

Assessing the impact of online reviews on consumer decision-making and business performance in the hospitality industry

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Abstract

Consumer reviews have become a critical factor influencing consumer choice and business performance in the hospitality industry, yet empirical evidence on the interaction between online reviews and gender in developing contexts remains limited. This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey in Anambra State, Nigeria. Data were collected through an online structured questionnaire administered to consumers with prior hospitality experience. A total of 110 valid responses (52 males and 58 females) were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA at a 0.05 significance level in SPSS. The findings indicate that both male and female consumers consider online reviews important when selecting hospitality services. Although males reported slightly higher mean scores regarding accessibility, usefulness, credibility, and influence of reviews, gender differences were not statistically significant. Similarly, both groups demonstrated comparable decision-making patterns, including comparing options, evaluating service quality, and avoiding businesses with negative feedback. Inferential results show that online reviews significantly influence consumer decision-making and perceived business performance, while gender has no significant direct effect. However, a significant interaction exists among online reviews, consumer decision-making, and business performance. The study concludes that effective online review management is essential for enhancing customer decisions, competitiveness, and overall hospitality performance.

1. Introduction

The digital age has seen the greatest number of consumers use online reviews to decide on hospitality services like hotels, resorts, and restaurants. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on websites such as TripAdvisor, Google Reviews and Booking.com have mostly replaced or at minimum complemented traditional word-of-mouth. These online reviews have a significant influence on consumer perceptions and choices (Tamashevich et al., 2024). Moreover, new media platforms serve as digital channels that influence cultural transmission and user engagement, highlighting the broader role of digital information in shaping user preferences and behavior (Ndibe & Laksana, 2025). Nonetheless, hospitality businesses find it difficult to strategize their online reputations in spite of their pervasiveness. Weak review management may result in the loss of booking and reduced revenue whereas positive feedback may improve market performance. Therefore, to be competitive in the hospitality sector, it is paramount to know the impact of online reviews on consumer decision-making and corporate performance.

Online reviews are taking centre stage in the information-seeking process that leads to hospitality purchases. Hospitality services are also intangible and experience-based (unlike tangible products) where the customer cannot partially evaluate quality prior to taking in the product. In a bid to reduce perceived risk, consumers resort to online reviews to assess service quality, cleanliness, location, and other features (Sharma et al., 2023). This dependency on peer feedback corresponds with the information asymmetry theory that assumes that consumers rely on the available information to decrease uncertainty in decision-making.

Empirical research repeatedly shows that would be guests consult reviews prior to booking. Indicatively, a study conducted in Indonesia showed that online customer reviews are strong and significant in room-service purchase decisions, during which potential customers rely on the reviews as a way of minimizing uncertainty and enhancing confidence in making bookings (Riski & Wulansari, 2025). Correspondingly, other studies have confirmed that a significant share of travellers visit online reviews first before making hotel bookings because of their recognition as the primary sources

of information that affect perceptions, preferences, and ultimate decisions (Sharma et al., 2023; Gursoy, 2019). These findings indicate that online reviews are not ancillary but central in the consumer decision process of hospitality services.

Internet reviews serve as social proof, a social psychological construct where people are influenced to act in certain ways by seeing others as having performed the same actions and therefore must be correct or approved. Many positive reviews are often perceived by consumers as signs of quality and credibility as a whole. On the other hand, any negative feedback, even a few reviews, may have a disproportionately negative impact on the bookings, which is what negative feedback asymmetry looks like (Gursoy, 2019). Moreover, reviews minimize perceived risk in consumers. In the case of non-experiential consumers of a hotel or restaurant, such as when they do not have first-hand experience with a hotel or a restaurant, they can predict the quality of service and avoid negative experiences by reading reviews. Such risk-mitigating system fosters confidence and lowers the potential of post purchase regrets, which have a significant influence on the process of booking (Hospitality Insights, 2026).

The effects of online reviews are not just limited to consumer perception but have quantifiable effects on the business performance. Occupancy rates, revenue per available room (RevPAR), and profitability are some of the most common performance measurement metrics in the hospitality business. There is a considerable amount of literature suggesting that good online reviews may increase revenue by drawing more customers and improving brand confidence. An example is that scholarly data indicate that the overall rating, the amount of reviews, and positive management responses are strongly linked with the hotel performance indices such as customer satisfaction and revenue performance (Xie et al., 2014). Favorable comments enhance the presence of hotels on online travel agents (OTAs) and search engines, which helps to secure more bookings. On the other hand, negative reviews may hurt the online reputation and turn potential guests away, which can indicate that the sentiment and volume of reviews directly affect business performance.

Others report uncorrelated or mixed effects on revenues; an example is a study in Sustainability, which found that online satisfaction and eWOM had a significant impact, but as the remaining contextual determinants, the direct statistical outcome on the room revenue was not significant in some models, indicating that other contextual variables could moderate the relationship between online reviews and performance (Tan et al., 2023). However, most of the literature advocates the idea that properly managed reviews are associated with improved financial performance, especially when firms are using reviews via responsive communication and quality improvement plans.

Online reviews have taken a central role in informing consumers in the process of choosing hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality services but there still exist significant gaps in our knowledge that warrants further research. Human research indicates that online reviews have a considerable impact on consumer decision-making; Sharma et al (2023) discovered that online reviews can determine the intentions to purchase by affectively modifying perceptions related to the quality of service and awareness of the hospitality services. The literature has however mostly concerned consumer adoption and intentions, and not addressed how these reviews can translate to quantifiable business performance benefits, e.g. in terms of revenue or reputation (Sharma et al., 2023).

Furthermore, although review studies have identified general themes in online reviews, such as the influence of factors on credibility and trust in a review, no agreement has been reached on the specific attributes of a review (e.g., recency, volume, sentiment) that influence consumer behavior and business performance differently (Abuhulaibah et al., 2021). Additionally, contextual research within developing country settings remains sparse, despite evidence that online review effects vary across cultural and market contexts, as shown in the Nigerian hospitality sector (Chinedu, 2024). Finally, studies that directly link online reputation management strategies to financial or competitive performance are limited (Chi et al., 2014), underscoring a need for further empirical investigation into the dual impact of reviews on consumers and businesses in hospitality.

According to recent academic research, online reviews are one of the key factors influencing consumer behavior and business performance in the hospitality industry. The empirical data suggest that the hotel ratings, their quantity, and credibility have a significant impact on booking intentions;

overall ratings have a strong positive impact on consumer utility and purchase intent, especially when supported by rational review content (Wu, 2024). Reviews serve as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), reducing uncertainty and increasing consumer confidence through providing authenticity in service quality, services, and trustworthiness, which improves booking propensities (Che -Mohd -Ruzima et al., 2024; Chinedu, 2024). Reviews online have therefore become an important informational source that influences consumer decision-making, particularly in markets that are of uncertainty and information asymmetry. Consumers use peer-based reviews to reduce the perceived risk and enhance confidence before finalizing their buying decisions. This dependence is similar to the processes of evaluation emphasized in the literature on policy and performance assessment, where the access to credible information determines the outcome (Odimegwu & Odumodu, 2020; Odimegwu & Igwe, 2020).

The policy failure and implementation studies show that lack of or inadequate information undermines trust and effectiveness (Odimegwu & Anyakora, 2018), and the same effect is experienced in case of inconsistent or misleading online reviews. Social perception and normative influence also influence the way consumers make sense of reviews since decision making is often selective, through common beliefs and experience (Okemgbo et al., 2002). Clarity and contextual communication enhances influence, which is supported by the research on explaining complex information to be understood by a people (Oramah, 2025). Also, risk-oriented and industry studies suggest that people increase their information-seeking behavior at times of uncertainty, like environmental threat or economic disruption (Akanwa et al., 2024; Ikechukwu & Odimegwu, 2021). Online reviews therefore act as unofficial but powerful evaluation systems that influence consumer attitudes, trust and ultimate buying behavior.

The environmental quality, reliability of infrastructure, and sustainability practices continue to shape business performance in the hospitality industry because of their impact on customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. Guest perceptions and hotel patronage are influenced by the environmental conditions, including waste management and emissions, thus affecting destination image (Okafor et al., 2022a). On the same note, too much noise pollution impairs the comfort of the guests, quality of service provision, subsequent repeat visitation, and poor financial results (Onwuka et al., 2017). Another performance determinant in hospitality operations is infrastructure quality. Research on infrastructure and brand loyalty shows that effective utilities and technology systems enhance consumer confidence and loyalty to brand, which is also paramount in hotels and resorts (Anyakora et al., 2021).

Maintenance that emphasizes sustainability also contributes to further operation efficiency and the corporate image and makes hospitality companies competitive in environment-aware markets (Anyakora et al., 2025). Long-term business resilience is also affected by adaptation to climate-related risks. According to a study conducted by Odimegwu and Ikeotuonye (2023), education and adaptive strategies are important to strengthen organizational performance in times of environmental stress. Furthermore, the accessibility, safety and market demand are influenced by the neighbourhood attributes and real estate investment dynamics, which indirectly influence hospitality business outcomes (Ikeotuonye & Efobi, 2022). Hospitality business performance is therefore multidimensional, fuelled by environmental management, quality of infrastructure, sustainability and adaptive capacity.

In addition to consumer choice, online reviews influence business performance and reputation, with high review ratings associated with better competitive positioning and customer engagement, and negative review potentially scaring away potential guests and decreasing revenue (Noh et al., 2024). The performance can be further improved by review management approaches, such as platform trust and proactive response, which will increase customer loyalty and reduce negative feedback. All of this research together highlights the fact that online reviews are not just information artifacts, but strategic resources: these are sources that influence consumer behavior, contribute to the operational learning to improve service delivery, and are associated with the key performance indicators in hospitality management.

Objectives

- a. Assess the impact of online reviews on male and female consumer decision-making in the hospitality industry.
- b. Evaluate the effect of online reviews on business performance in the hospitality industry, considering gender differences.
- c. Analyze how online reviews, consumer decision-making, and business performance interact, with a focus on gender.

Research Questions

- a. What is the impact of online reviews on male and female consumer decision-making in the hospitality industry?
- b. What effect do online reviews have on business performance in the hospitality industry, considering gender differences?
- c. How do online reviews, consumer decision-making, and business performance interact in the hospitality industry with respect to gender?

Hypotheses

- a. There is no significant impact of online reviews on male and female consumer decision-making in the hospitality industry.
- b. Online reviews have no significant effect on business performance in the hospitality industry when gender differences are considered.
- c. There is no significant interaction effect among online reviews, consumer decision-making, and business performance in the hospitality industry with respect to gender.

2. Method

The research design adopted was quantitative research design with a cross sectional survey to determine the impact of online reviews on consumer decision making and the performance of businesses in the hospitality industry with consideration of gender differences. Anambra State, Nigeria was chosen to conduct the study because it has a growing hospitality industry and it has a high rate of internet and social media penetration among the consumers. Data collection involved the use of a structured questionnaire and was done virtually using Google Forms. The online approach guaranteed extensive coverage, comfortability and timely feedback. The questionnaire was well structured and covered demographic attributes of respondents, perception towards online reviews, consumer decision making behaviour, and the perceived impact of online reviews on the performance of the hospitality business. A Likert-type rating scale was used to measure all items in order to analyze them quantitatively.

The research sample was composed of consumers in the state of Anambra who had previously used online reviews and had patronized hospitality services. They obtained 110 valid responses (52 males and 58 females). The process was voluntary, and the answers were exported into Google Forms and automatically recorded and exported to SPSS so that they could be analyzed. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. Means and standard deviations generalized the perception of respondents and established the gender-based trends. Between-subjects effects tests (ANOVA) were conducted to identify the principal effects of online reviews and gender, the interaction effect of online reviews and gender on consumer decision making and business performance. Estimated marginal means were also calculated to demonstrate the difference between male and female respondents, whilst holding the online reviews constant. All hypotheses were checked at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of online reviews on male and female consumer decision-making in the hospitality industry?

To provide an overview of the sample profile and ensure clarity regarding the characteristics of the respondents involved in this study, the demographic distribution is presented below Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 110)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Location	Urban	95	86.4	86.4	86.4
	Rural	15	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	110	100.0	100.0	
Age (Years)	18–28	13	11.8	11.8	11.8
	29–39	44	40.0	40.0	51.8
	40–50	53	48.2	48.2	100.0
	Total	110	100.0	100.0	
Gender	Male	52	47.3	47.3	47.3
	Female	58	52.7	52.7	100.0
	Total	110	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 1, the respondents were predominantly urban residents (86.4 percent), indicating greater urban participation in the study. Most participants were aged 40–50 years (48.2 percent), followed by those aged 29–39 years (40.0 percent), reflecting a mature respondent base. Female respondents slightly outnumbered males at 52.7 percent, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution among the participants. Gender differences in perceptions of online reviews in the hospitality industry can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Gender Differences in Perceptions of Online Reviews in the Hospitality Industry

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Online reviews are easily accessible when searching for hospitality services.	Male	52	1.65	1.153	.160
	Female	58	1.48	.978	.128
Online reviews provide useful information about hospitality services.	Male	52	3.58	.667	.093
	Female	58	3.22	.992	.130
I consider online reviews to be credible sources of information.	Male	52	3.31	.940	.130
	Female	58	3.02	.982	.129
Ratings attached to online reviews influence my perception of hospitality businesses.	Male	52	3.00	.907	.126
	Female	58	2.95	.759	.100
I regularly rely on online review platforms before choosing hospitality services.	Male	52	1.67	1.184	.164
	Female	58	1.45	1.012	.133

As shown in Table 2, male respondents recorded slightly higher mean scores than females on all statements relating to online reviews in the hospitality industry. Males perceived online reviews as more accessible, more useful, and more credible sources of information. They were also marginally more influenced by review ratings and reported greater reliance on online review platforms when choosing hospitality services. Nonetheless, the differences in mean scores between male and female respondents are minimal, indicating that perceptions of online reviews are largely similar across genders.

Research Question 2: What effect do online reviews have on business performance in the hospitality industry, considering gender differences?

To assess potential gender-based differences in consumer decision-making, a comparison of male and female responses was performed. The findings are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Gender Differences in Consumer Decision-Making in the Hospitality Industry

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I compare several hospitality options before making a final decision.	Male	52	3.27	.952	.132
	Female	58	3.22	.773	.102
Online information plays a major role in my hospitality service choices.	Male	52	1.58	1.054	.146
	Female	58	1.52	.978	.128
I carefully evaluate other customers' experiences before selecting a hospitality service.	Male	52	3.19	.864	.120
	Female	58	3.21	.695	.091
My choice of hospitality services is influenced by perceived service quality.	Male	52	3.40	.934	.130
	Female	58	3.45	.820	.108
I avoid hospitality businesses with frequent negative customer feedback.	Male	52	3.08	.682	.095
	Female	58	3.16	.745	.098

As presented in Table 3, both male and female respondents exhibited similar patterns in consumer decision-making within the hospitality industry. Mean scores indicate that respondents of both genders actively compare multiple options and carefully evaluate other customers' experiences before making final decisions. Perceived service quality strongly influenced choices for both males and females, with females recording slightly higher mean values on this item. Additionally, both groups tended to avoid hospitality businesses associated with frequent negative feedback, while online information played a relatively modest role in decision-making for both genders.

Research Question 3: How do online reviews, consumer decision-making, and business performance interact in the hospitality industry with respect to gender?

To evaluate gender-based differences in perceptions of how online reviews affect business performance, a comparative analysis was performed. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Gender Differences in Perceived Influence of Online Reviews on Business Performance in the Hospitality Industry

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Customer reviews influence the overall performance of hospitality businesses.	Male	52	3.46	.699	.097
	Female	58	3.41	.879	.115
Positive online reviews contribute to increased patronage of hospitality businesses.	Male	52	3.54	.699	.097
	Female	58	3.22	.839	.110
Online reviews affect the competitive position of hospitality businesses.	Male	52	3.77	.469	.065
	Female	58	3.26	.909	.119
Hospitality businesses with favorable reviews experience better financial performance.	Male	52	3.62	.771	.107
	Female	58	3.31	1.030	.135
Online customer feedback helps hospitality businesses improve their services.	Male	52	1.62	1.051	.146
	Female	58	1.48	1.013	.133

In response to Research Question 3, Table 4 shows that both male and female respondents perceived online reviews as important to business performance in the hospitality industry, though males consistently reported higher mean scores. Male respondents more strongly agreed that online reviews influence overall business performance, competitive positioning, patronage, and financial outcomes. Both genders acknowledged the role of customer feedback in service improvement, although with relatively lower mean scores. Overall, the findings suggest that online reviews interact with consumer decision-making to shape hospitality business performance, with slightly stronger perceived effects among male respondents than females.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant impact of online reviews on male and female consumer decision-making in the hospitality industry.

A between-subjects effects test was conducted to assess the impact of online reviews and gender on consumer decision-making. The findings are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Online Reviews and Gender on Consumer Decision-Making in the Hospitality Industry

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	299.278 ^a	2	149.639	19.620	.000
Intercept	486.039	1	486.039	63.727	.000
Gender	8.755	1	8.755	1.148	.286
H1	299.249	1	299.249	39.236	.000
Error	816.077	107	7.627		
Total	24359.000	110			
Corrected Total	1115.355	109			

a. R Squared = .268 (Adjusted R Squared = .255)

As presented in Table 5, online reviews significantly influenced consumer decision-making ($F = 39.236, p < .001$), indicating their strong role in shaping consumer choices. However, gender had no significant effect on consumer decision-making ($F = 1.148, p = .286$). The model accounted for 26.8 percent of the variance in consumer decision-making. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 is accepted, since

online reviews impact consumer decision-making similarly for both male and female consumers. Next, graphic estimated marginal means of consumer decision-making by gender can be seen in Figure 1.

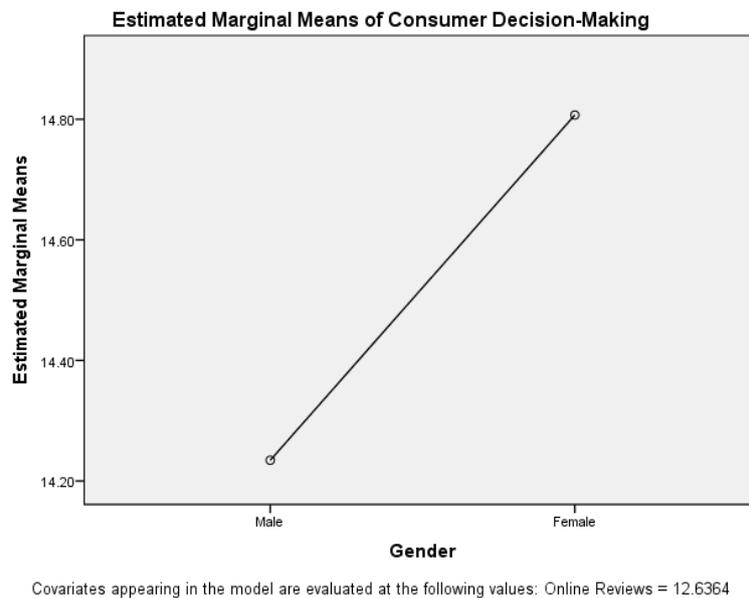


Figure 1. Estimated Marginal Means of Consumer Decision-Making by Gender

Figure 1 shows that female respondents have slightly higher estimated marginal means in consumer decision-making (≈ 14.80) compared to males (≈ 14.23) when online reviews are controlled at a value of 12.6364. This suggests that, after accounting for online reviews, females demonstrate a marginally stronger tendency to engage in careful decision-making within the hospitality industry.

Hypothesis 2: Online reviews have no significant effect on business performance in the hospitality industry when gender differences are considered.

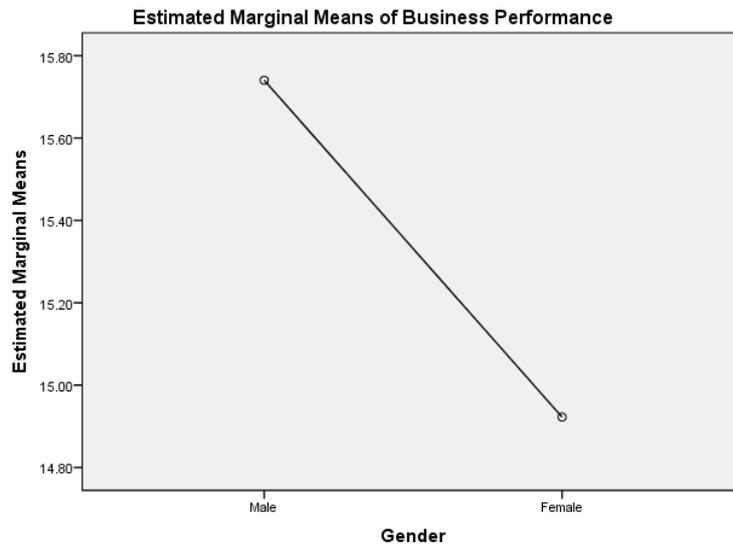
A between-subjects effects test was carried out to evaluate the impact of online reviews and gender on business performance. The results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Online Reviews and Gender on Business Performance in the Hospitality Industry

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	295.917 ^a	2	147.959	17.291	.000
Intercept	659.419	1	659.419	77.064	.000
Gender	17.862	1	17.862	2.088	.151
H1	248.840	1	248.840	29.081	.000
Error	915.574	107	8.557		
Total	26992.000	110			
Corrected Total	1211.491	109			

a. R Squared = .244 (Adjusted R Squared = .230)

As shown in Table 6, online reviews had a statistically significant effect on business performance in the hospitality industry ($F = 29.081, p < .001$). In contrast, gender did not significantly influence business performance ($F = 2.088, p = .151$). The model explained 24.4 percent of the variance in business performance. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected, as online reviews significantly affect business performance regardless of gender differences. Next, graphic estimated marginal means of business performance by gender can be seen in Figure 2.



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Online Reviews = 12.6364

Figure 2. Estimated Marginal Means of Business Performance by Gender

Figure 2 shows that male respondents have higher estimated marginal means in business performance (≈ 15.75) compared to females (≈ 14.93) when online reviews are controlled at 12.6364. This indicates that, after accounting for online reviews, males perceive online reviews as contributing more strongly to business performance in the hospitality industry than females.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant interaction effect among online reviews, consumer decision-making, and business performance in the hospitality industry with respect to gender.

An interaction effects test was performed to assess the combined influence of online reviews, consumer decision-making, and gender on business performance. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Interaction Effects of Online Reviews, Consumer Decision-Making, and Gender on Business Performance in the Hospitality Industry

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	493.990 ^a	3	164.663	24.327	.000
Intercept	137.610	1	137.610	20.330	.000
Gender	31.966	1	31.966	4.722	.032
Online Reviews	38.483	1	38.483	5.685	.019
Consumer Decision-Making	198.073	1	198.073	29.262	.000
Error	717.501	106	6.769		
Total	26992.000	110			
Corrected Total	1211.491	109			

a. R Squared = .408 (Adjusted R Squared = .391)

As shown in Table 7, there is a significant interaction effect among online reviews, consumer decision-making, and business performance with respect to gender. Specifically, online reviews ($F = 5.685$, $p = .019$) and consumer decision-making ($F = 29.262$, $p < .001$) significantly influenced business performance, while gender also had a modest but significant effect ($F = 4.722$, $p = .032$). The model explains 40.8 percent of the variance in business performance ($R^2 = .408$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is rejected, indicating a significant interactive relationship among the variables in the hospitality industry. For a clearer representation of the interaction pattern, the estimated marginal means of business performance are displayed in Figure 3.

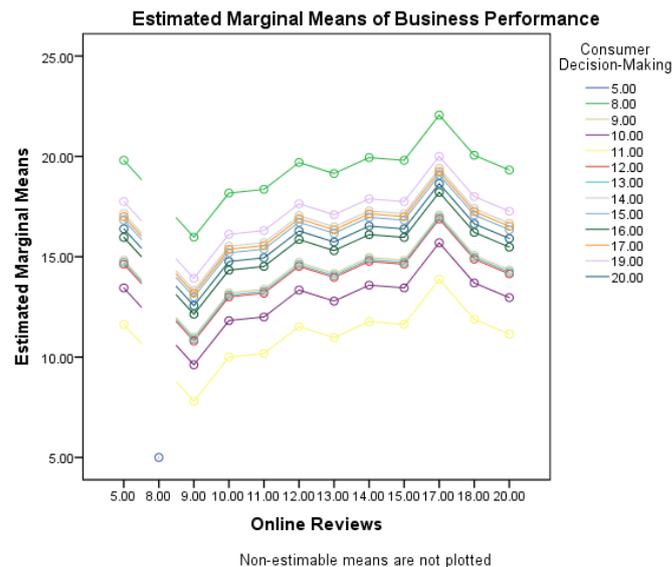


Figure 3. shows approximate marginal means of business performance in different levels of online reviews and consumer decision-making in the hospitality sector, which shows a gradual improvement in business performance with increase in review scores and strong decision-making.

The plotted data represents the estimated marginal means of business performance in different strata of online reviews and consumer decision-making. The overall picture is that the higher the review scores and the higher the consumer decision-making scores, the higher the performance. Despite the variability especially on the extreme values, the overall trend indicates a positive correlation between online reviews and consumer decision-making, and business performance.

3.2. Discussion

Although the descriptive statistics in Table 2 show that male and female respondents have quite similar perception of online reviews in the hospitality industry, males had slightly higher scores on all dimensions of accessibility, usefulness, credibility, rating influence, and platform reliance. In general, the respondents agree that online reviews are easily available and the information they present is useful, with both genders reporting moderate meanings, especially in regard to accessibility. This observation is in line with Gursoy (2024), who reported that the communication and usefulness of online reviews have significant effects on decision-making in a hospitality setting, with the parameters of trust and content quality playing crucial roles in the development of perceptions. Reflecting the wider influence of media communication in digital ecosystems, as seen in research on new media and cultural engagement (Ndibe & Laksana., 2025). Unlike the small gender difference in this case, Šostar et al (2024) have found that there was a significant gender moderation of hotel attractiveness after reviews exposure, with males showing a stronger change in perceptions influence by online reviews, thus indicating that gender may mediate review effects in some cases (Šostar, Andrić, & Ramanathan, 2024). This deviation means that the general perceptions might be broadly similar, but specific behavioral reactions may occur within specific analytical systems.

Shifting to consumer decision-making (Table 3), both sexes engaged in comparative hospitality choices, customer experiences and service quality before making decisions. These trends are in line with Ciocoiu et al (2024), who pointed out online accommodation reviews as the focus of consumer decision-making and consumer preferences, showing that systematic review analysis influences consumer behavior. This aligns with broader research on digital marketing communication via social media platforms like TikTok, which highlights how interactive digital information environments can enhance consumer engagement and decision processes (Ashari & Sinduwiatmo., 2024). Also, the current research result that the perceived service quality is a significant determinant of decision-making resonates with Gursoy (2024), whose findings indicated that believable online reviews increase the level of trust in the booking decision made using effective informational cues. On the other hand, online information, according to our data, has a relatively small effect compared to other decision factors, which is inconsistent with Gabbard (2023), who has reported substantial effects of

online reviews on hotel performance measures and consumer behavior meaning that online information has a stronger influence than our relatively small mean scores.

In terms of business performance (Table 4), both sexes felt that online reviews influenced overall business performance, but males cited stronger agreement with most measures of performance. This fact can be supported by the study conducted by Gabbard (2023), who determined that online reviews do influence hotel performance and revenue, which supports the idea that the effect of positive feedback improves business outcomes and competitive positioning. Shaheen (2020) conducted a similar study and, in a related study, also indicated that believable and informative online reviews increase customer confidence and, therefore, more patronage, which emphasizes the economic value of review quality. Nevertheless, the relatively low average of customer feedback helps to improve services, may imply scepticism regarding internal company learning based on reviews that have been understated in the literature which generally views feedback as a force behind service enhancement and innovation (Romano., 2025). This dissimilarity can be attributed to differences in context in local perceptions and the general international trends reported in the academic literature.

The findings of hypothesis-testing suggest that online reviews play a significant role in consumer decision-making regardless of gender and that H1 is supported, as well as Zhang and Yang (2024), who found that there were strong positive relationships between review credibility and consumer booking choices. Contrastingly, gender did not have a strong influence, contrary to the claims of Šostar et al (2024), where the study implied that gender mediates review effects on hotel attractiveness because of possible contextual or methodological variations among studies. Similarly, the effect of online reviews on business performance is substantial (rejecting Hypothesis 2), which is in line with Gabbard (2023) who also proved that online reputation can affect financial results and competitive advantage. Even though gender was not a statistically significant factor in the current model, the literature indicates that gender influences can occur when certain behavioral reactions or the cultural environment are considered (Šostar et al., 2024), and the role of gender in hospitality studies is highly complex.

More importantly, the high level of interaction between online reviews, consumer decision-making, and the performance of business highlights the fact that reviews do not only play a role in decision making but also translate into improved business performance. The existing research literature on the inseparability of review features, consumer behavior, and market success justifies this relationship (Ciocoiu et al., 2024; Gabbard, 2023).

4. Conclusion

This paper looked at the impact of online reviews on the decision-making of consumers and business performance in the hospitality sector, with a keen focus on the gender differences. These results indicate that online reviews are an important factor in influencing consumers, since respondents engage in a comparison process, consider the experience of other customers, and factors like perceived service quality before making a decision. The positive reviews were also revealed to be effective in improving business performance, which affected patronage, competitiveness, and financial results. Although males indicated a higher level of influence in the review, there were no significant gender differences in decision-making or business performance, which means that online reviews influence consumers and businesses in general regardless of gender. Additionally, online reviews, consumer decision-making and business performance were found to be interrelated in the interaction analysis, underlining the role of review platforms as strategic instruments of both consumers and hospitality providers. The paper highlights the importance of online reviews to informed consumerism and business performance and underscores the importance of hospitality companies to be proactive in managing their online reputations and using customer feedback in driving their businesses to keep on improving their services.

Author Contributions

All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/ or publication of this article.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/ or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declaration on AI Use

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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