

# User Generated Video Reviews by Hotel Guests

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore if hotel guests would be inclined to use video as a platform for leaving a review. This exploratory research uses a set of data gathered from hotel guests who completed a video review of a hotel after their stay. Results regarding the relationship between guests who already write or use reviews and whether they would participate in a video based feedback system in the future were not significant. This research is the first stage of data collection for a project that will compare text versus video based feedback systems. The technology used for this research is the beginning of a potentially new format for hotel guest reviews. While the findings are only from the initial collection of reviews, they demonstrate that video reviews have potential in a hotel context.

**Keywords:** User generated content, hotels, feedback, business strategy, tourism, video

## 1 Introduction

The consumption of online video has exploded and is predicted to represent 82% of internet traffic in 2019 (Cisco, 2015). With 68% of adults in the United States adults owning a smartphone (Anderson, 2015), more consumers than ever are empowered to watch, record and post video on the go. Within a hotel context it has been reported that consumers are 67% more likely to make a booking when a video tour is available (Hotelmkt.com, 2014). With this growth in the traffic, mobile availability and relevance to the hotel industry, video reviews by hotel guests represent a possible new medium of user generated content (UGC).

Online reviews are important to hotels. Researchers have been able to link increased hotel performance to review results (Tuominen, 2011; Ye, Law, Gu & Chen, 2011, Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Other research suggests that consumers rely on easy-to-process information when evaluating hotels based upon reviews (Sparks & Browning, 2011). It has also been demonstrated that personal identifying information about a reviewer affects the credibility of the review (Kusumosondjaja, Shanka & Marchegiani, 2012). Online video reviews may offer an easy-to-process method for consumers to identify personal information about the reviewer.

The trends in video usage and research related to the value of online reviews to hotels suggest the potential for video to be used as a medium for online reviews. A review of literature related to videos and online reviews confirmed that research does not exist at this time. This research note is about the potential for video as a feedback mechanism, design of the platform and the quantitative and qualitative results of an initial collection of video recorded hotel guest reviews. The goal of this study is to

better understand whether video reviews could replace or supplement the current feedback system (text based).

## **2 Video Reviews**

One of the driving factors in the increased consumption of online video is social media applications which encourage short videos; Instagram (15-seconds), Snapchat (10 Seconds), and Twitter (one minute). These short videos are a form of UGC enabling consumers to interact with an organization and share their experiences with others. Short videos are a form of UGC and UGC represents an influential form of content which enables consumers to express themselves (Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012). When it comes to short form UGC, millennials watch more on their smartphones than any other age group (e-Marketer, 2014). With the popularity of short videos as an influential form of content, we wanted to design a system which could collect online videos in public spaces.

To collect the videos from consumers we developed a system that allowed video to be recorded and text-based questions to be added. We used a user-centred design approach to the system development process by employing an empirical, observational evaluation methodology that included users early and continually throughout the process (see Gabbard, Hix, & Swan, 1999 for a detailed discussion of this methodology). When developing the system, the user feedback instruments were constructed to collect user attitudes and preferences about leaving video feedback and using the system.

The system, called SociusPro, was designed to be portable and allow consumers to leave a review while standing up. Prior to implementation at a hotel we evaluated early functionality at several public events such as conferences, and with university level undergraduate and graduate students. The system was then modified to be a touch screen system, with four main control options, record, preview, delete and submit (see Figure 1). It was also designed to be connected to a video server for storing and post-processing videos.

In response to the growth in short form video (especially by millennials) and the importance of hotel review we developed a platform to collect online hotel guest reviews. Online hotel guest review systems presently use three main instruments for collection of information: 1) text-based paper surveys; 2) text-based online surveys; and/or 3) online, in-person or paper-based complaint mechanism. These present forms are either anonymous or require the user to go beyond the review site to discover any personal identifying information about the reviewer. Video represents a new approach which could improve existing online hotel guest review systems.



**Fig. 1** SociusPro Video Feedback Prototype

### **3 Methodology**

A user study was carried out at the Marriott Hotel, downtown Toronto, over a three-week period in the fall of 2015. Fifty-two customers checking out of the hotel (women = 31) were asked to provide a 30 second or less audio/video review of their experience with the hotel. All participants were over 18 years. This task was then followed by a five question survey that included use of customer reviews, posting of reviews and likelihood of using video reviews. Sixty-two percent (31/52) said that they often or always use reviews when selecting a hotel.

A chi-square analysis was carried out to determine whether participant responses were different from chance. In addition, we used crosstab analysis to examine the relationship between the posting of reviews, use of reviews and likelihood of creating a video review in the future.

### **4 Results and discussion**

There was a significant difference from chance for participant responses to whether they used reviews for making decision  $\chi^2(3, N=52) = 17.24, p = 0.003$ . Seventy-three percent of participants said that they had never posted a review for a hotel prior to the study. Of the 52 interviews collected, 60% of participants agreed that they would post a video review if it was an option in the future. Using video as a review format thus show promise, particularly when it is located on the premises of the organization interested in collecting customer feedback.

A Shapiro-Wilkes test for normality was carried out on all data and was non-normal. As a result, a crosstab analysis with Kendall's tau was used to evaluate whether there was a correlation between participants who write reviews and would do a video review again. There was no significant crosstab result,  $p = 0.896$ . Another cross tab analysis with Kendall's tau was carried out to evaluate whether there was a correlation between participants who use reviews when selecting a hotel and those who would do a video review again. There was also no significant crosstab result,  $p = .245$ . This may mean that there is an insufficient amount of data due and/or participants may not be inclined to try the new system due to its uncertainty. The video feedback system being a new integration may have an adjustment into the comfort of reviewers to use consistently. With the frequency level at 60% of the

participants agreeing to use video feedback in the future again, while only 11% would not, shows positive direction for the video review growth and integration.

From a qualitative perspective, there were some important observations. While on premise of the hotel SociusPro functioned properly but required human interaction with potential participants to entice them to engage with the study. This was a novel system that potential participants seemed unfamiliar with; therefore, it was not surprising that they tended to walk by it.

When participants agreed to conduct the study, many observations were made. Most participants were familiar with using touch interfaces, and interacting with a computer video camera. In examining the video reviews made by participants there were positive and negative comments although the majority were positive. This could have been because the hotel was a four-star establishment in a key location in the downtown Toronto core or it could be that providing a video review containing a user's face and voice may result in more positive reviews; further research regarding the impact of video on the valence of a review is required.

## **5 Conclusions, contributions, implications, and limitations**

Researchers developed and tested SociusPro to collect online video reviews from hotel guests. We also collected information about the guests' present use of online reviews for hotels and found that there was no correlation in a guest's likelihood use or post online video reviews in the future. This result may be due to the novelty of the system or the differences between video and text-based media consumption or use by hotel guests. The findings of the research are limited and only represent the first (initial) phase of the research project at this time. Further research regarding motivations for using/posting video reviews is necessary and user generated content.

The theoretical contribution is the evaluation of the collected data and analysis to provide content for the second phase of the study. The practical contribution is the development of the current feedback system's landscape into a modern hybrid which utilises online video reviews with text based reviews within the tourism industry. While we believe there is potential for the user generated video reviews by guests, the idea needs further investigation. The next phase of the research will compare text versus video reviews using validated scales to measure authenticity, believability, and trustworthiness. The results of the next phase will help to formulate the value proposition for the future of video based reviews.

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