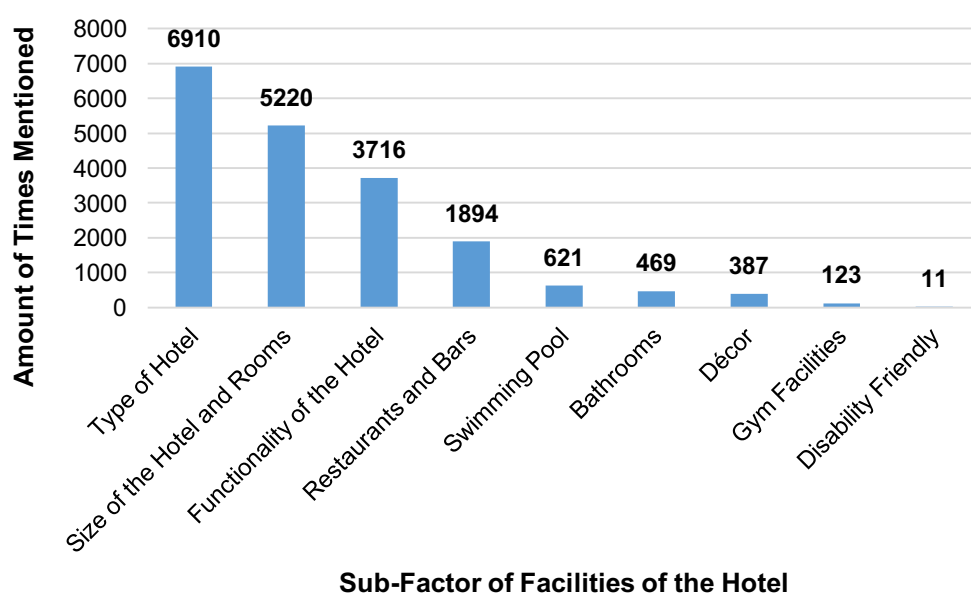
From Figure 4.2, it can be deduced that the most important sub-factor identified by reviewers on Hotels.com, with regards to the facilities of the hotel was the type of hotel (6910 mentions or 36% of total mentions for this factor). The second most important sub-factor to reviewers when booking a hotel is the size of the hotel and the rooms, reflected in the 5220 mentions, or 27% of total mentions for this factor. Two other predominant sub-factors of the facilities of the hotel identified as important by reviewers of Hotel.com when booking a hotel include; the functionality of the hotel (3716 mentions or 19% of total mentions for this factor), and; if there are restaurants and bars available (1894 mentions or 10% of total mentions for this factor). The remaining sub-factors constituted the minority of mentions, collectively contributing only 1611 mentions, or 8% of total mentions for this factor. This minority includes the availability of a gym (123 mentions), whether the hotel is disability friendly (11 mentions), if the hotel has a swimming pool (621), the bathrooms within the hotel (469) and the décor of the hotel (387). It can be concluded that the type of hotel, the functionality of the hotel, the size of the hotel and rooms and the availability of restaurants and bars are significant contributors to the facilities of a hotel.

4.2.2 The Location of the Hotel

The first factor identified in this study is the location of the hotel, which constituted safety and convenience of the location; if there are transport hubs in the close vicinity; if the hotel has an aesthetically pleasing view, and; the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 280 words, which were mentioned 15834 times collectively. This indicates that a large number (28%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.3 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.3

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF THE LOCATION OF THE HOTEL

Sub-Factors of The Location of The Hotel
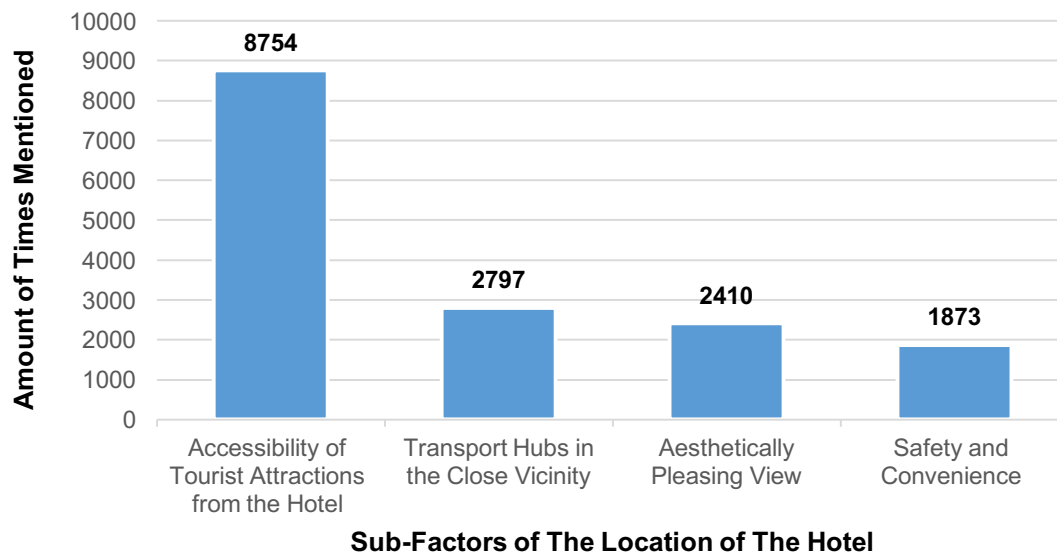
The most mentioned sub-factor, reflected in the 55% and 8754 mentions, with regards to the location of the hotel is the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel, indicating that reviewers found this aspect most significant when booking a hotel, with regards to the location of the hotel. This is followed by whether there are transport hubs in close proximity to the hotel, with 2797 mentions, resulting in 18% of the total for this factor. The third most mentioned, and therefore sought, sub-factor for the location of the hotel is if the hotel is aesthetically pleasing to look at (2410 or 15% of the total mentions) and lastly safety and convenience of the hotel, which constitutes 1873 mentions and 12% of the total mentions for this factor. It can be concluded, therefore, that the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel is a significant contributor to the location of the hotel.

4.2.3 Human Resources

For this study, human resources will refer to the customer service provided by the personnel associated with the hotel. This factor includes; the personal experience generated for the customer; the quality of the service provided; the intangible service hospitality of the personnel; the responsiveness of the hotel, and; the ability and efficiency of communication. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 120 words,

which were mentioned 9343 times collectively. This indicates that a relatively high percentage (16%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.4 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.4

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Sub-Factors of Human Reources
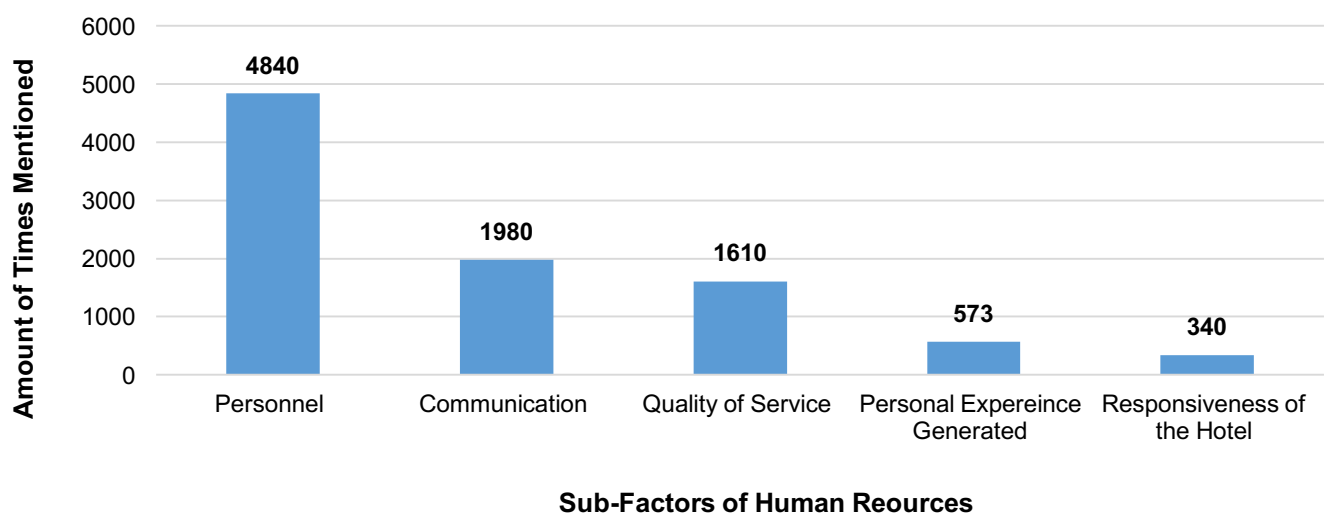
The largest portions of mentions with reference to human resources of a hotel are the personnel or staff employed by the establishment, apparent by the 4840 mentions (52% of total mentions for this factor). As indicated by reviewers, the second most important sub-factor relating to human resources of a hotel is the level of communication they experienced, which is depicted by the 1980 mentions, constituting 21% of total mentions for this factor. Another sub-factor highlighted by reviewers within this factor was the quality of service they received from the hotel (1610 mention or 17% of total mentions for this factor). The remaining two sub-factors, namely; personal experience generated, and; responsiveness of the hotel, collectively contributed 10% of total mentions for this factor, indicating that reviewers did not find them important when selecting a hotel, with regards to human resources of the hotel. It is therefore apparent that the personnel and communication by the hotel are significant contributors to this factor.

4.2.4 The Hotel Amenities

As defined in Chapter 2, hotel amenities can be within a hotel room, or in the communal areas of a hotel. Amenities include: hair styling tools; stain remover wipes; lint rollers; exercise gear; electronic charges; adaptors; toiletries; complimentary breakfast; Wi-Fi; air conditioning; premium bedding; daily housekeeping; mattress type; a mini refrigerator; secure parking; 24- hour front desk service; the availability of coffee/tea in the lobbies, and; the cleanliness of the hotel. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 210 words, which were mentioned 7852 times collectively. This indicates that a moderate percentage (14%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.5 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.5

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF THE HOTEL AMENITIES
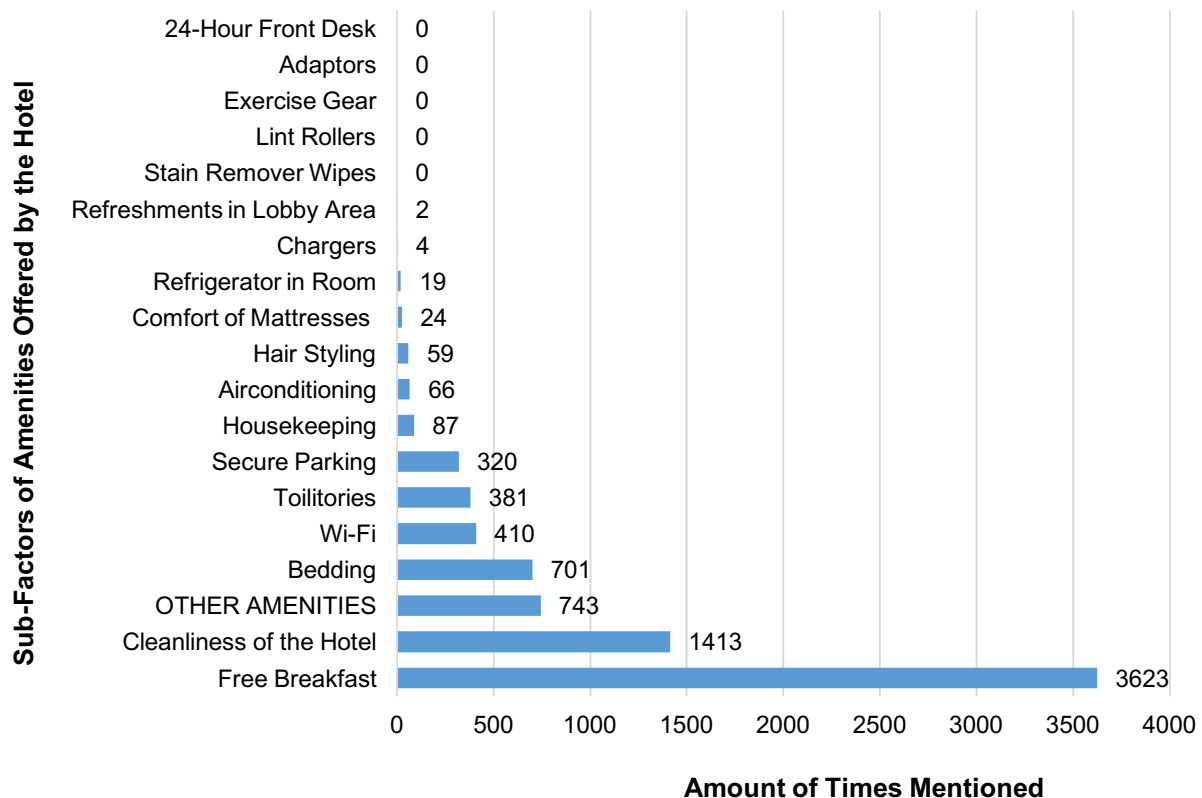
The most mentioned sub-factor within the factor of amenities offered by the hotel was free breakfast (3623 mentions or 46% of total mentions for this factor). This indicates

that a very large portion of reviewers though it was important when selecting a hotel. The second most mentioned or sought-after sub-factor was the cleanliness of the hotel, reflected in the 1413 mentions (18% of total mentions for this factor). Another amenity identified by reviewers as important when selecting a hotel was the bedding in the rooms, with 701 mentions or 9% of total mentions for this factor). Moderately mentioned or sought-after amenities included; the availability of secure parking (320 mentions); the availability of Wi-Fi (410 mentions), and; the availability of toiletries (381 mentions). Amenities which appear to be less significant to reviewers when booking a hotel are; the availability of refreshments; 24-hour front desk service; having a refrigerator in the room; the comfort of the mattresses; housekeeping being offered; air-conditioning in the rooms; adaptors, lint rollers, stain remover wipes and chargers in the room; the availability of exercise gear, and; hair styling tools. These collectively constituted 261 mentions, or 3% of total mentions for this factor. From the empirical study, other amenities were indicated by reviewers as being important when selecting a hotel, constituting 701 mentions or 9% of total mentions for this factor. This category included amenities such as DSTV, decoders, a dishwasher, earplugs, a freezer in the room, the availability of hangers, microwaves and other appliances in the room, slippers and laundrette. It can be deduced that within this category free breakfast, the cleanliness of the hotel, secure parking, bedding, the availability of Wi-Fi and toiletries are significant contributors to this factor.

4.2.5 Monetary Value that the Client Perceives to Gain

For this study, the factor relating to the monetary value that the client perceived to gain refers to whether the guest feels that they have received sufficient value for what they have paid, or value for money, which includes; discounts on longer stays; child payment policies, and; loyalty programs. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 79 words, which were mentioned 1833 times collectively. This indicates that a low percentage (3%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.6 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.6

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF MONETARY VALUE THAT THE CLIENT PERCEIVES TO GAIN
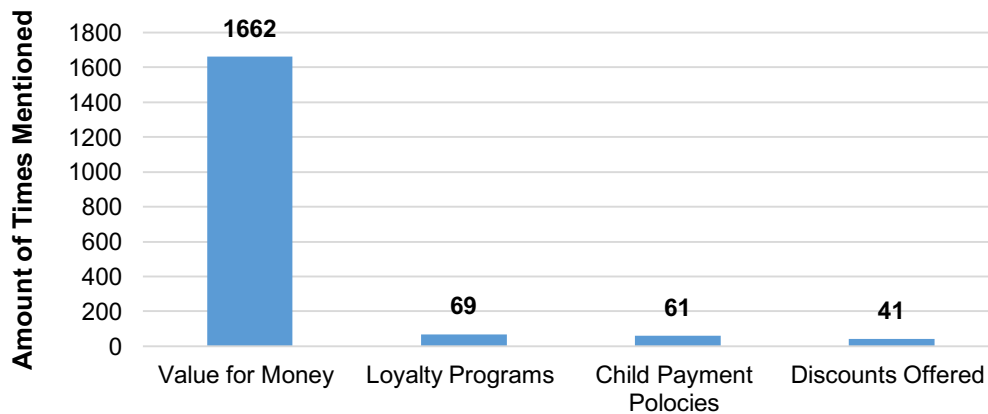
Sub-Factors of Monetary Value that the Client Percieves to Gain

A very large portion (91% or 1662 mentions) of mentions within monetary value, is value for money, which indicates that reviewers found it very important to receive a deal which they felt was worth the cost when booking a hotel. The remaining sub-factors for monetary value exhibited low frequencies, with loyalty programs only being mentioned 69 times (4% of total mentions for this factor), child payment policies only having 61 mentions (3%) and discounts offered only being mentioned 41 times (2%). This depicts that reviewers did not find these sub-factors important when selecting a hotel, with regards to the monetary value that they perceived to gain. Therefore, it is apparent that receiving value for money is a significant contributor to this factor.

4.2.6 Entertainment Provided

The definition of accommodation is no longer limited to the facilities offered anymore but has expanded to include the experience generated for the client. One aspect of this is entertainment provided by the hotel, which, for this study, includes; sports and recreational activities; indoor entertainment; kids' entertainment, and; entertainment for adults. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 38 words, which were mentioned 849 times collectively. This indicates that a relatively low percentage (2%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a

hotel. Figure 4.7 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.7

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDED BY THE HOTEL

Sub-Factors of Entertainment Provided by the Hotel
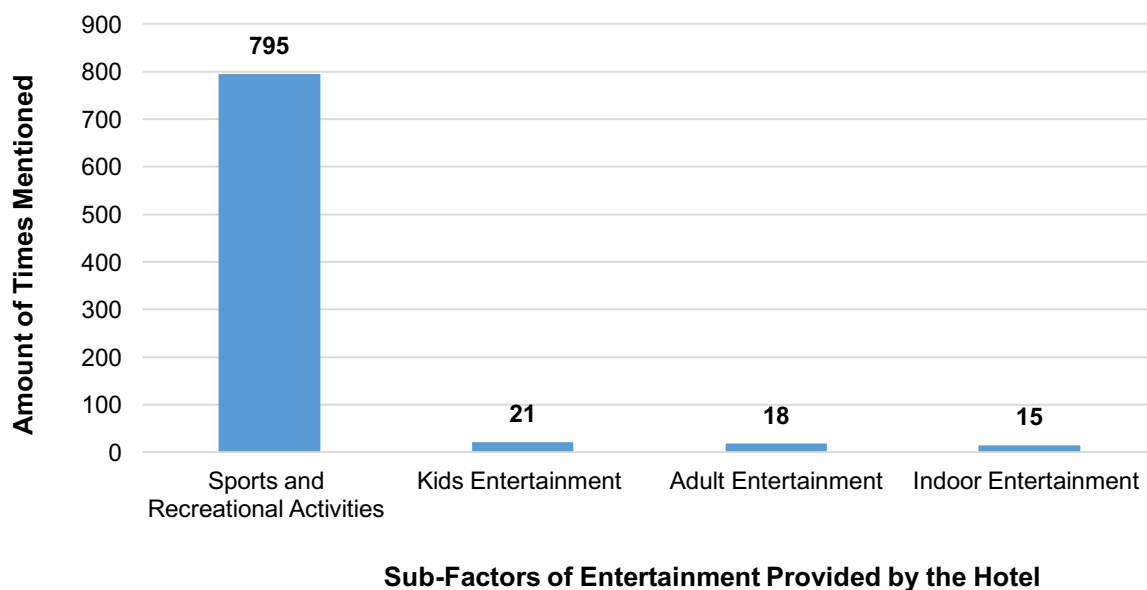
From Figure 4.7, the most important sub-factor with regards to the entertainment provided by the hotel was sports and recreational activities, reflected by the 795 mentions (94% of total mentions for this factor). This implies that reviewers indicated that this was important when booking a hotel, with respect to entertainment provided. The remaining sub-factors were indoor entertainment (15 mentions), kids entertainment (21 entertainment) and adult entertainment (18 mentions), collectively constituting only 6% of total mentions for this factor. Therefore, it can be concluded that sports and recreational activities are a significant contributor to this factor.

4.2.7 The Type of Traveller

Depending on the reason for travel, such as holiday makers; business people; tech-savvy travellers; backpackers or budget-friendly travellers, and; retreaters, as well as the individual's personal preferences they will have different needs and demands with

regards to the accommodation type they select. The types of travellers included in this study are holiday makers; business people; tech-savvy travellers; backpackers or budget friendly travellers, and; retreaters. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 19 words, which were mentioned 431 times collectively. This indicates that a low percentage (0.8%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.8 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.8

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF THE TYPE OF TRAVELLER
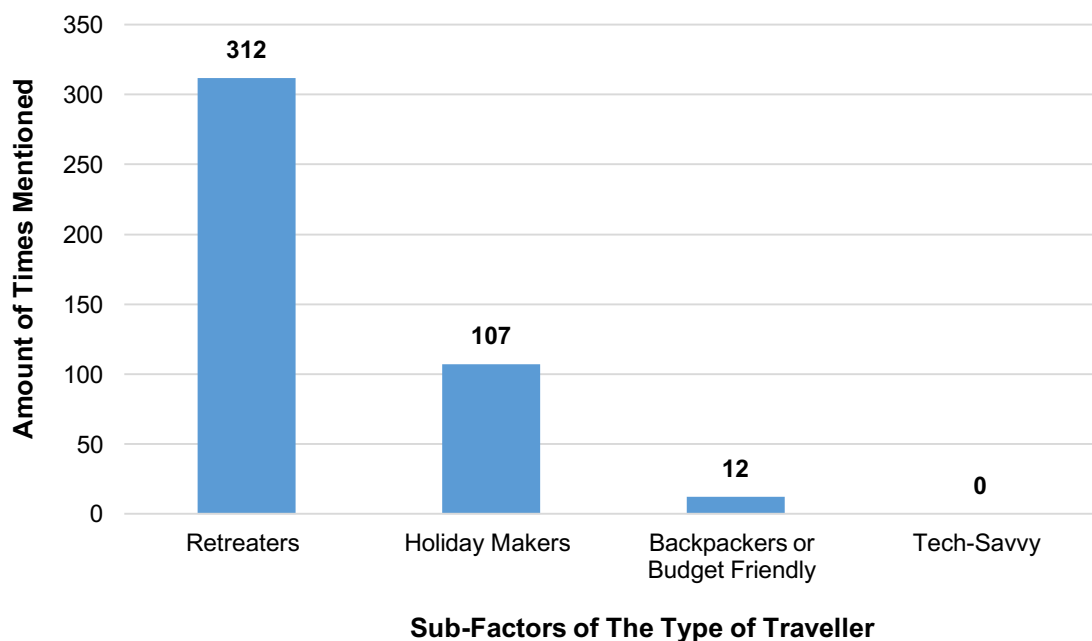

Sub-Factors of The Type of Traveller

Within the factor constituting the type of traveller, the largest sub-factor was retreaters (312 mentions or 72% of total mentions for this factor), this indicates that the majority of travellers were retreaters. Following this was holiday makers, reflected by 107 mentions and 25% of total mentions for this factor). Only 3% of total mentions for this factor, or 12 mentions, indicated that the reviewer was a backpacker or budget-friendly traveller and no reviewers mentioned basing their selection of a hotel on a hotel being tech-savvy.

4.2.8 The Promotional Efforts of the Hotel

The second factor identified in this study related to the promotional efforts of the hotel and included social media platforms utilised; the availability of information online (such as using a website); word of mouth generated; advertising seen, and; reviews of the hotel. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 45 words, which were mentioned 370 times collectively. This indicates that only a small percentage (0.7%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.9 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.9

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF THE PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS OF THE HOTEL

Sub-Factors of The Promotional Efforts of The Hotel
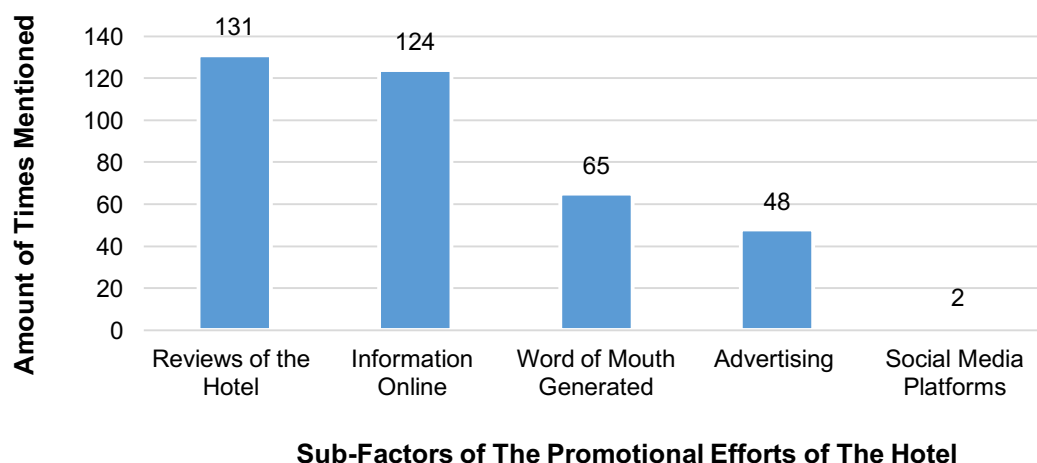
From Figure 4.9, it can be seen that the most sought sub-factor of reviewers, with regards to the promotional efforts of the hotel, is the availability of reviews of the hotel by previous clients, reflected in the 131 mentions and 35% of total mentions for this factor. The second most sought sub-factor of reviewers for this factor is if there is information available online (124 mentions and 33% of the total mentions for this factor).The two remaining predominant sub-factors sought by reviewers is if people have told them about the hotel or recommended it, with 65 mentions and constituting 18% of total mentions for this factor, and advertising run by the hotel (48 mentions and

13% of total mentions for this factor). There were only 2 mentions, or 1% of total mentions, of social media being significant when booking a hotel, indicating that reviewers did not see this as important when selecting a hotel. It can be concluded that the two sub-factors which contribute most significantly to the promotional efforts of the hotel are therefore, reviews of the hotel and information being available to clients.

4.2.9 The Integration of Technology into the Operation of the Hotel

As explained in Chapter 2, technology has been identified as a key contributor to customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. Therefore, it was important to include the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel as a factor for this study. This factor constitutes any IT systems in place, such as a website, mobile app, portal or self-check-in kiosks. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 29 words, which were mentioned 412 times collectively. This indicates that a very low percentage (0.7%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.10 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.10

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF THE INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY INTO THE OPERATION OF THE HOTEL

Sub-Factors of The Integration of Technology into the Operation of the Hotel
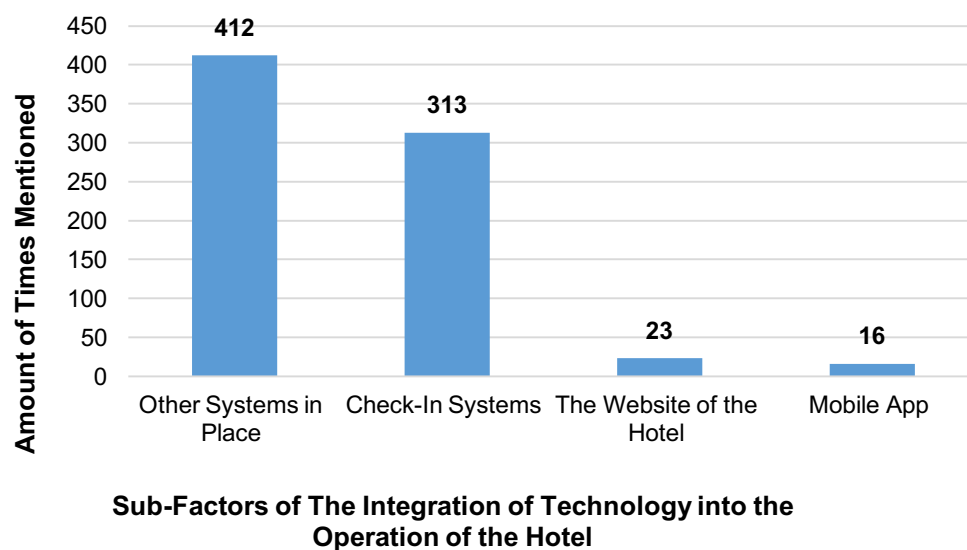
From Figure 4.10, it can be seen that check-in systems, which make the process of checking-in and out of the hotel easier for the client, were identified by reviewers as important (313 mentions or 41% of total mentions for this factor), with regards to the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel. Reviewers further indicated that the hotels website was an important sub-factor when selecting a hotel, reflected in the 23 mentions. Furthermore, it can be noted that the sub-factor of the hotel making use of a mobile app was not seen as important to reviewers when selecting a hotel. A large sub-factor of the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel is other systems in place (412 mentions or 54% of total mentions for this factor). These other systems included; the availability of ATM machines, and; online cancellation policies. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sub-factor of check-in systems is a significant contributor to this factor.

4.2.10 The Brand Name of the Hotel

The identity of an organisation is whereby their customers can differentiate them in the market, and with the hotel industry being so saturated, the ability for clientele to identify a hotel has become increasingly important. For this study, the brand name of the hotel constitutes; the trustworthiness of the establishment; how well known or established the hotel is, and; if the establishment is operating in an environmentally sound manner. As seen in Table 4.1, this factor constituted 37 words, which were mentioned 425 times collectively. This indicates that a low percentage (0.7%) of reviewers felt that these aspects were important when selecting and reviewing a hotel. Figure 4.11 depicts how many times each sub-section of this factor was mentioned.

FIGURE 4.11

PREVELANCE OF EACH SUB-SECTION OF THE BRAND NAME OF THE HOTEL
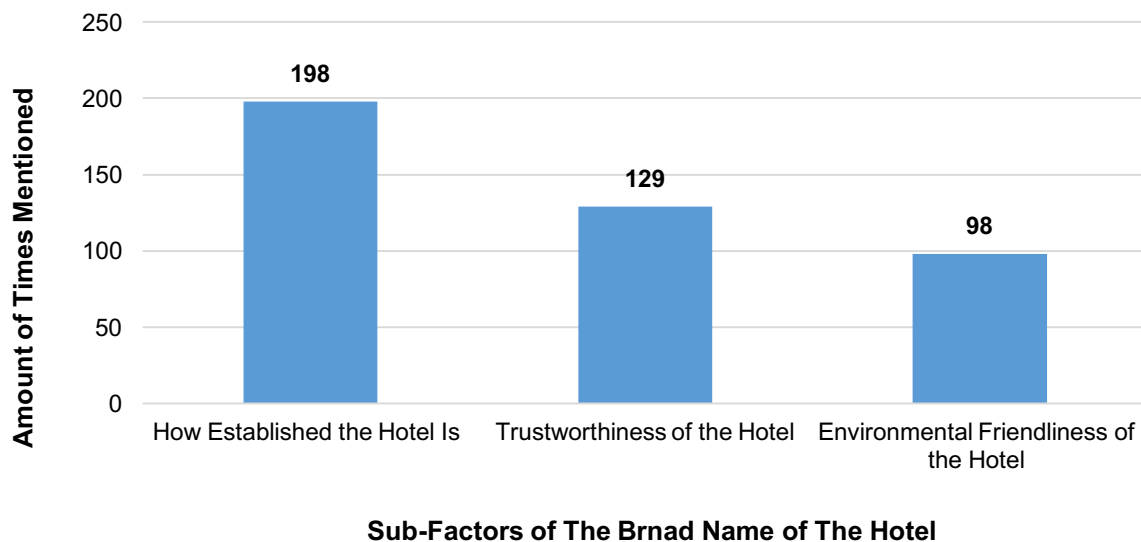
Sub-Factors of The Brnad Name of The Hotel

The largest sub-factor with regards to the brand name of the hotel was how established the hotel is, indicated by the 198 mentions or 47% of total mentions for this factor, implying that the reviewers felt that this was important when selecting a hotel. The second largest sub-factor identified by reviewers as important when selecting a hotel, with reference to the brand name of the hotel, is the level of trustworthiness of the hotel (129 mentions or 30% of total mentions for this factor). The last sub-factor of the brand name of the hotel is whether or not the hotel acted in an environmentally friendly way. As depicted by the 98 mentions or 23% of total mentions for this factor, it was not highlighted by reviewers as an important sub-factor when selecting a hotel. Therefore, how well established the hotel is, is the largest contributor to this factor.

4.3 SUMMARY

In chapter five the data obtained from the 10 000 online review comments were coded, presented and analysed, using content analysis Figures and tables were utilised to present the data and descriptions were given to interpret the findings. The following findings   highlight the most important information.

From the findings it was apparent that the factors which reviewers found most important or sought after the most were; the facilities of the hotel, constituting 34% of total mentions; the location of the hotel, constituting 28% of total mentions; human resources of the hotel, constituting 16% of total mentions, and; the amenities offered by the hotel, constituting 14% of total mentions. The highlighted sub-factors within the location of the hotel were the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel (8754 mentions), whether there are transport hubs in close proximity to the hotel (2797mentions), and if the hotel is aesthetically pleasing to look at (2410 mentions). It can be concluded, therefore, that the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel is a significant contributor to the location of the hotel.

The most sought-after sub-factors of reviewers, with regards to the promotional efforts of the hotel, is the availability of reviews of the hotel by previous clients (131 mentions), if there is information available online (124 mentions), if people have told them about the hotel or recommended it (65 mentions), and advertising run by the hotel (48 mentions). A very large portion (1662 mentions) of mentions within monetary value, is value for money. The remaining sub-factors for monetary value exhibited low frequencies. This depicts that reviewers did not find these sub-factors important when selecting a hotel, with regards to the monetary value that they perceived to gain. Therefore, it is apparent that receiving value for money is a significant contributor to this factor.

The most important sub-factor identified by reviewers on Hotels.com, with regards to the facilities of the hotel was the type of hotel (6910 mentions). The second most important sub-factor to reviewers when booking a hotel is the size of the hotel and the rooms (5220 mentions). It can be concluded that the type of hotel, the functionality of the hotel, the size of the hotel and rooms and the availability of restaurants and bars are significant contributors to the facilities of a hotel.

The most mentioned sub-factor within the factor of amenities offered by the hotel was free breakfast (3623 mentions). The second most mentioned or sought-after sub-factor was the cleanliness of the hotel (1413 mentions). Another amenity identified by

reviewers as important when selecting a hotel was the bedding in the rooms (701 mentions). It can be deduced that within this category free breakfast, the cleanliness of the hotel, secure parking, bedding, the availability of Wi-Fi and toiletries are significant contributors to this factor.

The most important sub-factor with regards to the entertainment provided by the hotel was sports and recreational activities (795 mentions). Therefore, it can be concluded that sports and recreational activities are a significant contributor to this factor. With regards to human resources of the hotel, the largest portions of mentions are the personnel or staff employed by the establishment (4840 mentions). The second most important sub-factor relating to human resources of a hotel is the level of communication they experienced (1980 mentions). Another sub-factor highlighted by reviewers within this factor was the quality of service they received from the hotel (1610 mentions). It is therefore apparent that the personnel and communication by the hotel are significant contributors to this factor.

It can be seen that check-in systems were identified by reviewers as important (313 mentions) with regards to the integration of technology into the operation of the hotel. Reviewers further indicated that the hotels website was an important sub-factor when selecting a hotel (23 mentions). Therefore, it can be concluded that the sub-factor of check-in systems is a significant contributor to this factor.

The largest sub-factor with regards to the brand name of the hotel was how established the hotel (198 mentions). The second largest sub-factor identified by reviewers as important when selecting a hotel is the level of trustworthiness of the hotel (129 mentions). Therefore, how well established the hotel is, is the largest contributor to this factor. Within the factor constituting the type of traveller, the largest sub-factor was retreaters (312 mentions). Following this was holiday makers (107 mentions). The following chapter will be a discussion on the findings and conclusions will be drawn.

CHAPTER 5

SYNOPSIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter four the primary data collected was coded, analysed, interpreted and discussed. The results were presented in graphs and tables and important points of the data were highlighted.

Chapter five provides a synopsis of the study highlighting the most important points in each chapter. Following this, conclusions and managerial implications based on the results in chapter five are discussed, and recommendations from these findings are made. The constraints the researchers faced in compiling this research study are then noted and elaborated on. Lastly, suggestions for future areas of study are given, relating to the gaps in the literature with regards to uses and gratifications sought by users of accommodation.

5.2 SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY

In chapter one, the background of this study was introduced. This included the aim of the study, which was to identify gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting a hotel in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online review comments. To accomplish this aim, the following objectives were set, namely to:

- To identify whether the facilities of the hotel is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether the location of the hotel is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether human resources is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether amenities available is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether the monetary value offered is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether entertainment provided is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether the type of traveller is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether promotional efforts of the hotel is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether the integration of technology into the hotel processes is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

- To identify whether the hotel brand name is a gratification sought by users of Hotels.com when selecting accommodation in the Western Cape, SA, based on their online comments;

These objectives were introduced, furthermore, the research methodology and statistical analysis used in this study were elaborated upon. The chapter concluded with an outlay of the rest of the chapters and the significance of the study was highlighted, which was further discussed in chapter two.

Chapter two presented the literature review on the uses and gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com in the Western Cape, South Africa, based on their online review comments. The literature review provided a holistic overview of the tourism industry in the South African economy. Following on this, a major factor of the tourism industry, namely accommodation, was discussed and the effects of the advances in technology on accommodation were explained, which is referred to as e-tourism. The highlighted effect of e-tourism in the accommodation industry was that service providers can better satisfy their customers by increasing the ease of searching, comparing, and booking an offering, such as a hotel. Additionally, in order to explain a customer's motivation to purchase and behave in a certain manner, theories of motivation were discussed. In the section that followed, the subject of this study was introduced, Hotels.com, and the 10 categories of gratifications sought by users of hotels, identified from the review of the extant literature, were presented (facilities, location, human resources, amenities, monetary value, entertainment provided, type of traveller, promotional efforts, integration of technology and, brand name).

Chapter three discussed the research methodology which was utilised in this research study. Thereafter the numerous data collection and sampling techniques were expanded upon in detail. The sampling method utilised in this study was non-probability, the technique used was judgement maximum variation and the tool used to collect data was textual analysis. This study made use of a hybrid research design. Additionally, the primary research of this study identified that the target population are users of Hotels.com that utilised a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa and made an online review of their experience. Furthermore, the sample selected included online review comments from users who booked a hotel in the Western Cape, South Africa on Hotels and the sample size was 10 000 online review comments. The sampling method utilised in this study was probability sampling.

The findings of this study were discussed in chapter four. The main findings relating to the most sought gratifications by users of Hotels.com included; Facilities of the hotel, constituting 34%; of total mentions; the location of the hotel, constituting 28% of total mentions; human resources of the hotel, constituting 16% of total mentions, and;

the amenities offered by the hotel, constituting 14% of total mentions. The highlighted sub-factor within the location of the hotel was the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel, indicating it is a significant contributor to the location of the hotel. Furthermore, within the factor of monetary value, receiving value for money was a significant contributor. Additionally, the findings indicate that type of hotel, the functionality of the hotel, the size of the hotel and rooms and the availability of restaurants and bars are significant contributors to the facilities of a hotel. With regards to the findings on the factor of amenities, free breakfast, the cleanliness of the hotel, secure parking, bedding, the availability of Wi-Fi and toiletries are significant contributors to this factor. Two more sub-factors of entertainment and human resources that reviewers identified as important contributors to their decision in selecting a hotel were the availability of sports and recreational activities and personnel and communication by the hotel. It was further found that check-in systems were important to reviewers and that reviewers also valued how well established the hotel was.

The last chapter, chapter five, deliberates on the conclusions and managerial implications that were formulated from the findings. From the conclusions and managerial implications drawn, managerial recommendations were made to the various stakeholders of the accommodation industry, more specifically, hotels. Following this, the constraints related to this study are defined and suggestions for future areas of study are provided.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS, MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND MANAGERIAL RECCOMENDATIONS

As stated in chapter four, the study identifies 10 categories of uses and gratifications sought by users of Hotels.com in the Western Cape, South Africa. These are; facilities of the hotel; location of the hotel; human resources; amenities offered by the hotel; monetary value; entertainment provided; type of traveller; promotional efforts; integration of technology into the processes of the hotel, and; brand name of the hotel (Chapter 2, Section 2.8). One of the main objectives of this study was to provide managerial recommendations to service providers in the hotel industry from the results

and findings. In the sections that follow, in-depth managerial implications and recommendations for each gratification category identified in this study are provided.

5.3.1 Facilities of the Hotel

The items relating to the facilities of the hotel identified in this study include; the type of hotel; the functionality of the hotel; the size of the hotel and the rooms; the availability of a restaurant and bar; the availability of a gym; whether the hotel is disability-friendly; access to a swimming pool; the bathrooms, and; the décor of the hotel (Chapter 2: Section 2.8.1).

In this study, the facilities of the hotel were identified as the most important contributor to the decision of reviewers to book a hotel. This concurs with the findings of Shanka and Taylor (2003:119) who conclude that the physical facilities of a hotel are perceived by customers as important and have an influence on the rating of the hotel (Chapter 2; Section 2.8.1). The findings on the facilities of the hotel (Chapter 4; Figure 4.2) indicated that 36% of mentions making up this category were to do with the type of hotel, which implies that the reviewers felt this sub-factor contributed greatly to their decision to select a hotel. Other sub-factors identified as important to guests when booking a hotel, relating to the facilities offered by the hotel, included the functionality of the hotel (19%) and the size of the hotel and the rooms (27%). This finding supports Lai and Yik (2012:141-157), who argue that customers are placing emphasis on the importance of the upkeep of the building with regards to the grounds, furniture, general maintenance and building fabric of the hotel (Chapter 2; Section 2.8.1).

The major managerial implications from this study included that the most sought gratification was the facilities of the hotel, with special emphasis on the type of the hotel, the size of the hotel and the rooms and the functionality of the hotel.

The managerial recommendation for this item would be that hotel service providers need to decide on the specific type of hotel they will position themselves as, as this will have an impact on the type of facilities they offer. No matter the type of hotel, hotel

service providers must take note of the facilities that their customers have indicated as important. This can be done by conducting primary research through customer surveys or through finding secondary research online. By doing this, the hotel can identify which facilities offered their customers most appreciated and which they felt were lacking. The hotel can thereby reduce expenditure on the irrelevant facilities and rather focus on providing exactly what their customers want, which will increase their chance of satisfying future customers.

5.3.2 Location of the Hotel

The category relating to the location of the hotel identified in this study include; safety and convenience of the location; if there are transport hubs in the close vicinity; if the hotel has an aesthetically pleasing view, and; the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel (Chapter 2: Section 2.8.2).

The findings of this study concluded that the location of the hotel was identified by reviewers as the second most important contributor to their decision to book a hotel. This supports the findings of Popovic, Stanujkic, Brzakovic, and Karabasevic (2019:49) who proclaim that the location of a hotel is amongst one of the most important considerations for customers when booking a hotel. Sub-factors (Chapter 4; Figure 4.4) relating the location of the hotel that were more specifically mentioned by reviewers included; the accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel, constituting 55% of mentions for this category; whether transport hubs were in close vicinity to the hotel (18%), and; both whether the hotel had an aesthetically pleasing view and if it was safe and convenient were mentioned, 15% and 12% respectively. These findings concur with Chu and Choi (2000:365), who identified convenience of the hotel to be significant when booking a hotel, and Brotherton (2004:944) as well as Popovic et al. (2019:49) who state that accessibility and the geographical location of the hotel are considered as important when booking a hotel.

The managerial implications for this category are that hotel service providers must be aware of factors relating to the location of the hotel, with specific reference to the accessibility of attractions from the hotel and whether or not there are transport hubs

in close proximity to the hotel if they wish to increase their chance of being selected by customers when they are booking a hotel.

The managerial recommendation for this factor is that hotel service providers could offer a free or low-cost hourly shuttle to the airport, train stations or other popular transport hubs. Another option could be to partner with other hotels in the area to establish a bus route between them and the most sought attractions. Hotels could identify theses attractions by consulting websites, such as TripAdvisor, where travellers share opinions with one another regarding what to see in different locations. Furthermore, they need to ensure they market their location to the public.

5.3.3   Human Resources

For this study, human resources referred to the customer service provided by the personnel associated with the hotel. This included; the personal experience generated for the customer; the quality of the service provided; the intangible service hospitality of the personnel; the responsiveness of the hotel, and; the ability and efficiency of communication (Chapter 2: Section 2.8.3).

The human resources of the hotel were the third most mentioned category in this study. This supports the findings of Cheung, Kong, and Song (2014:1165) who explain that human capital of a hotel is important as they become a part of the brand and can either assist in growing it or destroy it. With regards to the human resources of the hotel, personnel or staff employed by the establishment (52% of total mentions for this factor), the level of communication experienced (21% of total mentions for his factor) and the quality of the service received from the hotel (17% of total mentions for this factor) were identified by reviewers to have an impact on their decision to book a hotel. This is in line with Guo et al. (2011:3) who conclude that hotels must have policies and procedures in place, such as training and code of conduct, to ensure all personnel contribute positively to the organisation and behave in a standardised manner. Moreover, it concurs with the findings of Shanka and Taylor (2004:124), who indicate that the personnel of a hotel result in customer satisfaction.

The managerial implication for this category is that hotel service providers must be aware of the impact their personnel or human resource base have on the satisfaction and experience of their guests. Furthermore, they need to understand how communication and the quality of the service provided can influence their customers' views of the standard of their human resource base.

The managerial recommendation is therefore that hotel service providers should ensure that they hire and train their staff correctly, meaning they should perform internal marketing in order to have a high-quality staff base, as this is valued by guests. They could do this by; employing a good screening, hiring and continuous training program; attempting to standardise the service performance throughout the hotel by making use of a service blueprint, and; continuously monitoring customer satisfaction by conducting customer surveys.

5.3.4 Amenities Offered by the Hotel

The category relating to the amenities offered by the hotel identified in this study include; hair styling tools; stain remover wipes; lint rollers; exercise gear; electronic charges; adaptors; toiletries; complimentary breakfast; Wi-Fi; air conditioning; premium bedding; daily housekeeping; mattress type; a mini-refrigerator; secure parking; 24- hour front desk service; the availability of coffee/tea in the lobbies, and; the cleanliness of the hotel (Chapter 2: Section 2.8.4).

In Figure 4.5 (Chapter 4), it can be seen that most important amenity identified by reviewers as influential in their decision to book a hotel was the availability of free breakfast, constituting 46% of total mentions for this factor. Another amenity which reviewers identified as influential in their decision to book a hotel was the cleanliness of the hotel, being mentioned 1413 times. Other amenities sought by reviewers included; premium bedding in rooms; the availability of Wi-Fi; toiletries provided in the rooms, and; the availability of secure parking. The findings relating to the amenities of a hotel concurs with Jayapalan (2001:41), who states that if a customer perceives an amenity as important, it will affect their decision to purchase. Furthermore, this category indicated that different reviewers valued different amenities, apparent by the

large variation in answers. This supports Tran et al. (2019:14) and Rhee and Yang (2015:577) who claim that hotels will each cater to different target audiences and will therefore have to analyse what their customers specifically value.

The managerial implication for this category is that hotel service providers need to be aware of the amenities their target audience specifically want in order to be able to cater accordingly. Furthermore, while it is apparent that different customers want different things, hotel service providers should be aware of the importance placed by the majority of reviewers on the availability of free breakfast and the cleanliness of the hotel.

To cater for this implication, the hotel first needs to identify what amenities their target audience actually wants. They can again make use of customer surveys or after sale service calls. They can use the data they get from this to tailor their offering specifically for their target audience. To address the highlighted want for the availability of a free breakfast, hotel service providers could offer customers the option to include a breakfast into their booking for a small fee or offer one as a standard service onto all reservations. Furthermore, to maintain the cleanliness of the hotel, daily checks according to a predetermined "check-list" should be done by the floor manager in every room. By doing this, the hotel can prevent any slip-ups by hotel cleaning services, and it will also help in standardising the service offered per customer.

5.3.5 Monetary Value

In this study, the category relating to the monetary value offered by the hotel referred to whether the guest felt that they received sufficient value for what they paid, or value for money, which includes; discounts on longer stays; child payment policies, and; loyalty programs (Chapter 2; Section 2.8.5).

The findings on the monetary value of the hotel (Chapter 4; Figure 4.6) indicated that a very large portion (91% or 1662 mentions) of reviewers identified value for money as very important when booking a hotel. This implies that reviewers want to receive a

deal that they felt was worth the cost. The prevalence of loyalty programs, child payment policies and discounts were not indicated by reviewers as being major contributors in their decision to purchase. The findings relating to the monetary value of the hotel prove the findings of Bindu, Rajendran and Sai (2008:471) who state that customer value relates to whether the prices quoted are of a suitable level and if the customer perceives the services given to be worth what they paid and that it is a key contributor to customer satisfaction. However, the findings of this study conflict with those of Liu and Zhang (2014:72), who claim that the price of any given offering is regarded by the majority of customers as important, which is not evident from the findings of this study.

The managerial implication relating to this category is that hotel service providers need to be aware of the price of the offering relative to what their customers perceive the value to be. Hotel service providers need to understand what their customers' value in order to increase perceived value for money to their customers.

Hotel service providers must ensure there is a balance between cost of offering their service and benefit they receive back. Therefore, they must identify ways to increase the perceived value to their customers, without increasing the cost of providing the service. In this way they can create value for money. An example can be to utilise IT systems to make the company processes more efficient or to eliminate process or amenities which are irrelevant and replace them with others recommended by their customers. They can also make use of technology to communicate with their customers post and pre-purchase in order to increase perceived trustworthiness, which will directly increase the perceived value to the customers, without increasing the cost of offering the service. Another example would be to offer discounts to regular clients or offer complimentary services to boost the perceived customer value of the hotel, without increasing expenses. Lastly, hotel service providers could try to form partnerships with nearby restaurants or attractions, whereby they could advertise the attraction to customers, and the attraction could offer discounts to customers from the hotel.

5.3.6 Entertainment Provided

The category relating to the entertainment provided by the hotel identified in this study include; sports and recreational activities; indoor entertainment; kids' entertainment, and; entertainment for adults (Chapter 2: Section 2.8.6).

In Figure 4.7 (Chapter 4), it can be seen that the type of entertainment most sought by reviewers was sports and recreational activities, constituting 94% of total mentions for this factor, indicating that reviewers felt this offered enjoyment, and therefore contributed to their experience. This is in line with Mastery (2017) as well as Oliver and Bartsch (2011:3), who explains that entertainment is the product of enjoyment. The remaining forms of entertainment, namely; kids' entertainment; adult entertainment, and; indoor entertainment was not mentioned often by reviewers, indicating their lack of importance in the decision to book a hotel.

The managerial implication with regards to the entertainment provided by the hotel is that hotel service providers need to be aware that customers value the creation of enjoyment, which will have an impact on their experience of the service.

Experience can be created in communal areas of the hotel as well as in rooms. In communal areas, the hotel could offer "dinner with a show", this is a relatively inexpensive way to entertain the guests while they are all in one location. Another option could be to embrace holiday festivities. For example, if it were Christmas time, the hotel could be decorated accordingly or offer a "Christmas lunch". In room entertainment could include TV entertainment systems. Hotels could ensure that guests have access to decent TV channels, or ensure the TV was geared to allow guests to connect their own media devices for entertainment. For more family orientated hotels, the rooms could be provided with board games or packs of cards.

5.3.7 Type of Traveller

In this study, the type of traveller referred to the numerous reasons that people travel for. This included; holiday makers; business people; tech-savvy travellers; backpackers or budget-friendly travellers, and; retreaters (Chapter 2; Section 2.8.7).

While Sharpley (2018:58) indicates that there are numerous types of travellers, from the findings relating to the type of traveller, this study contradicts this finding, with the majority of travellers being retreaters (72% of total mentions for this factor). The second-largest group of travellers was holiday makers, followed by back-packers or budget-friendly travellers. No travellers were recorded as being tech-savvy. Sharpley (2018:58) further states that each type of traveller will have different perspectives on what value is.

The managerial implication for this category is therefore that hotel service providers need to be aware of the type of traveller they are targeting so as they can cater to what they specifically value.

Once the hotel has decided what types of travellers constitute their target audience, they can understand exactly what they need to do to cater for their specific needs. For example, if the hotel is catering for:

• Holiday makers and Retreaters – if the hotel is targeting these guests, they should focus on offering information of nearby attractions or activities. These guests would also appreciate the hourly shuttles or bus services from the hotel. Lastly, the hotel could have an in-house travel agent who would be able to advise and assist the guts in making bookings for their trip.

• Business people – they should ensure there are work stations in the rooms, such as a desk, Wi-Fi and plug adaptors.

• Tech-savvy travellers – they should insure that as far as possible, the process from pre-check in to post sale service, is digitalised. This can be done through the use of ICT systems, self-help kiosks and post-sale emails.

• Backpackers or Budget-friendly travellers – for these travellers, the bare necessities are expected. Therefore, hotels should focus their energy on cost-free

services to increase their perceived customer values, such as the cleanliness of the hotel, the friendliness of the staff and offering safe lockboxes for each guest for their belongings.

5.3.8 Promotional Efforts

In this study, the promotional efforts will refer to all the marketing efforts of the hotel and includes; social media platforms utilised; the availability of information online (such as through the use of a website); word of mouth generated; advertising seen, and; reviews of the hotel (Chapter 2; Section 2.8.8).

The findings on the promotional efforts of the hotel (Chapter 4; Figure 4.9) indicated that the most sought promotional effort by reviewers is the availability of reviews on the hotel by previous clients, reflected in the 131 mentions and 35% of total mentions for this factor. This finding supports those of Tran et al. (2019:13) as well as Liu and Zhang (2014:72), who concluded that online review comments had a large influence on a consumers' decision to purchase. Moreover, reviewers pointed out that the availability of information online also influenced their decision to book a hotel. This concurs with the findings of Tran *et al.,* 2019:13) who state that the digital market is the new marketing landscape. Two additional modes of promotion that were mentioned by reviewers as having an influence on their decision to book a hotel was word-of-mouth generated about the hotel and the formal advertising conducted by the hotel itself, which supports Swarbrooke and Horner (2007:7) who insist that an advertising campaign in tourism is important. Only two mentions were made of social media as a form of promotional effort, indicating its lack of importance in the decision to book a hotel.

The managerial implication for this category is that hotel service providers must be aware that the marketing world is changing, and with it, the proffered modes of promotion for the customers. Furthermore, they need to be aware of the preference of customers for the digital marketing landscape and the importance of reviews on their hotel to customers.

The managerial recommendation to address this implication is for the hotel to employ an in-house marketer to run, update and maintain their online presence. This would include having an interactive website, whereby guests can find information, communicate with the hotel and even book online and having a presence on both Instagram and Facebook or other social media platforms whereby people can interact and share their experiences. Hotels could also make use of email marketing and other forms of digital marketing to connect with their audiences. Lastly, hotels should link with websites such as TripAdvisor so that guests can review them, and they can have the opportunity to respond to guts comments.

5.3.9   Integration of Technology into the Processes of the Hotel

In this study, the integration of technology into the processes of the hotel will include any IT systems in place, such as a website, mobile app, portal or self-check-in kiosks (Chapter 2; Section 2.8.9).

The category as a whole exhibited a very low level of importance to reviewers when booking a hotel. These findings conflict with those of Cobanoglu et al. (2011:277) who found that technology is a key contributor to customer satisfaction within the hotel industry. The findings (Chapter 4; Figure 4.10) indicate that the majority of this small percentage was attributed to check-in systems available (313 mentions) and other systems in place to better the efficiency of the hotel (412 mentions). This finding relating to other systems in place to better the efficiency of the hotel supports Bilgihan, Okumus, Nusair and Kwun (2011:140), who explain that within the hospitality industry, information technology is utilised to manage the establishment, aiding in increasing productivity, decreasing cost, and therefore bettering the value proposition offered to customers.

The managerial implications based on these findings are that hotel service providers need to be aware of the increasing benefits that technology offers in increasing efficiency and therefore their value proposition. However, hotel service providers need to understand to what extent these systems affect their customers in order to not over-focus on technology.

Some recommendations on ways in which hotels can integrate technology into their operations include having customer data systems. These systems allow the hotel to gather information on their guests and then tailor the experience to the specific customer and they can also use the information to form generalisations about their target audience as a whole. Another way to incorporate technology could be to offer guests the ability to access their room via a mobile app rather than having to look after a room key. More standard methods include allowing online bookings and offering self-check in kiosks.

5.3.10 Brand Name of the Hotel

The category relating to the brand name of the hotel identified in this study includes; the trustworthiness of the establishment; how well known or established the hotel is, and; if the establishment is operating in an environmentally sound manner (Chapter 2; Section 2.8.10).

The findings of this study indicate that this category was regarded as the least influential contributor to the decision of reviewers to book a hotel. This finding contradicts those of Cheung et al. (2014:1165) as well as Wang and Chung (2015:567) who identified the brand name of the hotel as an important factor in the minds of potential customers. The findings on the brand name of the hotel (Chapter 4; Figure 4.11) indicated that the most sought sub-factor of the brand name of the hotel was how established the hotel is, constituting 47% of total mentions for this factor. Secondly, trustworthiness was mentioned 129 times and the least mentioned sub-factor relating to the brand name of the hotel as if the hotel was environmentally friendly, with only 98 mentions.

The managerial implication for this category is that hotel service providers need to be aware that the customers value an established brand name and if the hotel is seen as trustworthy.

The best way for a hotel to build a strong brand would be to generate positive word-of-mouth about the brand. To do this, the hotel should encourage their satisfied customers to make comments on social media platforms and chat forums. They could also offer incentives, such as discounts or free nights, for referrals by guests. The hotel must also focus on addressing the complaints they get, not just the positive feedback they receive. If the hotel can respond in a prompt manner, and resolve the issue, they can gain the support of the previously dissatisfied guest and begrudged customers who are handled well are statistically more likely to turn loyal to the service provider. For this to be possible, the hotel has to have an effective and efficient complaint/compliment forum in place and ensure their customers know of it.

The next section will elaborate on the constraints of this study.

5.4   CONSTRAINTS

According to Price and Murnan (2013:66-67) the findings of a study can be manipulated by the limitations of the study. Price and Murnan (2013: 66-67) add that these limitations are the constraints of a study and that this information can be used to establish the external or internal validity of the study.

This section addresses the most profound structural constraints pertaining to this study.

5.4.1 Lack of Time

The main limitation of the study was a time constraint. The time scheduling was difficult for the researchers as they are students doing their BCom (Hons) in Business Management, with the specialisation in Marketing at the Nelson Mandela University, South Campus. Furthermore, in order to gather the necessary amount of reviews and code them in a way that is compatible with ATLATS.ti proved to be time-consuming. Following this, the coding, cleaning, and sorting of the results given by the textual analysis was a very time-consuming feat.

5.4.2 Finding a Program

One of the problems that were encountered during this study was finding a program to conduct the textual analysis of the online review comments collected. One reason for this is that the researchers had a limited budget and could therefore not purchase a program. Most of the identified programs, such as Google Analytics, that could perform the textual analysis needed had to be purchased. Therefore, it was a struggle to identify one that could perform the needed textual analysis and also did not have to be bought.

5.4.3 Collecting a Large Enough Sample

For the purpose of this study, it was necessary to collect a very large sample of review comments in order to get a fair representation of what reviewers on Hotels.com wanted. Samples of 10 000 online review comments were needed and to find and collect this many proved to be difficult and time-consuming. Furthermore, when collecting the reviews, the researchers had to keep track of the hotels they had taken reviews from, as the site shows the same listing numerous times. Lastly, there is no indication of the amount of reviews per hotel, therefore, it also proved difficult to count the amount of reviews collected.

5.4.4 Sourcing Current Information

Lastly, a problem encountered by the researchers was the location of current information of technology in tourism, as this is a relatively new concept. Furthermore, exact numbers of how many users of Hotels.com per area could not be located and attempts to contact the company were unsuccessful.

Based on the findings of this study and the gaps identified in the extant literature, recommendations will be made for future areas of study.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has implications for businesses and stakeholders in the tourism and accommodation industry. Firstly, a comparative research study should be done between Hotels.com and another digitally based accommodation site, such as Airbnb. Secondly, more in-depth research should be done on each category of gratification identified in his study. Thirdly, a study should be conducted, where a theoretical model is proposed to explain the relationship between the categories of gratifications identified in this study and customer satisfaction. Another area of study could be to conduct the same study, utilising the same method, but for another region and then comparing it to the findings of this study. Lastly, a comparative study could be conducted on the uses and gratifications sought by customers based in different forms of accommodation, such as hotels, B&B's, backpackers or resorts.

5.6 SUMMARY

Chapter five provided a discussion on the synopsis of all the chapters, thereafter the conclusions and managerial implications were introduced relating to the uses and gratifications sought by reviewers of Hotels.com in Western Cape, South Africa. Following this, the managerial recommendations were made to the various stakeholders in the tourism and accommodation industry. Finally, the structural constraints encountered by the researchers during the study were discussed and possible future areas of studies recommended.

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ANNEXURE A
A REVIEW OF THE EXTANT LITERATURE

Authors	Title	factors	Locations	word to mouth	Personal experience	Promotion value for money	Hotels facilities	Type of hotel	quality of servive	Uses of technology	Intangible service hospitality	HR	Amenities	Reviews Rating	Social media	Function resort	Hotel size	Entertainment	Trust	Perception of service	Availability of Info	Convenience	Social interaction	Pass time	Security	Type of Traveler	Hair styling tools	Stain remover wipes	Lint rollers	Workput gear	Electronic chargers	Adaptors	Toiletries	Complimentary brekafast	Restaurant	Wi-FI	Parking	24-Hour front desk service	Smoke free hotel	Swiming pool	Bar	Air conditioning	Coffee/tea lobby	Shower	Room size	TV	Premium bedding	Daily husekeeping	Mattress type	Refrigerator	Spa	Brand name	Rooms with a view	Child paymen	Cleanliness	Disability friendly	Responsiveness	confidence	communication	signage	Type of hotel	Greenness of the hotel
Petra Zabukovec Baruca Žana Čivre 2012	How do guests choose a hotel?			1	1	1	1																																																							
Valeriya Naletova 2017	How Travelers Choose Accommodation Online		1					1	1	1	1	1																																																		
Rebecca Wilson-Mah 2015	Introduction to Tourism and Hospitality in BC		1					1	1				1																																																
Asunur Cezara 2012	The Factors Affecting Writing Reviews in Hotel Websites													1																																																
Eleftherios Varkaris	The influence of social media on the consumers' hotel decision journey														1																																															
Shawn Mankad 2016	What Guests Really Think of Your Hotel		1		1	1					1		1																																																	
Anne Sofie Beck Dinesen Beate Sætre 2018	WHAT TO CONSIDER AS A HOTEL WHEN CHOOSING A HOTEL AFFILIATION CHAIN		1			1					1			1		1	1	1																																												
Che-Hui Lien a Miin-Jye Wen b, * , Li-Ching Huang b Kuo-Lung Wu c 2015	Online hotel booking: The effects of brand image, price, trust and value on purchase intentions					1													1	1																																										
Jammaree Choosrichom	Factors influencing the selection of hotel					1			1		1									1																																										
Abdul Aziz Abdullah 2012	Internal Success Factor of Hotel Occupancy Rate					1			1		1																																																			
Margaret Ady	Important attribute to travelers								1		1		1					1																																												
Asunur Cezara	The Factors Affecting Writing Reviews in Hotel Websites					1								1																																														
Mingyang Liu 2012	Factors Affecting Students' Decision of Hotel Selection		1					1	1									1			1																																								
James N.k lui Elaine Yulan zhang 2014	An investigation of factors affecting customer selection of online hotel booking channels		1		1	1			1	1											1																																								
Asilah Emir Hazwani Halim Asyikin Hedre Dahlan Abdullah* Azila Azmi Saiful Bahri Mohd Kamal 2016	Factors Influencing Online Hotel Booking Intention: A Conceptual Framework from Stimulus-Organism-Response Perspective			1		1												1		1	1																																								
Prof. Irena Ozimek 2017	FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF HOTEL FACILITIES IN POLAND		1		1	1	1	1	1		1			1			1				1																																								
Al Saleem* Dr.Noorya Flayyih Mzaiel Al-Juboori	Factors Affecting Hotels Occupancy Rate		1			1			1		1		1																																																	
Adeline Kok Li-Ming1,* , Teoh Boon Wai2 2013	Exploring Consumers' Attitudes and Behaviours toward Online Hotel Room Reservations					1															1	1																																							
Aisar Salihu Musa 2015	Exploring the Uses and Gratifications Theory in the Use of Social Media among the Students of Mass Communication in Nigeria														1			1			1		1																																						
Leila Karimi 2014	Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory to Compare Higher																	1			1	1		1																																						
Siakalli, Michailina 2015	Understanding Online News: Uses and Gratifications of Mainstream News Sites and Social Media																	1			1		1	1																																						
Nasir Koranteng Asiedu 2017	Motivating issues affecting students' use of social media sites in Ghanaian tertiary institutions														1			1					1	1																																						
EUN-KYONG (CINDY) CHO 2016	Social Media Marketing: Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory in the Hotel Industry																				1	1	1																																							
Tripadvisor review	advice from creative consumers : A study of online hotel reviews			1		1		1	1		1	1	1	1				1			1				1	1																																				
Paul phillips 2016	Understanding the impact of online reviews on hotel performance			1				1	1		1			1																																																
Browning 2013	The influence of online reviews on consumers attributions of service quality and control for service standards in hotel			1					1		1	1		1											1																																					
Karen Xie 2015	Online consumer review factors affecting offline hotel popularity: Evidence from tripadvisor								1					1																																															
Petra 2012	How do guess choose a hotel			1		1			1			1	1																																																	
Joleen bizi 2016									1																																																					
Penny Jackson 2012	Value for money and international development: Deconstrucing myths to promote a more constructive discussion					1																								1			1		1					1	1											1											
Robert Beckerman 2015	5 Reasons why customer value is more important than the product					1																																																								
Christine Sakris 2018	9 Suroising free hotel amenities																										1	1	1	1	1	1	1																													
Lisa Miller 2014	The most popular hotel amenitites revealed in new survey																										1							1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1														
Hasa 2016	Difference between facilities and amenities																										1									1						1				1				1												
Chris Gibbs, Ulrike Gretzel, Jesse Saltzman	An expereince-based taxonomy of branded hotel mobile applications									1																																																				
Breffni M Noone, Kelly A McGuire 2013	Pricing in a social world: The influence of non-price inflormation on hotel choice			1										1																																							1										
Wlson Alan 2012	Hospitality and Travel: The nature and implicaions of user generated content			1						1																																																				
Ajay Aluri 2013	The effectiveness of embedded social media on hotel websites and the importance of social interactions and return on engagement														1								1																																							
Ajay Aluri, Lisa Slevitch, Robert Larzelere 2015	The influence of embedded social media on travelers grtaifications, satisfaction, and purchase intentions									1								1			1		1																																							
Bona Kim, Seongseop Kim, Brian King, Cindy Yoonj	Luxurious or economical? A identification of tourists' preferred hotel attributes using best-worst scaling (BWS)							1																		1																																				
Raymond K.S, Chu, Tat Choi 2000	An importance- performance analysis of hotel selction factors in the Hong Kong hotel industry: A comparison of business and leisure travellers					1			1									1							1										1			1							1																	
Sara Dolnicar 2002	Business travellers hotel expectations and dssapointments: A different perspective to hotel attribute importace investigation		1			1																																														1										
Lorenzo Masiiero, Cindy Yoojoung Heo, Bing Pan 20	Determingin guests' willingness to pay for hotel room attributes with a discrete choice model		1																												1										1												1									
Kelly Hunte, Antonio Alleyne 2017	Child payment polocies an important hotel attribute for family travelers? How does Barbados match up?		1			1						1	1																					1																				1	1							
Cihan Cobanogly, Le Minh Thanh, Abdulkadir	Proceedings of the global conference on business, hospitality, and tourism research: Volume 1			1		1									1																				1																					1						
Faizan Ali, Kashif Hussain, Rupam Konar, Hyeon-Mo	The effects of technical and functional quality on guests perceived hotel service quality and satisfactoin: A SEM-PLS analysis								1																																																					
Ladharo 2012	Five dimensions: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Confidence and communication																																																									1	1	1			
Ali 2015	Five dimensions: Hotel ambiance and staff courtesy, food and beverage product and knowledge, reservtion services and overall value for money					1	1		1			1								1		1												1	1																											
Seung Hee Lee , Hyunsoo Lee 2015	The design of servicescape based on benefit sought in hotel facilities: A survey study of hotel consumers in Seoul					1							1					1			1	1	1	1																		1																		1		
Sangeetha Gunasekar, Sooriya Sudhakar 2019	How user generated judgemnets of hotel attributes indicate guest satifaction		1			1	1		1			1											1		1									1	1	1		1			1				1								1		1							
Hailin Qu, Bill Ryan, Raymond Chu 2008	The importance of hotel attributes in contributing to travelrs' satisfaction in the Hong Kong Hotel industry (HUMAN RESOURCES)					1						1													1																																	1					
Qu Xiao, Hanqin Qiu Zhang, Hui Haung 2013	The effectss of hotel theme startegy: An examinaton on the perception of hotel guests on the theme element						1		1																																																				1	
Mithat Zeki Dincer, Zaid Alrawadieh 2017	Negative word of mouth in the Hotel industry: A content analysis of online reviews on luxuary hotels in Jordan			1										1							1																																									
Cihan Cobanoglu, Katerina Berezina, Micheal L. Kas	The impact of technology amenities on Hotel Gest overall satisfaction									1											1															1																										
Katerina Berezina, Anil Bilgihan, Cihan Cobangoglu,	Understanding satisfied and dissatisfieed hotel customers: Text mining og Online hotel reviews						1					1						1																	1						1				1											1							
Eric Siu-wa Chan 2012	Green marketing: Hotel customers perspective																																																													
Jungsun Kim, Cythia Mejia, Daniel J. Conolly 2017	Tablets and tablet apps: what do hotel customers want?									1																																																				
Yim King Penny Wan 2015	Equal acess to integrated resort amenities for people with disabilities																																																							|1|					
David D.M Mason, Elizabeth Roberts 2008	Guest perception and uncertainity					1															1	1																																							
Yang Jiang, Yixing (Lisa) Gao 2019	Factors that influence potential green hotel customers decision making process- evidence from china																																																													
TOTAL			12	10	4	25	6	7	20	7	11	9	8	10	5	1	2	13	1	4	15	6	8	4	5	2	3	1	1	2	2	1	2	4	7	4	1	3	1	2	5	3	1	1	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	

Location
Promotional efforts
Monetary value
Hotel facilities
Hotel amenities
Entertainment
Human resources
Use of technology
Brand name
Type of traveler

ANNEXURE B
MAP OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Source: My Cape (2018)

ANNEXURE C
MASLOWS HIERARCHY OF NEEDS THEORY

Self-fulfillment needs

Self-actualization: achieving one's full potential, including creative activities

Psychological needs

Esteem needs: prestige and feeling of accomplishment

Belongingness and love needs: intimate relationships, friends

Basic needs

Safety needs: security, safety

Physiological needs: food, water, warmth, rest
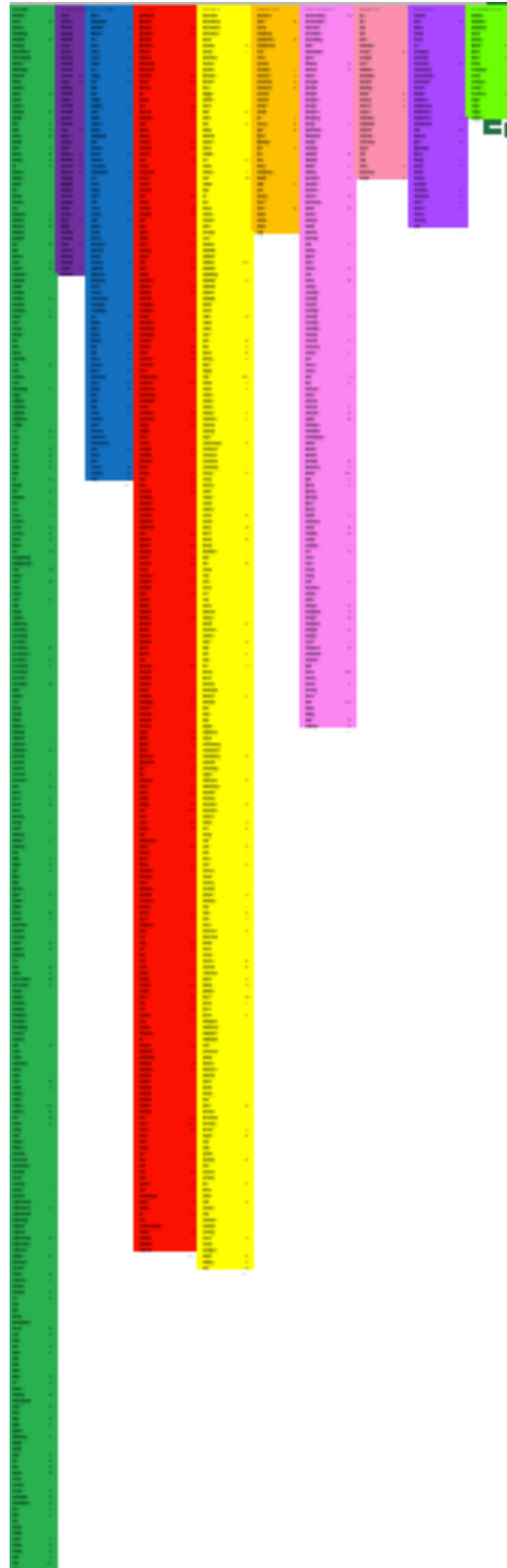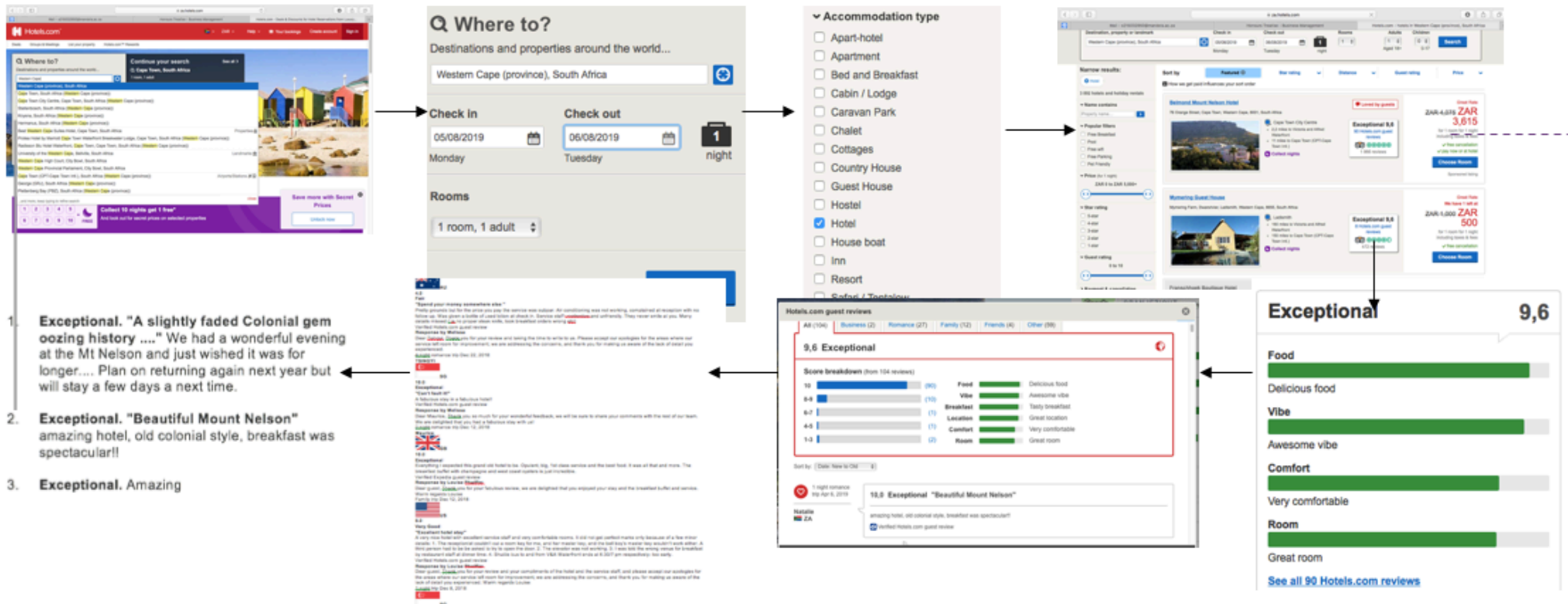
Source: McLeod (2018)

ANNEXURE D
A SUMMARY OF HOW ALL GRATIFICATIONS HAVE BEEN DIVIDED INTO EACH CATEGORY
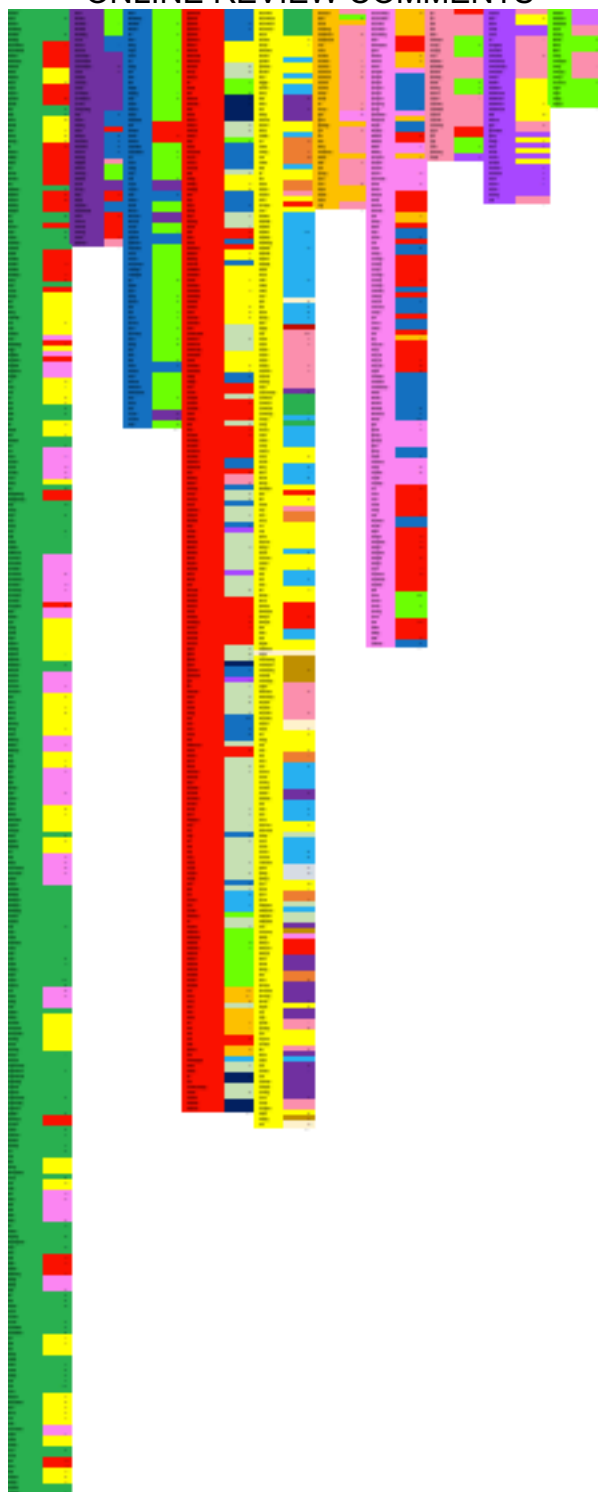
ANNEXURE E
A STEP-BY-STEP GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

ANNEXURE F
THE CATAGORISATION OF THE WORDS COLLECTED BY ATLAS.TI FROM THE
ONLINE REVIEW COMMENTS

ANNEXURE G
THE CATAGORISATION OF THE WORDS COLLECTED BY ATLAS.TI FROM THE ONLINE REVIEW COMMENTS

AMENITIES			
hair styling	59		59
stain remover wipes	0		0
lint rollers	0		0
exercise gear	0		0
chargers	4		4
adaptors	0		0
toilitories	381		381
free breakfast	3304	319	3623
wifi	102	308	410
aircon	65	1	66
bedding	701		701
housekeeping	87		87
mattress	24		24
mini fridge	19		19
parking	320		320
front desk	0		0
OTHER	710	33	743
coffee tea in lobbies	2		2
cleanliness	1411	2	1413
			7852

ENTERTAINMENT	
sports and recreatonal act	795
indoor entertainment	15
kids entertainment	21
adult entertainment	18
	849

HUMAN RESOURCES			
personal expereince generated	573		573
quality of service	1610		1610
personnel	1133	3707	4840
responsiveness of the hotel	340		340

LOCATION				
safety and convenience	1873			1873
transport hubs in the close vicinity	1231	784	782	2797
aesthetically pleasing view	1899	511		2410
accessibility of tourist attractions from the hotel	2967	3083	2704	8754
				15834

PROMOTION	
social media platforms utilised	2
word of mouth generated	65
information online	124
advertising	48
reviewa	131
	370

MONETARY VALUE			
discounts	41		41
child payments polocies	61		61
loyalty programs	69		69
value for money	643	1019	1662
			1833

FACILITIES					
type of hotel	6910				6910
functioonlaity	1495	1110	1092	19	3716
size	5220				5220
restaurants and bars	1894				1894
gym	123				123
disability friendly	11				11
swimming pool	621				621
Bathrooms	469				469
Décor	387				387
					19351

BRAND NAME OF THE HOTEL	
trustworthiness	129
how well known	198
enviro friendly	98
	425

TYPE OF TRAVELLER	
holiday makers	107
tech-savvy	0
backpackers/ budget friendly	12
retreaters	312
	431

TECHNOLOGY	
website	23
app	16
check in kisoks	313
other it systems	60
	412

ANNEXURE H
TURNITIN REPORT

Refer to Dr Nelmapius at Nelson Mandela University who has worked out the Turnitin and can confirm that this document is not plagiarised.

TREATISE D1

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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