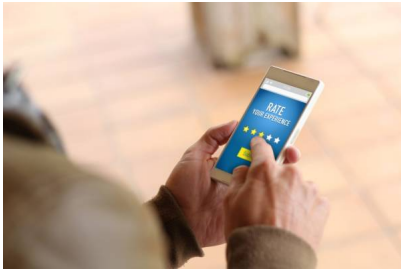


HOTEL REVIEWS - ARE THEY STILL USEFUL?



From “top location” over “breakfast buffet could have been more luxurious” to “absolute service disaster”. When booking their holidays, many people trust the hotel reviews found on various social networks.

Hotel reviews are growing in importance especially for the hoteliers. Travelers appreciate the opinions of more experienced guests and hotels can easily stand out. Truly negative reviews are quite rare.

However, hotel review portals have lost their innovation value of the early years, according to Axel Jockwer, an expert on online tourism. “The revolutionary force no longer exists, the individual assessment loses its importance,” he says.

“It has now really come to everyone in the hotel industry that modern marketing without evaluations no longer works,” says Jockwer. Therefore, the presentation on websites is adapted so that every hotel stands as good as possible – for every type of holidaymaker. “If a hotel is 99% recommended, then the users should be careful. Demands of travelers are simply too variable.

But reviews are still important for holidaymakers. “Holidaymakers trust other holidaymakers,” says the spokeswoman of Tripadvisor Susanne Nguyen. According to a study by Bitkom in March 2016, 28% of all travelers use online reviews when booking a hotel.

Purchased reviews play a very minor role, says Jockwer. He sees the problem elsewhere. “There is a percentage of reviews in a grey area.” This is caused by the fact that hotel operators, for example, intentionally motivate guests to rate their hotel. This, even despite they were enthusiastic about the stay anyway.

There are, however, some advices that can be useful for travelers. Users should restrict themselves to one or two hotel rating portals, instead of browsing the web. They should also search with filters for specific categories and desires. This makes the search for the right hotel easier. Users should ask themselves what is really important to them and then consider these aspects.

Moreover, three detailed reviews are often quite enough to be able to roughly assess the hotel. Users should also pay attention to the language of the evaluations. They can draw conclusions from the words, punctuation and sentence constructions about the person who has written the review. Picture material uploaded by the user is also usually more meaningful than images from the hotel website. Thus, people should take a closer look at where the photos come from on evaluation portals.

In most cases evaluation portals provide little information on the author of the review, says Jockwer. Because often only basic data are stored about the users. “Prince Charles and Ozzy Osbourne are both British and equally old, but certainly have different visions of a perfect hotel.”

Axel Jockwer himself played a key role in the creation of Holidaycheck. He says there is still a lot to be done in the portals. “In the future, the filter mechanisms should be expanded more intensively.” A

huge mass of reviews does not help very much. **It is better to distinguish between travel types, such as business travelers traveling alone or families with children.** There are already many approaches. In the future, filters could help to find the desired hotel.

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