

# Hospitality Discourse on Social Media: Evaluating Online Complaints and Service Recovery for Luxury Hotels

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**Abstract**—The number of hotel visitors who post their personal experiences on online hotel review forums after their trips has increased significantly in the digital age. However, there is limited linguistic research that examines 1) how international travelers communicate online to share their negative hotel experiences and 2) how luxury hotel management resolves complaints and regains customer trust. This study examines electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the reviews and focuses on posts by international travelers who stayed at Hong Kong's 5-star luxury hotels and e-replies posted by hotel management groups. The data are based on authentic reviews collected from an online travel review forum. The present study employs appraisal analysis (Martin & White, 2005) and specifically the engagement system to investigate heteroglossic voice in 38 sets of complex e-complaints and responses totaling 17,344 words. The findings contribute to the advancement of professional discourse in hospitality service encounters.

**Index Terms**—hospitality discourse, e-complaints and e-responses, reviews on online travel forum, appraisal analysis, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have enabled users to express their opinions on a wide range of goods and services in the digital age. Customers can leave reviews, and these comments have the potential to be viewed by an infinite number of people (Stringam & Gerdes Jr., 2010). Service industry consumers, particularly those in the hospitality sector, rely on review websites as a form of marketing to attract potential consumers (Vo et al., 2022). Traveler recommendations on social media and travel websites appear to be more reliable and have an impact on actual purchasing decisions of other potential customers (Vázquez, 2011). As it appears that customers are easily influenced by the experiences of previous customers (Pop et al., 2022), and actively seek out comments and viewpoints of other similarly minded consumers to reduce the risks of making a wrong decision (Bui, 2022). Travel review websites are becoming a key source that informs and influences the decision making of individuals (Hong, 2020; Vázquez, 2011). Online reviews also afford opportunities for dissatisfied customers to rant and satisfied customers to share their experiences with other consumers. The internet allows for faster communication while also significantly reducing the time and financial costs associated with filing a complaint (Au & Ekiz, 2009). Dissatisfied travelers can use blogs and/or travel review websites to publicly air their discontent in a private setting (Wicker, 2020). For instance, damaged fixtures might not have been fixed as soon as they ought to have been, or the staff might respond to a request slowly, which does not match the traveler's expectations. Due to the inadequate service standards, customers may have posted an online complaint on social media platforms to voice their displeasure with the services offered. The internet has evolved into the ideal medium for customers, or in this case, guests, to express their annoyance at receiving below-par service as it reduces the barriers of time and place for complaints and eliminates the psychological costs such as embarrassment (Gannon et al., 2023). Negative comments and online reviews can help hotels become more aware of their customers' needs and expectations. When guests raise concerns in a public forum, hotel managers respond accordingly. This can improve the hotel's reputation by demonstrating to customers that their concerns are valued and taken seriously. Despite a growing body of literature on hospitality, relatively little linguistics research has investigated how customers use the internet to share negative experiences and how management responds to such reviews (Au et al., 2010). Through the analysis of e-complaints and e-responses from 5-star hotels in Hong Kong on a travel forum website, this paper aims to assess hospitality discourse and identify the most frequent hotel complaints made by guests and how hotels address these issues.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983) is closely related to workplace interpersonal relationships. Emotional labor is defined as “the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions” (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 98). Sociologist Hochschild proposed the term “emotional labor” after researching the job nature of flight attendants and bill collectors. Since then, there has been a trend in professional settings toward understanding emotion-focused meanings in the workplace (Bolton & Boyd, 2003). The duties of a hotel professional include regular interaction with guests, where staff are expected to express positive emotions to reassure the customer. The employee’s linguistic choices are underpinned by the concept of emotional labor. The present study identifies the norms and practices that govern professional communication. Effective communication can have a positive impact on visitors’ overall experience and has the potential to make or break a customer’s experience. Understanding the linguistic complexities of hotel interactions can help to develop effective communication strategies.

In the hotel industry, word-of-mouth (WOM) is especially important for experiential services (Kuppelwieser, 2022). WOM is the transmission of knowledge from one person to another. Market research and practitioners have long recognized the importance of WOM communication (Zeithaml et al., 2006). Customers honestly express their true feelings and thoughts. A disgruntled customer may also spread negative experience through their reviews which leads to negative WOM advertising (Azemi et al., 2020). This is intended to punish businesses that fail to give the customer their expected satisfactory experience (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Negative WOM behavior can have a global spread when it is connected to online customer reviews (Barlow & Møller, 2008). The WOM concept, on the other hand, helps hotel operators improve the quality of their services by analyzing customer feedback (Shea et al., 2005). WOM is critical for providing immediate and, to some extent, free advertising for hotel organizations (Bilgihan et al., 2013). Online reviews have evolved into a powerful decision-making tool in the hospitality industry (Park & Allen, 2013). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication has emerged as a new marketing tool for consumers (c.f. Jin & Phua, 2014; Verma & Yadav, 2021). eWOM has a significant impact on consumer decisions regarding intangible services (Yuan et al., 2020). Customers can easily obtain online information from other travelers to assist them in making their own purchasing decisions. A travel forum on a social media site refers to the various kinds of content users share about their experiences. It can include images, videos, suggestions, ranking the performance of different aspects of their experience, e.g., cleanliness, service, value for money, etc., and evaluations of various locations or activities. Users evoke a sense of place and atmosphere in a travel forum by using vivid language and personal anecdotes to describe their lived experiences. The forum can assist users in making connections with other travelers who have similar interests to them. Therefore, managing an organization’s online reputation is crucial to its marketing strategy (Sparks & Browning, 2011). A timely and well-written response to online complaints on social media platforms can greatly improve a hotel’s reputation (Chan & Guillet, 2011). However, there has been little research into how hotel management responds to guest reviews. Ye et al. (2009) suggest that hotel managers should pay closer attention to the reviews that previous guests post on third-party websites. When responding to an online complaint on a social media platform, the primary goal of hotel top management is to demonstrate that they genuinely care about and are attentive to their guests and that they are prepared to take appropriate action to address any issues that may have arisen. Resolving customer complaints effectively helps to reduce bad WOM (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002), and demonstrates how the hotel values guest feedback and strives to provide the best possible experience. Furthermore, hotels can demonstrate their linguistic expertise knowledge by publicly responding to complaints on social media sites, such as establishing different generic stages and utilizing various lexical grammatical features in shaping excellent customer service. This builds trust and improves the hotel’s reputation. Potential guests are more likely to select a hotel that responds to customer complaints and values customer feedback. Investigating serious hotel guest complaints and responses from 5-star hotel management posted on travel forums can have significant implications, such as building trust and creating positive brand experiences.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand how language makes meaning in the context of e-complaints and e-responses, we have adopted a theory of language, systemic functional linguistics (SFL), which explicitly acknowledges the symbolic relationship between the language system, society, and human activity (Halliday et al., 2007, 1964). Language is a key component of social interaction and is considered the primary social semiotic system in SFL (Halliday, 1978). Language is used by participants to express their meanings and experiences (Halliday et al., 2007, 1964). Language aids in societal understanding, exchange of shared values, and relationship negotiation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In the present study, hotel management and guests both use language to conduct social activities, such as reviewing and responding to the guest’s hotel experience. Speakers or writers choose language options to convey meaning unconsciously. When writing a review, written language is far more conscious than conversation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In interactions with hotel staff, language plays a crucial role in the construction and exchange of meanings. The linguistic features used in these interactions must be carefully studied. The appraisal system evolved from the tradition of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Appraisal is defined as a “major discourse semantic

resource constructing interpersonal meaning” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 34). Appraisal resources enable the analyst to examine attitudinal/evaluative meanings in a text, that is, language choices that inscribe or evoke the authors' point of view (Martin & White, 2005). The system investigates the lexicogrammatical and discourse semantic choices the author makes when expressing opinions. These meanings can be analyzed using the three basic categories of the appraisal system: engagement, attitude, and graduation (Martin & Rose, 2007). Within appraisal, engagement is concerned with the linguistic resources through which writers adopt a stance toward the value positions referenced by the text as well as those addressed (Martin & White, 2005). Studying engagement resources of monoglossic (e.g. *I said*) and heteroglossic realization (e.g. *he claimed that*) can characterize the author's interpersonal style and rhetorical strategies (Martin & White, 2005). The present study explores the various points of view and interpersonal language used in hospitality interactions across engagement resources.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study used a comparative analysis to interpret guest comments and hotel responses. This study made use of publicly accessible user-generated content from a travel discussion forum. The dataset for this study consists of a selection of hotel reviews that were taken from a well-known travel review website. Millions of travelers use this platform, sharing their stories by making contributions (Oliveira et al., 2020). On the hotel's website, previous guests have posted their own reviews detailing their positive and/or negative experiences. On a scale of 1 (terrible) to 5 (excellent), customers can rate their satisfaction in different areas. Both positive and negative comments are found on the forum. Only negative comments are chosen because they are the most damaging, and the hotel's response is critical for a successful resolution. Extremely negative reviews might make hotel managers or other professionals pay attention and respond in writing. Data for this study were gathered at upscale and expensive 5-star hotels in Hong Kong. Hotel rating was the primary criterion for selecting hotels. Eighteen five-star luxury hotels were chosen. In the travel forum, hotel reviews can range from “terrible” (0) to “excellent” (5) and are based on member ratings. As part of the screening process, this study selected hotel complaints that were rated “terrible” in the English-language review and viewed as serious complaints from the 5-star hotels. Both the complaint and the hotel response were collected. A total of 38 complaints from the 18 five-star hotels (11647 words) and 38 management responses (5697 words), together a total of 17344 words were carefully examined. The primary goal of this study is to investigate the linguistic features adopting appraisal analysis and not to violate guest or hotel brand privacy, therefore, all sensitive information, including names, dates, numbers, and prices, have been manually coded to ensure anonymity.

#### V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Although the content and interpersonal choices of “terrible” hotel guest complaints can vary, when they are posted on public forums, they frequently share some linguistic features. The common generic stages of these e-complaints and e-responses posts are examined in Sections *A* and *B*, and a comprehensive lexicogrammatical analysis of engagement resources in appraisal system is presented in Sections *C* to *E*.

##### A. Structure of Guest E-Complaints

Customers often feel dissatisfied when a company's performance falls short of their expectations, particularly when the product is significant to them and of high quality (Varela-Neira et al., 2008). Prior research, however, suggests that most dissatisfied customers chose not to complain or that only a small percentage do due to the high cost of presenting complaints to service providers (Kotler et al., 2010). For instance, Stauss and Seidel (2004) calculated that each complaint costs hundreds of dollars to analyze, prepare, and provide necessary information. However, Hanna and Wozniak (2001) state that service providers should pay attention to these unhappy customers because they are four times more likely to tell others about their bad experiences than satisfied customers. In the present study, it is believed that complaint texts are valuable and scarce linguistic data with significant research value. To understand these texts, we analysed the genre and generic stages found in these texts. Genre is defined as “the unfolding structure through which texts work to achieve their social goals” (Eggins & Martin, 1997, p. 239). The study of generic stages refers to the examination of stage realisation patterns in text structure, and each stage contributes to the overall social goal (Eggins, 2004). The caret sign ^ indicates the stage order; and brackets ( ) indicate the genre's optional stages (cf. Halliday & Hasan, 1980). Based on the analysis of the 38 letters, it emerged that the generic stages of guest complaints on travel forums are as:

**Opening ^ Event details ^ Emotional reaction ^ (Impact on the stay) ^ (Individual attempt at resolution) ^ (Continual issues) ^ (Desired outcomes) ^ Closing & reiteration**

- **Opening** (obligatory stage): The guest offers a brief description of the incident(s) they encountered while staying at the hotel. For example, *Hotel C was one of the most disappointing hotel experiences I had* (Text 4a).
- **Event details** (obligatory stage): The incident(s) is thoroughly described, including the time and location, hotel policies, as well as the names of any staff members who may have been involved. For example, *the bedding arrangement was awful with a rock-hard bed* (Text 4a).

- **Emotional reaction** (obligatory stage): The guest's immediate emotional reactions to the incident, such as their frustration, disappointment and rage are heavily discussed. For example, *Completely disgusting!!* (Text 6a).
- **Impact on the stay** (optional stage): The issue is further elaborated, along with any negative effects it may have had on the guest's comfort, security, or enjoyment during their stay at the hotel. For example, *our staycation was completely ruined* (Text 2a).
- **Individual attempt at resolution** (optional stage): Any attempts or personal effort the guest made to resolve the issue prior to posting the online review, such as speaking with a hotel manager or a customer service representative, may be discussed. For example, *I contacted the manager with my gripe. No solution except apologies* (Text 10a).
- **Continual issues** (optional stage): If the issue persisted, the guest could explain why and how they were bothered after they checked out. For example, *Upon getting home I noticed a strange transaction on my card. The card had been charged in full by the hotel* (Text 29a).
- **Desired outcomes** (optional stage): The guest suggests practical solutions such as a refund, an apology, or a future assurance to provide better service. For example, *I have made a formal complaint through my hotel survey, but I have yet to receive any explanation or apology to date* (Text 21a).
- **Closing & reiteration** (obligatory stage): The guest states their criticism again and makes any additional comments or suggestions. For example, *I had high expectations for such an expensive place, but I was let down* (Text 12a).

The generic stages of most guest complaints follow a similar pattern: **Opening**^ **Event details**^ **Emotional reaction**^ **Closing & reiteration**. If the complaints are severe, various stages of **Individual attempts at resolution** and **Continual issues** may show up.

#### B. Structure of Management E-Responses

Negative online reviews influence other guests' decisions and a hotel's reputation, hotel businesses must develop and implement strategies to handle e-complaints and manage service recovery (Chen et al., 2022). Earlier studies referred to service recovery as the steps an organization takes to address a service failure (Andreassen, 2001). Online complainers can quickly become online opinion leaders (Zheng et al., 2009). Management should address complaints quickly as possible. Based on the findings from the present study, the typical generic stages of managements' responses to complaints that are made public online are as:

##### **Acknowledgment** ^ **Apology** ^ **(Investigation)** ^ **(Resolution)** ^ **Follow-up** ^ **Gratitude**

- **Acknowledgment** (obligatory stage): The first stage is to acknowledge the complaint and thank the guest for bringing it to the company's attention. For example, *Thank you for having taken the time to share your feedback about your recent stay* (Text 3b).
- **Apology** (obligatory stage): The management sincerely apologizes to the guest for the inconvenience. For example, *I apologize for the inconvenience caused to you* (Text 12b).
- **Investigation** (optional stage): This step involves thoroughly investigating the issue to ascertain what went wrong and why. This entails looking over the pertinent records, discussing with the involved employees, and gathering any additional information. For example, *We have brought your comments to the attention of the department heads concerned for necessary corrective actions to be taken* (Text 1b).
- **Resolution** (optional stage): Management entails compensating the client, providing a complimentary service, or providing other remedies or benefits. For example, *Your important comment has been shared with our Director of Rooms Operations for immediate review, who will also look into purchasing softer mattresses as back up should you once again visit Hong Kong, or should any guest wish to have such a mattress* (Text 4b).
- **Follow-up** (obligatory stage): The final step is to check in with the visitor to see if any additional assistance is needed. For example, *If you would like to further discuss your concerns, please feel free to contact me at comments@hotelP.com* (Text 36b).
- **Gratitude** (obligatory stage): Express gratitude to the visitor for bringing up the subject and outlining their concerns. For example, *Our ladies and gentlemen and I look forward to having the pleasure of welcoming you back again at Hotel C, Hong Kong should you allow us to redeem ourselves* (Text 4b).

The most helpful stages in the entire text are **Apology**, **Investigation**, and **Resolution**. This is a result of the hotel's efforts and sincere concern for the impacted guests. Overall, these stages of the response can assist in ensuring that customer complaints are successfully and promptly resolved, which is crucial for upholding a positive reputation and attracting new customers.

#### C. Engagement Analysis

This study examines how appraisal analysis can be used to analyze e-complaints and e-responses on travel forums to better comprehend workplace discourse. There are two sides to the interpersonal representation of meaning in the texts: the e-complaint generally construes negative emotions and comments, whereas the management response expresses empathy and concern in an attempt to undertake service recovery. Monogloss and heterogloss are two subcategories of engagement. The present study investigated engagement analysis using Martin and White's (2005) approach, as shown

in Figure 1. The appraisal analysis, specifically the engagement system, is a significant and organized framework for investigating the author's voice that largely construing the e-complaints and responses.

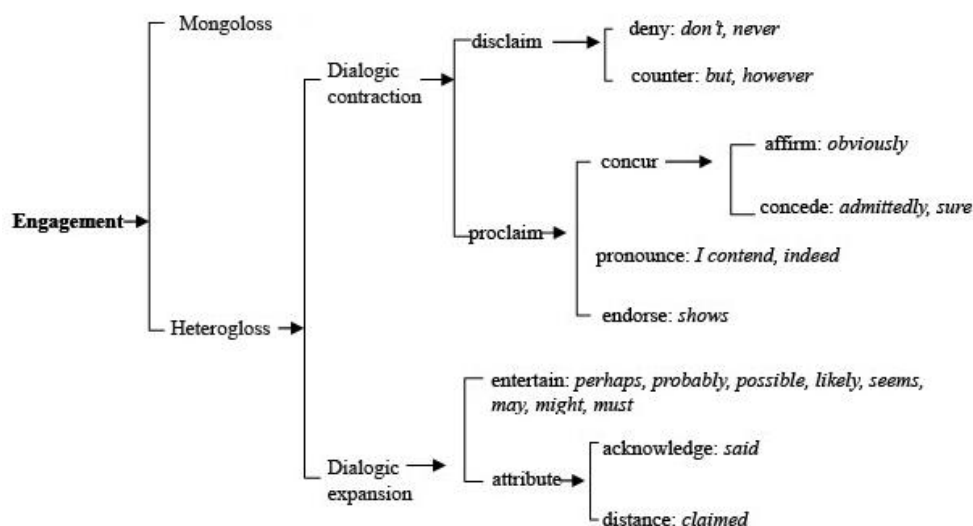


Figure 1. Engagement System (Adopted From Martin & White, 2005, p. 134)

Monoglossic utterances exclude other voices or points of view; heteroglossic utterances suggest or allow for dialogistic alternatives (Martin & White, 2005). The short Extract 1 is introduced as an example of monoglossic voice from the data.

[1] *I said* I would not sign the bill. (Text 15a)

The monoglossic lexical realization of *I said* in Text 15a does not recognize dialogistic alternatives. It leaves no room for compromise or alignment. The guest does not engage the readers, instead providing a descriptive and authoritative statement in the complaint. Monoglossic utterance is a rare occurrence in data. When customers complain, they frequently use heteroglossia resources.

#### D. Heteroglossia: Dialogic Contraction (Disclaim and Proclaim)

As illustrated in Figure 1, heteroglossic resources can be divided into two broad categories of dialogic contraction and expansion (Martin & White, 2005). Dialogic contraction “acts to challenge, end off or restrict the scope of other voices”, while dialogic expansion “makes allowances for dialogically alternative positions and voices” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 102). Both expressly mention the utterances and viewpoints of outside voices. Dialogic contraction has two subcategories: disclaim and proclaim. Disclaim is a textual voice that positions itself as opposing or rejecting a contrary position (Martin & White, 2005, p. 97): deny (*don't, never*) and counter (*but, however, even though*). In the disclaim category, negative polarity is frequently employed, examples include *don't* and *never*. Extracts 2 and 3 are examples of disclaiming in the data.

[2] She was not even smiling and seemed upset when I approached the Guest Relations Department. I just *don't* understand how she could give me such a look. (Text 17a)

[3] My stay was terrible, and I will *never* come back. (Text 31a)

These statements with the examples of *don't* and *never* are forceful, direct, and leave little room for negotiation. When creating e-complaints, a guest's negation is frequently encountered. Extract 2 provides a compelling illustration of the value of smiling and conveying a positive attitude in the hospitality sector. To reassure the guest, hotel staff must show positive emotions (Xiang et al., 2022). It is therefore inappropriate to look *upset* and *not even smile*. In the service encounter, a pleasant facial expression is one of the preferred emotions during interpersonal interactions (González-Rodríguez et al., 2020). The lexical choice of *never* in Extract 3 conveys a very serious message, and this would be seen as harming the hotel's reputation. Reviews that are unfavorable could lead to a decline in business.

Within the disclaim category, counter refers to the opposite of the original idea and is frequently denoted by the words *but* and *however*. According to Forey (2020), Hood and Forey (2008), the counter concession is examined as part of the appraisal to create counter expectancy. In the data, *but* has 78 tokens in the data, with 69 tokens from guests and 9 tokens from management; *however* has a total of 15 tokens, with 10 tokens from guests and 5 tokens from management. The words *but* and *however* perform important linguistic functions that enhance the impact of a complaint, emphasizing the disparity between what was expected and what was actually encountered. They set up a situation in which the complainant can take control of the discussion by laying out a contrast. As a result, the words *however* and *but* appear frequently in e-complaint, adding to their power and persuasiveness. Extracts 4 to 8 are selected concession examples from the guest complaints.

[4] I was at the lobby with two friends, and we ordered drinks and prepared to have a nice catch up. **However**, after 10 minutes of sitting down, we started feeling itchy, and we noticed there were so many mosquitos flying around, and we all got bitten badly. (Text 32a)

[5] Don't be fooled by staff's smile, they say yes, **but** delivery takes ages. (Text 2a)

[6] While I was here, my iPhone was stolen from my room. It had been in the room before the housekeeping came and was not there when I returned. I know that the iPhone can do many great things, **but** walking out of the room is not one of them. (Text 5a)

[7] As a business traveler, I never feel the need to leave any comment on any internet engine even though it seems to be a popular thing to do... **But** with my recent experience at Hotel B, I finally feel like I have to say something for those who trust online travel forums a lot when they travel. (Text 3a)

[8] This is a public platform, and I cannot use a certain language. **But** I wish I could express the magnitude of my discontent, anger and disgust. (Text 33a)

In the past, many guests either declined to file complaints or, if they were not satisfied with the outcome, moved on to other businesses (Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). Guests who are irate about a hotel's lack of response may vent their anger through social media. They have the chance to interact with a larger group of people and voice any concerns they may have (Au & Ekiz, 2009). The way the staff interacts with guests, the misleading smile in Extract 5, the misbehavior of the hotel staff in Extract 6, and specific hotel amenities such as poor pest control in the lobby in Extract 4 are examples of complaints. Guests are aware of the power of online review forums for the general public, such as a *public platform* in Extract 8 and the *online travel forum* in Extract 7. Customers may want to put pressure on hotel management to address the negative issues they have experienced and the pressure to quickly resolve any unresolved problems may be strengthened.

Customer experience is at the center of the service product (Chapman & Lovell, 2006). Since customer satisfaction is positively correlated with future purchasing attitudes and intentions, therefore it should be prioritized from a business perspective (Severt et al., 2006). If the complaint is legitimate, management typically reply by sincerely apologizing for the trouble the client has experienced, and hotels might outline their plans for redress after issuing an apology. The following selected examples of concessive *but* and *however* usage in management e-response complaints, from Extracts 9 to 13.

[9] I understand the frustration you feel, **but** please be assured that this is not an intentional act. (Text 12b)

[10] We understand that an amenity and an apology cannot possibly compensate for your recent poor experience **but** are rather an expression of our embarrassment. (Text 6b)

[11] I can easily understand that you would feel the search of your room to have been invasive, **but** in most cases, we actually find such searches to be successful in turning up items that were first reported missing. (Text 5b)

[12] We regret that you have only stayed and used the room facilities briefly, **but** we hope to welcome you back in the future for a longer stay. We sincerely hope to have the pleasure of serving you again and making your next stay a more enjoyable one. (Text 17b)

[13] At Hotel C, we strive for the perfection of our products and services and the satisfaction of our customers by continuous improvements, and I am sorry we failed to satisfy you this time; **however**, thank you very much for your feedback. (Text 4b)

The management responds to the complaints with sincere words, such as *understand the frustration* and *not an intentional act* in Extract 9, *we understand that* and *an expression of our embarrassment* in Extract 10, and *I can easily understand* in Extract 11. Service recovery strategies like an apology, like *we regret that* in Extract 12 and *I am sorry we failed to satisfy you this time* in Extract 13, can be used effectively in both online and offline interfaces. Stronger relationships could be maintained with effective complaint management, if a prompt and sincere response is received (Barlow & Møller, 2008).

Proclaim is another type of dialogic contraction in heteroglossia. Proclaim is a textual voice that sets itself against, suppresses, or excludes alternative positions by portraying the proposition as highly justifiable (Martin & White, 2005). The three subtypes of proclamation are concur, pronounce, and endorse. However, the data show that there are few instances of pronounce, such as *I contend* and *indeed*. The emphasis is therefore on concur and endorse, as shown in Extracts 14 and 15.

[14] **Obviously** our bus had to come within the drive by area and halt for 5 minutes so that the 16 of us could get in and settle. However, the hotel manager stopped our bus driver from doing this twice. We had to argue with him about this too. Amazingly, this treatment was only given to us. (Text 33a)

[15] Within the next two days, there was a group of 40 Europeans who arrived. To my surprise, the manager that refused to take our luggage to our rooms was running circles around this group and instructing bell boys to quickly assist this group. WOW!!!! I couldn't believe what I had just seen. Hypocrisy and clear discriminative behavior are **shown** by this. Discrimination, racism, call it whatever. (Text 33a)

When sharing their unpleasant experience, some guests may describe more emotional details or exaggerate their complaints to attract more attention or damage the hotel's reputation. In Text 33a, the guest records a great deal of minor details about his unfair treatment, for instance, the time *5 minutes*, the number of guests *16 of us, 40 Europeans*,

the manager's actions *arguing, refusing to take our luggage, running around in circles, ordering bellboys to assist this group* and his surprise *WOW!!!! I couldn't believe*. These small particulars help other reviewers picture the scenario. The writer used the concur token *obviously* and the endorse token *shown* in Extracts 14 and 15 to convey and visualize his frustration and rage to other readers on the forum. After reading about these details, potential guests can make a decision about whether or not to book that specific hotel. The feedback from these reviews may also benefit hotel management in terms of improving their operations and providing better customer service.

#### E. Heteroglossia: Dialogic Expansion (Entertain and Attribute)

Heteroglossia dialogic expansion is covered in this section. Dialogic expansion “actively makes allowances for dialogically alternative positions and voices” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 102) as opposed to dialogic contraction. It fosters a dialog between divergent points of view. Entertain and attribute are the two main categories of dialogic expansion: entertain refers to the authorial voice invoking these dialogic alternatives by explicitly presenting the proposition as one of several opposing views and by clearly indicating that it is based on its own contingent, unique subjectivity (Martin & White, 2005); while attribute is defined as “representing proposition as grounded in the subjectivity of an external voice” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 98). The use of modal adjuncts such as *perhaps* and *probably* to express similar likelihood can be used to lexically realize entertain resources. Extracts 16 and 17 contain the entertain (likelihood) examples that were derived from the data.

[16] *Perhaps* I am not one of their frequent customers and just giving a simple promise might not be enough to justify my wanting to stay there again. (Text 26a)

[17] *Probably* it is a good idea to stick with Hotel G and Hotel H (other hotels). At least a correct room type will be given every time. (Text 35a)

The author makes fun of himself in Extract 16 for not being treated with respect and not having a five-star experience. One possible explanation is that he is not a frequent customer who deserves satisfactory treatment. *Perhaps* is a likelihood resource he employs in this argument. The customer in Extract 17 expresses this intention by using the word *probably* to indicate that they will likely stay at other hotels that offer reasonable service. Likelihood can be expressed via modal attributes *possible, likely* and *seems* in Extracts 18 to 20.

[18] Maintaining the highest *possible* standard of cleanliness and housekeeping is something that each of our guests will expect at any Hotel D property. (Text 6b)

[19] Travelers who are not bothered by strong fragrance will most *likely* be happy with Hotel N. (Text 28a)

[20] It *seems* that my request had been forgotten. (Text 3a)

In Extract 20, the guest stated that his request appeared to have been forgotten. Failure to respond to requests due to controllable forces can reduce client loyalty (Homburg & Fuersten, 2005). Additionally, modality auxiliaries *must* and *may* are used to achieve dialogic expansion. Extracts 21 and 22 are examples of high modal auxiliary (*must*) used by the guest to express their complaints, whereas Extracts 23 and 24 are examples of low modal auxiliary (*may*) used by the management in service recovery.

[21] Extremely difficult to find if you come by the airport train as you *must* traverse through a rabbit warren shopping complex. Good luck finding it. [Text 10a]

[22] They *must* know that certain rooms are not suitable for use. Why they sell them at a premium rate is beyond me. [Text 1a]

[23] I would very much like to call you to discuss your feedback so I *may* gather some details that *may* shed light on our shortcomings and ultimately express our sincere apologies for the inconvenience caused. (Text 20b)

[24] Please contact me personally with your reservation in hopes that we *may* be able meet and exceed your expectations for your future stays. (Text 37b)

When composing complaints and responses, the low and high modalities interact. In Extract 23 and 24, responses from management are usually written in lower modality with a more polite tone that steers clear of being offensive or confrontational. They frequently start by expressing empathy for their situation and understanding their concerns. This demonstrates the significance and value of the business to its clients. As a result, more conflict is averted, and the company's reputation grows. Furthermore, it is clear that the management wants to have a further conversation with the reviewer. An online response might not always be enough to handle the service recovery process. Face-to-face meetings or phone calls are sometimes necessary for time-sensitive issues (Reinartz et al., 2005). Additionally, online reviews are frequently posted under false names, casting doubt on the validity of such comments (Sen & Lerman, 2007). It is advantageous and appropriate for management to carry out more investigation to verify the facts of the event.

Attribute is another type of dialogic expansion. This is most frequently accomplished through “the grammar of directly and indirectly reported speech and thought”, with the communicative process verbs *said* and *claimed* (Martin & White, 2005, p. 111). There are two subcategories of attribution: acknowledge and distance. Examples of acknowledge (attribute) resources used in the data can be found in Extracts 25 through 27.

[25] After a while he came back with insulting expressions and *said* "this will be the last exception". (Text 11a)

[26] The incapable and unhelpful manager even *said* if he were me, he would forget about it and go out to enjoy the city! (Text 22a)

[27] The manager *said* there was nothing he could do. I said I would not sign the bill; he could charge my credit card they had on file, and I would dispute it when I got home. (Text 15a)

According to the data, phrases such as *the manager said* are used as indicators of “hearsay” from outside sources. The guest used another person’s voice to bolster his arguments by adding relevant details. Because the guest regards the manager as *incapable* and *unhelpful*, the words spoken by these managers are also unprofessional and ineffective. As a result, *the manager said* is interpreted as negative hearsay. The second attribution subcategory is distance. Distance is defined as “an explicit distancing of the authorial voice from the attributed material” (Matin & White, 2005, p. 113).

[28] If you look at my history on here, you’ll see I always stay in 5-star luxury hotels. So, seeing Hotel N *claiming* to be 5 stars, I thought I’d give it a go. (Text 30a)

The reviewer disassociates himself from the claim “to be 5 stars” in Extract 28, indicating his reservations. The reviewer believes that there is still room for debate regarding the hotel’s 5-star service quality. To summarize, this section provides a detailed lexicogrammatical examination of appraisal analysis and in particular engagement resources. These engagement resources, which include disclaim (counter) tokens such as *but/however*, likelihood tokens via modal adjuncts and attributes such as *perhaps/possible/may/must*, are frequently found in complaint and responses.

## VI. CONCLUSION

A negative experience shared on a blog or website could reach millions of readers in an instance, due to the speed and constantly developing technology of the internet (Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006). This is especially significant for hospitality industries because the internet altered how travelers seek information and plan their trips (Ayeh et al., 2013). The growing need to analyze complaints and service recovery is discussed in the hospitality literature (Shams et al., 2021). This analysis of serious hotel guest e-complaints and management e-responses on social media can benefit all parties by providing information to both travelers and hotel management, as well as providing broader industry linguistic insights for the hospitality sector. The present study identifies different linguistic features used by complainants to express their dissatisfaction with their hotel stay. The guest frequently employs descriptive language to paint a vivid picture of the lodging experience, including the quality of the amenities and services, the condition of the rooms, and other elements that affect their overall impression. These online negative comments potentially hurt the company’s reputation. To avoid reputational damage, revenue loss, and legal repercussions, hotel management must reply to guest complaints seriously, thoroughly investigate them, and take appropriate action to address the issue. Responses from hotel management can show how committed they are to improving visitor experiences, show potential customers that they are accountable, and encourage good word-of-mouth recommendations. Using the framework of systemic functional linguistics, the present study contributes to the investigation of e-complaint and responses in terms of content, generic stages, and various lexical realizations in particular engagement resources in appraisal system. It is hoped that the study’s linguistic structures and language patterns will be incorporated into future English language training programs to improve understanding of business communication in the hospitality sector.

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