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Negative Online Reviews and Managerial Responses in Hotel and Accommodation Research: A Bibliometric Mapping and Thematic Review

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - No financial support.

Review Stage at time of this submission - Preliminary searches.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

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Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 19 May 2026 and was last updated on 19 May 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective This scoping review aims to map and synthesize research on negative online reviews and management responses in hotel and accommodation contexts. It examines publication trends, source patterns, keyword structures, thematic orientations, and methodological approaches in this research area.

Background Online hotel reviews have become an important form of post-consumption communication in hospitality research. Negative reviews are particularly important because they express service failures, complaint experiences, dissatisfaction, and public evaluations of service quality. At the same time, hotel management responses represent a visible form of organizational webcare and service recovery communication. Although previous studies have examined online reviews, sentiment, satisfaction, and management responses, the literature remains fragmented across different methodological traditions and thematic emphases. A bibliometric

and thematic scoping review is therefore needed to map how this research area has developed and to identify major patterns and gaps.

Rationale The rationale for this review is to provide a structured overview of research on negative online reviews and management responses in hotel and accommodation contexts. Existing studies often treat negative reviews within broader datasets on review valence, satisfaction, service quality, or electronic word of mouth. Management responses have also been examined under different labels, including webcare, service recovery, and managerial response. This review combines bibliometric mapping with thematic synthesis to clarify the development, structure, and thematic focus of this literature.

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis The review will use a two-stage synthesis strategy. First, bibliometric analysis will be conducted on the hotel/accommodation-focused core corpus to describe annual publication trends, leading sources, author

keywords, Keywords Plus, keyword co-occurrence patterns, and thematic structures. Second, thematic synthesis will be conducted on the final thematic-review corpus to examine how studies address negative online reviews, management responses, review valence, and methodological design. The bibliometric and thematic findings will be integrated narratively to identify major research patterns and gaps.

Eligibility criteria Studies will be eligible if they focus on hotel, accommodation, or lodging contexts and examine online reviews, negative reviews, complaints, management responses, managerial responses, webcare, or related service-recovery communication. Empirical, review, and methodologically relevant studies indexed in Web of Science will be considered. Studies centred mainly on restaurants, food service, attractions, destinations, or general tourism will be excluded unless they explicitly address hotel or accommodation reviews. Non-relevant records, records outside the accommodation context, and records without sufficient relevance to online reviews or management responses will be excluded.

Source of evidence screening and selection Records will be retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection using a Boolean topic search related to hotel/accommodation online reviews, negative reviews or complaints, user-generated content, and management responses or webcare. The initial retrieval corpus will be screened through context-scope classification, field-assisted screening, and manual thematic relevance assessment. A hotel/accommodation-focused core corpus will be retained for bibliometric mapping, and a smaller final thematic-review corpus will be used for thematic synthesis. Screening decisions will be documented to maintain an audit trail.

Data management Bibliographic records will be exported from Web of Science and managed in spreadsheet format. Screening decisions, coding fields, and thematic classifications will be recorded in structured Excel/CSV files. Bibliometric analyses will be conducted using R and bibliometrix. Thematic synthesis will be based on manually coded study-level information. All data files and analysis outputs will be stored in organized project folders with versioned filenames to support reproducibility.

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence The results will be reported through descriptive bibliometric indicators, publication trend figures, source and keyword summaries, keyword co-

occurrence mapping, thematic mapping, and a narrative thematic synthesis. The thematic synthesis will summarize how the included studies conceptualize negative reviews, management responses, review valence, and methodological design. The review will also identify underexplored areas and methodological gaps relevant to future research on hotel online complaint discourse and management response practices.

Presentation of the results Results will be presented in tables, figures, bibliometric maps, and narrative synthesis. The review workflow will be summarized in a flow diagram. Bibliometric findings will be presented through publication trends, source distributions, keyword rankings, keyword co-occurrence networks, and thematic maps. Thematic findings will be presented through structured categories and narrative interpretation.

Language restriction English.

Country(ies) involved Malaysia; China.

Other relevant information This review is designed as a bibliometric and thematic scoping review. It does not involve human participants, clinical intervention, or patient-level data.

Keywords negative online reviews; management responses; hotel online reviews; electronic word-of-mouth; user-generated content; service recovery; bibliometric review; thematic synthesis.

Dissemination plans The findings will be disseminated through submission to a peer-reviewed academic journal and may also inform the author's doctoral research on hotel online reviews and management responses.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Huaqiang Li - Author 1 designed the review, developed the search strategy, conducted screening and data extraction, performed bibliometric and thematic analysis, and drafted the manuscript.

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Author 2 - Zalina Mohd Kasim - Author 2 supervised the review, provided conceptual and methodological guidance, and reviewed the manuscript.

Author 3 - Lay Hoon Ang - Author 3 provided methodological advice, reviewed the screening and synthesis approach, and commented on the manuscript.