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US middle-class hotels on *Tripadvisor*

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English abstract

The past thirty years have seen increasingly rapid advances in the field of communication technology. The way people communicate with one another has changed tremendously. Instead of giving someone a call, it is more likely to send a *WhatsApp* message these days. The digital era has also changed the way people report about defective products or service failure. Rather than addressing a letter of complaint directly towards an accused, it has become the new normal to post a review on travel review platforms such as *Tripadvisor* or *Holidaycheck*. Online reviews have become increasingly recognized forms of electronic word-of-mouth. The primary purpose of this thesis, hence, is to investigate genre-specific conventions of negative hotel reviews via a corpus-based genre analysis. Data for this research were obtained from the platform *Tripadvisor* and include 100 reviews rating ten different US-based beach properties. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were taken to identify lexico-grammatical features, move sequence and levels of directness typical of negative hotel reviews. Results revealed that negative reviews share several characteristic lexico-grammatical patterns including the frequent use of first-person pronouns, adverbial high-degree markers, descriptive adjectives and branch-specific vocabulary such as *room*, *lobby* or *guest*. In addition, a generic discourse structure consisting of ten moves and several steps could be identified. The data further suggest that negative *Tripadvisor* reviews usually consist of various levels of directness. Expressions of disapproval whereby the guilty party is not mentioned explicitly were most prevalent. Less than half of the reviews directly accuse or blame the person or entity responsible. On account of these findings, the research at hand may enhance understanding of a complex genre that is certainly to become more present in the next years.

German abstract

Die Kommunikationstechnologie hat in den letzten 30 Jahren riesengroße Fortschritte erlebt. Die Art und Weise, wie Menschen miteinander kommunizieren, hat sich enorm verändert. Anstatt jemanden anzurufen, ist es heutzutage viel wahrscheinlicher, eine *WhatsApp* Nachricht zu versenden. Das digitale Zeitalter hat außerdem die Art und Weise verändert, wie Menschen über fehlerhafte Produkte oder Dienstleistungsversäumnisse berichten. Anstatt einen Beschwerdebrief direkt an den Schuldigen zu adressieren, ist es mittlerweile üblicher, eine Bewertung auf einem Reise- oder Hotelbewertungsportal wie beispielsweise *Tripadvisor* oder *Holidaycheck* zu veröffentlichen. Onlinebewertungen sind zu anerkannten Formen elektronischer Mundpropaganda geworden. Hauptziel dieser Arbeit ist es deshalb, gattungsspezifische Merkmale negativer Hotelbewertungen mittels einer korpusbasierten Gattungsanalyse zu untersuchen. Die Daten dieser Studie wurden auf der Plattform *Tripadvisor* gesammelt und umfassen 100 Bewertungen von zehn verschiedenen, am Strand gelegenen US-Hotels. Sowohl quantitative als auch qualitative Methoden wurden angewandt, um sprachliche Muster, Struktur, sowie Ebenen der Direktheit, die typisch für negative Hotelbewertungen sind, zu identifizieren. Die Ergebnisse legen offen, dass negative Bewertungen etliche charakteristische sprachliche Strukturen aufweisen, wie beispielsweise die Verwendung von Pronomen der ersten Person, verstärkende Adverbien, beschreibende Adjektive und branchenspezifisches Vokabular wie *Raum*, *Lobby* oder *Gast*. Darüber hinaus konnte eine generische Diskursstruktur, bestehend aus zehn sogenannten „Moves“ und mehreren kleinen Schritten, identifiziert werden. Die Daten lassen außerdem darauf schließen, dass negative *Tripadvisor* Bewertungen meist verschiedene Ebenen der Direktheit anwenden. Ausdrücke des Missfallens, in denen der Beschuldigte nicht explizit erwähnt wurde, überwiegen hier. Weniger als die Hälfte der Bewertungen beschuldigen die verantwortliche(n) Person(e)n direkt. Auf Basis dieser Erkenntnisse könnte das vorliegende Forschungsprojekt dazu beitragen, dass Verständnis für dieses komplexe Genre, welches in den nächsten Jahren sicherlich noch präsenter werden wird, zu erweitern.

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List of abbreviations

CARS	Create a Research Space
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
CMD	Computer-mediated discourse
DC	Direct complaint
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EMP	English for Medical Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
eWOM	Electronic word-of-mouth
FAQs	Frequently asked questions
IC	Indirect complaint
ICT.....	Information and communications technology
LSP	Language for Specific Purposes
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
WOM	word-of-mouth

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1. Introduction

The widespread adoption of digital communication has led to the evolution of human society into a digital and multimodal era. As genres are constructed to address the problems existing in reality, they tend to absorb the digital and multimodal elements and are developing into new forms and functions. (Xia 2020: 141)

One relatively new form that has seen a rapid development in the world wide web over the past years are (negative) online reviews. Whether it be restaurants, recipes, movies, diaper bags, hotel rooms or high-speed blenders - people nowadays share their experiences with nearly every type of service or product via the internet. (Vasquez 2014: 1) According to Cenni and Goethals (2017: 22), “[p]otentially, every product or service can be reviewed and evaluated online by its consumers, and these reviews are an increasingly important source of information for costumers and service providers”. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the form of online customer reviews is rife and has become a substantial part of many patrons’ purchase journey. (Askalidis & Malthouse 2016: 1). The same is true for rating travel experiences. Via online reviews, tourism services or products have been recommended or reproached more and more frequently (Cenni & Goethals 2017: 22). The number of consumers conveying their dissatisfaction through complaints expressed online in the form of such negative reviews has increased tremendously. As the internet is a medium that enables to articulate dissatisfaction easily, without having to directly confront someone and by being independent of time, consumers tend to resort to review platforms to formulate a complaint. (Maurer & Schaich 2011: 502)

Surprisingly, “online reviews have remained relatively unexamined in language and discourse studies” (Vasquez 2014: 1). Despite their considerable increase in publication, studies on genre-specific features of negative online reviews of hotels are comparatively rare. This is why I have decided to analyze this particular type of computer-mediated discourse in the thesis at hand. The present project strives to conduct a genre analysis of negative reviews of hotels posted on *Tripadvisor*. A corpus-based analysis with 100 representative texts will serve to identify genre-specific conventions of the target genre.

The present paper divides into two major parts. The theoretical background will form the groundwork for the analytical part. First, chapter 2 provides an introduction to

genre theory including the various notions of genre and its application in linguistic analysis. Thereby, two substantial approaches to genre analysis are to be discussed – the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach to genre. Section 3 attempts to review the most important concepts of the linguistic subdiscipline of pragmatics that are essential for the genre analysis to be performed. Speech act theory and the principle of politeness are being discussed with specific regard to the act of complaining. Chapter 4 will focus on genres and their development, existence and guise in the world wide web. On top of that, the genre of *Tripadvisor* reviews as a form of electronic word-of-mouth will be described in greater detail. Subsequently, a summary of previous genre analyses done in the field of online reviews will be provided. The empirical part subdivides into two further sections. A presentation of the research design including a description of the data set and data collection as well as the research questions will form the basis. Chapter 7 will summarize and discuss this study's results. A brief résumé will finish off the present project.

2. Genre theory

In order to secure efficient communication, “we need to know what kind of situation we are in, what kinds of things are being said, and what kinds of things we want to accomplish” (Bazerman 2010 in Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: xi). Shared sets of regulations in the form of distinctive categories such as content, purpose, stance, structure, form, context etc. help us with making meaning. It is *genre* that is at the heart of this meaning-making process. (Bazerman 2010 in Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: xi)

The term *genre* derives from the French (Harper 2020) and means “kind” or “form” (Flowerdew 2013: 138). Genre has become one of the most vigorous and authoritative concepts in second language teaching and research in the late 20th century (Hyland 2004: 1). Since then, the notion of genre has been adopted by analysts of a broad spectrum of various disciplines. It is, however, the field of literature within which genre has its roots. The notion of genre has already been investigated at the time of the Ancient Greeks. Aristotle was the first to classify texts into categories according to specified criteria. In his theoretical work *Poetics*, Aristotle differentiated between three major types of literature – novel, poetry and drama. The

Brothers Grimm also contributed to the notion of genre through their work on German myths, legends and folk stories within folklore studies. (Paltridge 1997: 1)

According to Flowerdew (2013: 138), “the notion of genre as a particular type of literature has lasted into the present era”, even though Aristotle’s classification has been extended considerably these days by also considering types of cultural amusement such as thrillers, westerns and soap operas as individual genres. Although genre has commonly been associated with literature only, the concept of genre has become a popular instrument for analysis within nonliterary disciplines as well. (Hyon 1996: 693) Contemporary conceptions of genre are employed for movies, music, computer games as well as professional, academic, and ordinary forms of speech and writing (Hyland 2004: 1). Besides that, genre has also contributed to the development of educational practices in a number of fields, including linguistics (Hyon 1996: 693). Without doubt, genre has become “a key concept in modern thought, not only in linguistics and language teaching but in many areas of contemporary social and cultural studies” (Hyland 2004: 1). Language and genres are undoubtedly crucial as they are the main instruments in developing relationships, establishing communities and achieving our goals. Genres are fundamental in providing certain social events with a particular structure. As a matter of fact, individuals would not be able to carry on “the most basic interactions of everyday life” if the knowledge of genres did not exist. (Hyland 2004: 1)

2.1 Defining genre

Even though (or precisely because) genre has been studied by researchers of such a vast range of diverse traditions, various interpretations of genre exist. Accordingly, Kwaśnik and Crowston (2005: 76) remarked that

[o]ne of the challenges of studying genre in general is that there never has been, nor is there presently a consensus on what genre is, what qualifies for genre status, how genres “work”, how we work with genres, how genres work with each other, or how best to identify, construe, or study genres.

So according to Kwaśnik and Crowston (2005: 77), there is no single or congruent definition of genre. It is said that “[a]t their most basic level, *genres are formed in order to carry out actions and purposes*” (Miller 1984 cited in Tardy & Swales 2014: 166). However, despite genres being “recognized types of communicative actions”, Hyland (2004: 54) argues that genres are “just abstract ideas”. Even in the late 20th century, Swales (1990: 30) already realized that the notion of genre was “extremely

slippery”. Within linguistics, for instance, genre is understood in an entirely different way than it is within literary disciplines (Flowerdew 2013: 138).

Nonetheless, “researchers working across a range of disciplines and contexts have revolutionized the way we think of genre, challenging the idea that genres are simple categorizations of text types [...]” over the course of the past 30 years. (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 3) No matter which domain or tradition they belong to, all genre scholars agree on the complexity of genres. Genre knowledge is always multidimensional. Regardless of “[w]hether we choose to analyze genres in terms of their textual features, social actions, communities of practice, power structures, or the networks and modalities in which they operate” (Johns et al. 2006: 239), we have to bear in mind that research is usually restricted to a certain area under investigation only, simply because you cannot analyze everything at once. This is also the reason why the term genre has been defined in so many different ways by experts of so many different fields. (Johns et al. 2006: 239)

In a general sense, any sort of spoken or written text can be identified as falling into a genre (Hyon 2017: 3). However, it is not these texts’ content that establishes a certain text category as a distinctive genre. This notion can actually be traced back to Greek philosophers and orators. When studying self-reflective human communication, they declared that a message’s content was not the one and only salient aspect in communication but that the combination of delivery, context and rhetorical structure is central when transferring information and when creating meaning from that transfer. (Kwaśnik & Crowston 2005: 76) These ancient ideas fundamentally converge with more recent concepts of genre in linguistics (Hyon 2017, Flowerdew 2013).

According to Sunny Hyon (2017: 3), each distinctive type of genre shares a set of specified characteristics including purpose, content, form, function and context. Moreover, genres are constituted through shared linguistic features such as syntax or word choice. An example of a text category established as a genre proposed by Hyon (2017) would be wedding invitations. They do not only have common linguistic elements but also share context, function and purpose. However, even though particular genres can usually be characterized by akin textual components and

purposes, disparity is not unusual. Thus, to put it in a nutshell, “a genre can be thought of as a category of texts characterized by similarities as well as - to some extent - differences across its members”. (Hyon 2017: 3-4)

Flowerdew (2013) also defines genre in the field of applied and educational linguistics. According to him (2013: 138), genre “refers to different communicative events which are associated with particular settings and which have recognized structures and communicative functions”. Along with this definition, he provides instances of genre such as business reports, academic lectures, news articles or recipes. On top of that, virtual types of communication including e-mails, text and instant messages, tweets and Facebook posts are considered to be genres. (Flowerdew 2013: 138) Flowerdew (2013: 138-139) further discusses characteristic features of genre. A concept fundamental to the linguistic notion of genre he refers to is the *communicative purpose*.

Henry and Roseberry (1998: 147) regard the communicative purpose as the “foundation” of genre theory and accordingly define genre as “a text, either spoken or written, that serves a particular purpose in a society and is composed of a series of segments, called *moves*”. Their definition of genre is based on the work of Halliday, Swales and Bhatia who they consider as the pioneers of genre-based language teaching (Henry & Roseberry 1998: 147). John Swales (1990) was among the first linguists to properly define genre. According to him (1990: 58),

[a] genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. [...] In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community.

Through stating that genres are “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (Swales 1990: 58), Swales sees genres primarily as linguistic and rhetorical actions that require using language in order to “communicate something to someone at some time in some context for some purpose”. In Swalesian theory, genres can therefore be regarded as a fairly persistent set of linguistic and rhetorical events that have been epitomized by

members of a particular community for the sake of responding to and attaining shared communicative targets. (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 45)

Along similar lines, Bhatia (1993) describes the term genre. He claims that “each genre is an instance of a successful achievement of a specific communicative purpose using conventionalised knowledge of linguistic and discursal resources” (Bhatia 1993: 15, 16). Largely influenced by the work of Bhatia (1993) and Swales (1990), Hüttner (2007) also highlights the significance of the communicative purpose. She sees genre as a vehicle “for the achievement of particular goals” and regards a shared purpose as “the prime motivation for all other features that might co-occur”, such as content, positioning and form. Yet, she stresses that there is no “one-to-one-relationship” of one single purpose and one specific genre. Instead, several purposes can be attained by one genre. (Hüttner 2007: 26-27)

In addition, one should bear in mind that genres are not static. Even though a genre’s context and communicative purpose(s) are generally regarded as situated and recurrent, it may be that they do not always show up in the same way. (Bhatia 2012: 241-242) Therefore, Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995: 6 cited in Bhatia 2012: 242) claim that genres have always been “sites of contention between stability and change”. They further emphasize that “genres are inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to conditions of use, and that genre knowledge is therefore best conceptualized as a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary cultures” (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995: 6 cited in Bhatia 2012: 241). Bhatia (2012: 241) consequently stresses two characteristics of genre that however are of a contradictory nature: the *emphasis on conventions* and the *propensity for innovation*.

Despite communicative purpose being considered one of the central characteristics of genre, defining genre merely via its communicative purpose would be inadequate (Flowerdew 2013: 139). Just as Bhatia (2012), Flowerdew (2013) outlines several other features that are equivalently relevant to communicative purpose. These include staging and lexico-grammatical patterning. Additionally, *discourse communities* are a central notion of genre. Discourse communities refer to a genre’s particular community of users. With the genre of lectures, for instance, the discourse

community would consist of teachers and students. (Flowerdew 2013: 139-141). As can be seen in the quote stated earlier, the discourse community has been seen as a central construct by Swales (1990) as well. Swales (1990: 9) defines discourse communities as “sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards a set of common goals”. In *Genre Analysis: English in academic and research settings*, Swales (1990: 24-27) proposes six major characteristics “for identifying a group of individuals as a discourse community”:

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals.
2. A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
3. A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
4. A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
5. [A] discourse community has acquired some specific lexis.
6. A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursive expertise.

In conjunction with the definition of the discourse community, Swales (1990) additionally brings up the concept of speech communities which is a core notion within sociolinguistics. He emphasizes the need of differentiating between the two terms discourse community and speech community. First of all, recruitment of membership within these communities differ to a great extent. While speech communities are formed by chance because of being dependent on “birth, accident and adoption”, discourse communities enlist people by “persuasion, training or relevant qualification”. A discourse community therefore is often composed of people having a shared interest or a similar occupation. As can be derived from the discourse community’s characteristics proposed by Swales (1990) and stated above, the discourse community uses linguistic means in order to accomplish certain goals and objectives whereas a speech community’s focus is on communicative needs. (Swales 1990: 24-25)

Askehave (2014) sees genre in a quite similar manner. Even though he does not explicitly state the concept of *discourse communities*, he places genre theory within professional settings and refers to it as a “valuable tool for capturing the characteristics and tracing the development of texts used by professionals in professional settings for getting their work done” (2014: 19).

The situatedness of genre within such expert communities is also a central notion in Bhatia's (2012) definition of genre. According to Bhatia (2012: 241),

genre [...] refers to language use in a conventionalized communicative setting in order to give expression to the specific set of communicative goals of a disciplinary or social institution, which give rise to stable structural forms by imposing constraints on the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discursive resources.

Bhatia's (2012) elucidation of genre is genuine for all major approaches to genre analysis in linguistics, which are to be introduced in chapter 2.2. After having analyzed different approaches to genre analysis, Bhatia (2012: 241) came to the conclusion that genre theory "covers a lot of common ground".

By going beyond textual analysis and looking at linguistic forms as in register analysis, genre theory has become a valuable tool for analyzing disciplinary and organizational discourse structure. Through the investigation of particular institutional and disciplinary practices, procedures, and cultures, scholars have succeeded in understanding "how members of specific discourse communities construct, interpret, and use these genres to achieve their community goals and why they write them the way they do". (Bhatia 2012: 242) Genre analysis in its literal meaning has evolved.

2.2 Analyzing genre

Genre analysis is a sub-discipline of discourse analysis (Hyland 2004: 195). Discourse analysis explores how language is used and how meaning is created in different social contexts. Thus, discourse analysts investigate language beyond the sentence level and consider larger entities of language by investigating how they are used to create meaning, coherence and purpose(s). (Gee & Handford 2012: 1) Genre analysis, as a branch of discourse analysis, can generally be defined "as the study of situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalized academic or professional settings" (Bhatia 2012: 241). More specifically, genre analysts want to "understand the communicative character of discourse by looking at how individuals use language to engage in particular communicative situations" with the ultimate goal of contributing to language education (Hyland 2004: 195).

Taking into account the multiple notions of genre that have been outlined in section 2.1, "there are [...] numerous ways to approach genre analysis" (Hyland 2004: 195). Accordingly, Bawarshi & Reiff (2010: xii) describe the development of genre theory

and analysis: “Given the richness of the concept of genre, it is no wonder that many approaches to understanding and teaching genre have developed, in many regions of the world.” Hyland (2004), however, raises awareness that irrespective of the tradition a genre analyst works in, language is always seen as the central pattern of interaction and the tool via which we establish social contexts. All approaches to genre analysis want to contribute “to a model of language use that is rich in social, cultural, and institutional explanation; that links language to contexts; and that has practical relevance for teachers by offering useful ways of handling conventionalized aspects of texts”. (Hyland 2004: 195) Hyland (2004: 195) therefore considers genre analysis as a vigorous instrument for teaching writing. By uncovering the relation between language and text types, as well as form and function, genre analysis in language teaching enables fostering students’ awareness of genre and their writing competence.

Besides a digression about the values of genre analysis within pedagogy, Hyland (2004) puts forward a set of intentions, genre analysis generally aims to achieve. According to Hyland (2004: 195-196), genre analysis seeks to:

- Identify how texts are structured in terms of functional stages or moves
- Identify the features that characterize texts and that help realize their communicative purposes
- Examine the understandings of those who write and read the genre
- Discover how the genre relates to users’ activities
- Explain language choices in terms of social, cultural, and psychological contexts
- Provide insights for language teaching

In the field of applied linguistics, three major strands of genre analysis have evolved: the approach grounded in the field of *systemic functional linguistics* mainly influenced by Michael Halliday and J.R. Martin, the approach stemming from the work of John Swales in the 1980s and situated in the field of *English for specific purposes* (ESP) and lastly, the “new rhetoric” approach to genre represented by Bazerman, Freedman and Medway, Berkenkotter and Huckin. Each of these three approaches have remarkably redounded to the notion of genre. (Paltridge 1997: 1-2) Hyon (1996: 694) claims that these three traditions are the ones within which “genre scholarship has been most fully developed” while at the same time pursuing completely separate courses.

Sunny Hyon (1996) was innovative in comparing these three “worlds of genre scholarship” (Flowerdew 2002: 91). John Flowerdew (2002) reevaluated Hyon’s categorization and suggested a twofold classification into *linguistic* and *nonlinguistic* approaches. The SFL and ESP based strands of genre analysis would fall into the category of the linguistic approaches while the New Rhetoric methodology is seen as nonlinguistic because of its sharper focus on ethnographic data. (Flowerdew 2002: 91) Based on Flowerdew’s (2002) categorization, the following sections will provide an overview of the two major approaches to genre in linguistic traditions. It is, however, solely the ESP approach and its notion of genre that will inform the genre analysis undertaken in this project.

2.2.1 The ESP approach to genre

In general terms, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a field concerned with analyzing and teaching specialized language used by nonnative speakers of English in academic and professional settings. It has existed as a subdiscipline of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) since the 1960s and comprises other specialist domains such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Medical Purposes (EMP). (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 41) As English language competence can be a key determiner of a person’s “access to career opportunities, positive identities, and life choices” (Hyland 2004: 43), being capable of a variety of specialized, written genres is essential in academic and professional domains. Within ESP, genre could therefore be described as *professional competence*. This is the reason why ESP researchers are studying “the structures and meanings of texts, the demands placed by academic or workplace contexts on communicative behaviors, and the pedagogic practices by which these behaviors can be developed”. (Hyland 2004: 43) According to Hyon (2017: 4), ESP’s primary mission is to prepare learners of English for how to use the language in their *target contexts* by analyzing the *target genres*. Broadly speaking, ESP scholars are interested in the communicative needs of certain academic and professional groups. Thus, the branch of ESP has embraced “a more eclectic set of pedagogies” and ESP practices have been implemented in a way that fulfills the needs of very specific communities usually consisting of adults employed in academia or specialized occupations. (Hyland 2004: 44, 49)

Researchers in ESP, therefore, regard genre as oral and written types of text that are generic in terms of their formal properties and their communicative purposes within a

particular social setting (Hyon 1996: 695). ESP's central notion is to "establish systematic links between communicative purposes and properties of texts" (Flowerdew 2013: 146). The ESP approach "is most prominently represented by Swales and Bhatia" (Hüttner 2007: 25). While Swales (1990) investigated academic genres, Bhatia (1993, 2012) first and foremost worked with business and juridical genres (Flowerdew 2013: 146). ESP researchers started to employ genre analysis as a tool for research and pedagogical purposes in the 1980s. Swales (1990) was the first to define the ESP approach's central attributes – its focus on academic and occupational English, and its use of genre analysis for *applied* purposes. (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 41-42)

Swales (1990) also described the aforementioned interdependency of communicative purpose(s) and formal properties in *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Considering his understanding of genre (see chapter 2.1), genres as communicative events are both affected by their communicative purpose(s) and their assorted patterns of structure, style, content and intended audience. (Hyon 1996: 695) Flowerdew (2013: 146) accordingly claims that the philosophy within ESP genre analysis is to "establish links between communicative purposes and properties of texts". A text's communicative purposes are manifested "in a staged or sequenced manner". Thus, a genre is systematically composed of a number of so-called moves and steps. (Flowerdew 2013: 146) In ESP genre analysis, *function* and *form* therefore are one of the most central criteria (Hyon 1996: 695).

For this reason, the analysis of an ESP text's discourse structure on a macro-level is typically referred to as the *move analysis*. There is the assumption that every text is composed of a set of moves whereof each may consist of one or even more steps. (Paltridge 2013: 348) A *move* is a segment of text and a functional unit that accomplishes a particular communicative function. However, a move does not only have its own purpose but further contributes to a genre's entire communicative purpose. There is no regulation on how long such a move has to be, so moves may vary in length. Usually, however, a move consists of one idea at the very least. It may also be that one particular move is realized by multiple elements. As already stated above, these elements can be referred to as steps. A *step* in genre analysis serves to accomplish the purpose of the move it is part of. In addition, there are moves that

occur regularly while others do not. (Biber et al. 2007: 23-24) Consequently, there are moves that are *obligatory* forasmuch as they are of paramount importance for achieving a genre's communicative purpose while there are others that are *optional*. Optional moves are "those which speakers or writers may choose to employ if they decide those moves add to the effectiveness of the communication but do not alter the purpose of the genre". (Henry & Roseberry 1998: 147) Apart from that, a text's moves and steps may also vary in terms of their sequence, may occur more than once or may have blurred boundaries (Flowerdew 2013: 146).

For being able to perform a genre analysis, Bhatia (1993: 22-36) devised a framework in which order to proceed. He suggests seven steps on how to undertake an investigation of ESP genres. These include:

1. Placing the given genre-text in a situational context
2. Surveying existing literature
3. Refining the situational/contextual analysis
4. Selecting corpus
5. Studying the institutional context
6. Levels of linguistic analysis
7. Specialist information in genre analysis

Item number 6 in this framework is analyzed on several levels including the study of lexico-grammatical patterning as well as a structural analysis in terms of a text's moves and steps (Bhatia 1993: 24-33).

Genres that are commonly analyzed by researchers of ESP via frameworks like Bhatia's (1993) include both texts from academic and professional domains such as dissertations, abstracts, memos or legal cases and briefs (Hyland 2004: 44). In that respect, it however is inevitable to say that instances of genre often differ in their prototypicality. It may be that some samples of a particular genre are considerably archetypal while others are less typical representations. Nevertheless, the latter also needs to be taken into consideration as an instance of a specified genre. (Paltridge 2013: 347-348) Swales (1990: 49) accordingly highlights that "exemplars or instances of genres vary in their prototypicality".

Despite the fact that genres can vary in their prototypicality, ESP genres are typically conceptualized in a similar way. The rationale of a genre is highly dependent on the communicative purpose, a text's structure and its rhetorical patterns. Genre can

generally be described with the help of a three-level framework composed by Swales (1990) that includes all of the aforementioned aspects. The interdependency of these three components integrally portrays the central notion of genre. (Askehave & Nielsen 2005: 2) Askehave and Nielsen (2005) describe the relation of a genre's purpose, its structure and rhetorical strategies in the following manner:

Communicative purpose

Realized by

Move structure

Realized by

Rhetorical strategies

This model that is based on Swales' (1990) idea of genre demonstrates quite well what Flowerdew (2013) later confirmed – the fact that a genre's purpose triggers a certain discourse structure that is referred to as move structure in the framework. This particular move structure in turn then realizes certain conventionalized verbal and visual rhetorical strategies.

Taking into account the remarks of section 2.1 including the discussion of concepts such as the discourse community or communicative purpose and the notion of genre in ESP discussed within this section, it seems as if genre theory has been greatly influenced by ESP and its two most eminent representatives Bhatia (1993, 2012) and Swales (1990). This goes hand in hand with what Bhatia (2012: 239) says. He regards genre analysis as being considerably inspired by ESP. So does Paltridge (2007: 931), according to whom the term of *genre* has its origin in the field of ESP in the early 1980s. Bawarshi and Reiff (2010: 41) even claim that ESP and genre analysis have become synonymous in several respects. For this paper, the theoretical background of the ESP approach to genre will serve as a core doctrine for the empirical part.

2.2.2 The SFL approach to genre

The Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach to genre, also known as 'Australian genre-based educational linguistics' or 'Sydney school' (Fakhrudin & Hassan 2015: 62), is a pedagogy established at the University of Sydney. Contrary to the ESP approach to genre that primarily concentrates on genres of tertiary levels, the SFL approach to genre has mainly evolved from genre work within Australian primary schools. (Flowerdew 2013: 150-153) Since then, SFL has expanded its notion of genre throughout all educational levels including secondary schools, adult

migrant programs, academic disciplines but also professional domains (Hyland 2017: 28). Compared to the ESP approach that predominantly focuses on post-secondary education, genre within the domain of SFL thus is generally seen in broader terms. This becomes especially evident when looking at its categories of genre that include *narratives, recounts, arguments, and expositions*. Just as in ESP, these examples represent text types that share similarities in their discourse patterning. (Hyland 2004: 28) However, unlike ESP, SFL genre study “is [...] specifically concerned with relating genres to social processes” (Hüttner 2007: 24). The Sydney school considers the relationship of language form and its meaning in social contexts as fundamental. SFL linguists take the view that language structure, social function and context are interdependent. The way language is organized within a certain culture is determined by the social purpose(s) it serves. (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 29) The language system, thus, is said to be radically formed by social setting and culture.

The SFL approach to genre can mainly be ascribed to the work of linguist Michael Halliday (Fakhrudin & Hassan 2015: 62). The social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, however, was the first to regard texts in relation to their social contexts. When studying a native language in New Guinea in the first half of the 20th century, “he proposed the idea that understanding language involves understanding the local situation and the wider culture in which the language occurs”. (Bruce 2008: 14) He developed two main concepts for scrutinizing a language system: the *context of situation* and the *context of culture*. Even though his work was highly appreciated, several linguists raised concerns about the terminology as the terms *context, situation* and *context of situation* were hard to differentiate. Besides that, neither Malinowski nor J.R. Firth, who built on Malinowski’s idea of *context of situation*, were able to create a framework for genre analysis. It was Michael Halliday who initially proposed a model for analyzing genre. (Bruce 2008: 14-15) His work can be seen as the fountainhead of the Sydney School which eventually developed out of research undertaken by successors of SFL theorist Michael Halliday under the direction of J.R. Martin. (Flowerdew 2013: 150)

According to Hüttner (2007: 24), Martin can be seen as Sydney school’s “most prominent representative”. He was the one who came up with a proper definition of genre in SFL regarding it as “a staged, goal oriented social process” (Martin

1997:13). In Martin's definition, genre is seen as the "cultural purpose of texts" (Fakhruddin & Hassan 2015: 62). Another notion that is central to the SFL approach therefore is the communicative purpose of a text (Hyon 2017: 20) that is also of major importance in the ESP approach to genre. In addition, the genesis of clearly staged genres accompanied by the description of each stage's linguistic features was groundbreaking in SFL. It served as a basis for the ESP approach to genre and its concept of structural moves. (Hüttner 2007: 24) It is the linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar and cohesion which shape a text's structure of several stages. These stages in turn realize a genre's purpose. (Hyland 2004: 27) Similar to the ESP approach, "the structural and realizational patterns" are seen as crucial in construing genre (Fakhruddin & Hassan 2015: 62).

The concept of *realization*, thus, plays a major role when performing SFL genre analysis (Fakhruddin & Hassan 2015: 62). It "describes the dynamic way that language *realizes* social purposes and contexts as specific linguistic interactions, at the same time as social purposes and contexts *realize* language as specific social actions and meanings" (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 30). Michael Halliday considers language as a form of socialization whereby meaning is realized through implementing meaningful actions within the so-called *contexts of situation*. Those contexts should not be seen as unparalleled and isolated but frequently reoccur as *situation types*. Situation types can be defined as "a set of typified semiotic and semantic relations". (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 30) According to Halliday (1978: 28-30 cited in Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 30), these types make up "a scenario [...] of persons and actions and events from which the things which are said derive their meaning". A mother reading a bedtime story to her child or customers ordering goods via the phone would be instances of such reoccurring situation types. Due to the recurrence of situations like these, the participants "develop typified ways of linguistically interacting within them". (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 30) Eventually, the situation types become conventionalized, and the speakers establish certain semantic patterns for each situation (Halliday 1978: 110 cited in Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 30).

Hence, lexico-grammatical features are linked with specific situational groups. This is referred to as *register*. (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 30) Register can be defined as "[t]he operation of language within a certain context of situation" (Bruce 2008: 15). When

producing a particular type of genre, individuals make decisions in *register*. They do so alongside three different dimensions. (Hyland 2004: 26) These are *field*, *tenor* and *mode*. *Field* describes the social action and its subject matter, *tenor* refers to the participants, their roles and their relationship in an interaction and *mode* regards the role language has within a specific situation such as written or spoken discourse or illustrations. (Bruce 2008: 15; Hyland 2004: 26) Register varies depending on when, where and how language is used. We would, for instance, use a different register when talking to our boss than when talking to our lover. The aforementioned three dimensions of register consequently influence our language choices. Genre on the other hand, functions on a separate level – the level of text and context. At the level of text and context interaction, linguistic choices and organizational patterning are swayed by the social purpose that is intended to be achieved. (Hyland 2004: 27)

Besides the investigation of lexis and social situatedness, the Sydney School has also been concerned with identifying a genre's metafunctions (Rajagopalan & Jie 2016: 511). Those language metafunctions (*ideational*, *interpersonal*, and *textual*) conform to the elements of register (Fakhruddin & Hassan 2015: 63). The *ideational* metafunction corresponds with field and has to do with the "linguistic representation of action (who is doing what, to who, when, and where)" (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 31). The *interpersonal* depicts the speakers' interactions and can be related to tenor. The *textual* metafunction refers to a text's structure and coincides with mode. Thus, "[a]t the level of register [...], context of situation and language realize one another". (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 31) By comparison, genre functions on the level of context of culture and links culture to situation (2010: 33). Therefore, as can be seen in the model underneath (figure 1), "register [...] contextualizes language and is in turn contextualized by genre" (Martin 1997: 7).

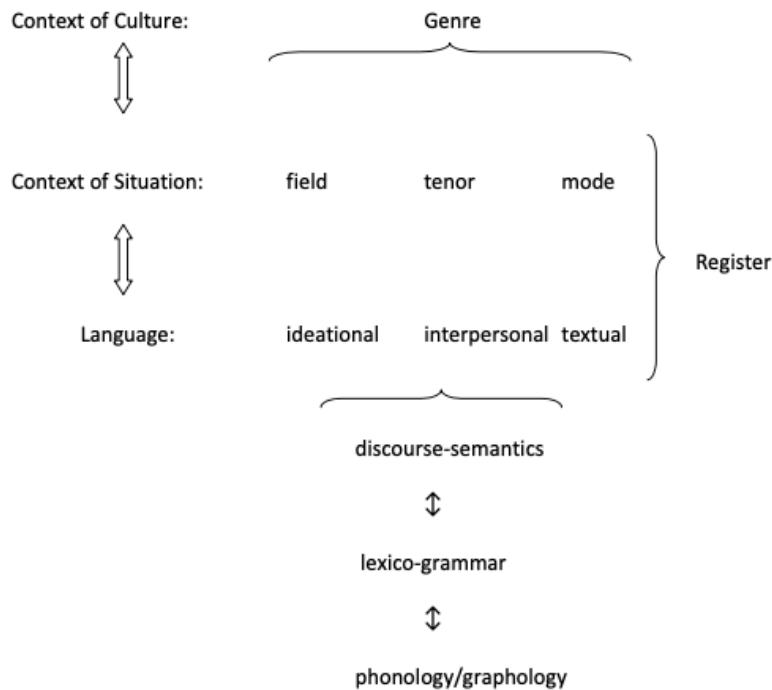


Figure 1. Relationship of genre & register in SFL (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010)

3. Pragmatics

Contingent upon a fairly dissimilar historical development, pragmatics and genre analysis appear to have little in common at first glance. While the domain of pragmatics primarily originates from philosophy, genre analysis has evolved from literary studies, anthropology and folklore studies. Another incongruity is their historical origins. Pragmatists initially prioritized small-scale spoken interaction, whereas genre analysts mainly concentrated on longer written texts such as research articles. Since the late 20th century, however, both disciplines have moved away from their straitened foci and have developed in a similar direction. Genre analysis has started to look at spoken genre while pragmatics has directed its attention towards written texts but also longer spoken utterances of conversational nature such as political speeches. (Tardy & Swales 2014: 165) In addition,

both fields recognize that discourses, both spoken and written, typically have beginnings, middles and ends and that such sections may well have different pragmatic and/or communicative functions, and concomitantly, draw upon different linguistic and rhetorical resources to realize those functions. (Tardy & Swales 2014: 165)

Consequently, a “growing interdisciplinary rapprochement” can be observed (Tardy & Swales 2014: 165). However, a pragmatic perspective on the notion of genre has infrequently been occupied (Paltridge 1995: 393). “[V]ery few linguistically motivated

efforts have been made to construct annotated corpora of spoken language that reflect the different facets of language involved in creating meaning on the level of human interaction – [...] the level of pragmatics” (Weisser 2018: 1). Although a relatively large number of different approaches to genre analysis has evolved in the late 20th century, the two aforementioned approaches based on the work of Swales (ESP) and the work of Halliday and Martin (SFL) have remained the leading ones (Paltridge 1995: 393). And even though the discipline of pragmatics has received particular attention from a broad array of researchers over the last five decades (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 3), it is only recently that genre analysis has become an invaluable tool for investigating the pragmatics of discourse (Tardy & Swales 2014: 165).

Until the late 1950s, it was generally understood that linguistics included nothing more than phonetics and phonemics. Concepts such as syntax or pragmatics were simply not considered. (Leech 1983: 1) The field of pragmatics first grew in popularity “as a reaction to Chomsky’s (1965) use of language as an abstract construct based on *competence* theory in which grammar was paramount and should be mastered independently from the actual functions of language use” (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 3). Chomsky initially worked within the domain of generative linguistics which primarily focused on syntax. This domain’s general framework, basic conception of objectives, and methodological and philosophical threads however transcend the investigation of linguistic form and enable implementation within other, related cognitive domains. Thus, “[a] certain notion of pragmatics” can already be identified in Chomsky’s early work. In the late 1970s, “[t]his ‘thin’ notion of pragmatics is replaced by a richer conception”, namely “that of pragmatic competence”. (Kasher 1991: 122-123) Chomsky (1978) then differentiated between two separate concepts – the notion of “grammatical competence” which has to do with the knowledge of appropriate form and use and the concept of “pragmatic competence” which combines “knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use” with different purposes and which “places language in the institutional setting of its use, relating intentions and purposes to the linguistic means at hand” (Chomsky 1978: 224-225 in Kasher 1991: 123). A pragmatic approach has been applied, and the notions of competence and performance have been separated (Kasher 1991: 124).

According to Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan (2010: 5), it was Leech (1983) who finally put forward the new linguistic research area of pragmatics. His ambition was a redefinition of pragmatics for the purposes of linguistics (Trosborg 1995: 6). By impelling “a shift of direction within linguistics away from *competence* towards *performance*”, Leech (1983) engendered “a fresh paradigm” (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 5). In place of concentrating on smaller units in the form of sentences, Leech (1983) considered utterance meaning to be of major relevance (Trosborg 1995: 6). He defines pragmatics as “the study of meaning in relation to speech situations” (Leech 1983:6). Instead of meaning in the abstract, pragmatics thus focuses on meaning in use – communicative actions in their sociocultural contexts are examined (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 3, 5). Based on Leech’s (1983) definition, Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan (2010: 5) define six core characteristics of pragmatics. These include

- (1) the use of language as a means of communication,
- (2) the importance of language use focusing on functions rather than on forms,
- (3) the study of the processes which occur in communication,
- (4) the importance of context and authentic language use,
- (5) the interdisciplinary nature of pragmatics,
- (6) and the application of linguistic theories based on the concept of communicative competence.

Out of all six qualities, there are two which should be given special credit – the *use* of a language and the *context* within which language users communicate. These two facets allow researchers to draw a distinction between pragmatics and other linguistic domains such as syntax or semantics. (Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan 2010: 5)

Although they propose a quite sophisticated definition of this branch of linguistics, Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan (2010: 5) consider Crystal’s (1997) to be “one of the most elaborate definitions”. Crystal (1997: 301) defines pragmatics as

[t]he study of language from a point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.

In Crystal’s (1997) perception of pragmatics not only users and context play a major role but also *interaction* becomes a key element. Instead of solely focusing on the speakers’ intentions, “the effects those intentions have on the hearers” in the course of communications become vital. (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 5) The field of pragmatics specifically analyzes “how speakers use language to express their

communicative intentions, and how hearers decode and understand these intentions”. Pragmatic studies are hence interested in the linguistic forms speakers apply when uttering a certain intention but also look at how listeners extract certain intentions from the words that are being said. (Plag et al. 2015: 181-182)

Depending on our intention in communication, we as speakers perform different actions such as commanding, stating, promising or baptizing – we “act through language”. Language is therefore used to carry out various actions. This idea dates back to the British philosopher John Langshaw Austin. He was the first to identify these “linguistic actions performed by speakers in a certain context with a certain communicative intention” as *speech acts*. Austin’s theory has become generally known as *speech act theory*. (Plag et al. 2015: 182-183)

3.1 Speech act theory

Even though pragmatics has various subdisciplines, speech act theory has become the one of most relevance. Austin (1962) can be considered as the mastermind of speech act theory as of assuming that people do not only use language in order to say things, but to actually do things. So besides making statements, speakers perform actions. (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 6-7) If, for example, a mother tells her son to “[t]ake some more vegetables” she does not just intend to make her son eat more legumes but instead commands her son to do so. Pragmatics, hence, is interested in the linguistic form and its communicative intention. Apart from that, one further aspect is of interest to pragmatists: the reaction an utterance causes in the hearer(s). (Plag et al. 2015: 183)

Altogether these three aspects can be assigned to a threefold model of utterances proposed by Austin (1962). His categorization of pragmatic speech acts consists of *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary* acts. These three concepts are an intrinsic part of speech act theory. The *locutionary act* refers to the linguistic form of the speech act, so to speak, the actual words that are being expressed. The *illocutionary act*, also known as illocutionary force, describes the intended meaning or force behind one’s words that are brought forward. The effect an illocution causes in the hearer is referred to as the *perlocutionary act*. (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 7; Plag et al. 2015: 184)

Out of these three categories, the illocutionary force has received particular attention. Austin (1962) was the first to propose a model dividing illocutionary acts into five categories. These were *verdictives*, *exercitives*, *commissives*, *behabitives* and *expositives* (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 7). John R. Searle (1976: 1-2), however, regarded Austin's (1962) "attempt at constructing a taxonomy" to be "defective" and considered it to be "inadequate" to a certain amount. This is why this paper will not explain Austin's (1962) taxonomy in greater detail. Based on Austin's (1962) work, Searle (1976) came up with a new classification of illocutionary acts which has been highly influential in pragmatic theory. Just as Austin (1962), Searle (1976) divides the illocutionary force into five major categories – *representatives*, *directives*, *expressives*, *commissives* and *declarations*. (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 7-8)

Representatives, also commonly known as *assertives*, have to do with the speaker's intention of asserting a state of affairs in the way the speaker sees it (Plag et al. 2015: 189). The speaker therefore commits him- or herself "to the belief that the propositional content of the utterance is true" (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 7). *Directives* are "attempts [...] by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (Searle 1976: 11) and perform some kind of action in the near future (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 7). *Expressives* are a form of illocutionary acts that reveal a speaker's feelings, inner states of mind and attitudes. *Commissives* describe utterances that commit the speaker to particular actions in the future. (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 7; Plag et al. 2015: 189) Lastly, the illocutionary act of *declarations* is concerned with bringing "about some alternation in the status or condition of the referred-to object or objects" (Searle 1976: 14) – current circumstances are altered by declaring something (Plag et al. 2015: 188). However, even though Searle (1976) criticized Austin's (1962) taxonomy of illocutionary acts and came up with an eminent one of his own, his typology has also come under attack. Among the critics, quite some researchers condemned that Searle (1976) looked at utterances in the form of isolated sentences only and did not consider context. (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 8) In addition, there is the possibility of not being able to categorize speech acts according to the five suggested types. It could be the case that some speech acts are a combination of different illocutionary acts – a "[s]traightforward classification in terms of speech act type" therefore can be problematic. In other

words, it is possible that one and the same exact locution can have various illocutions. (Plag et al. 2015: 190-192)

Apart from that, speakers can realize the same illocutionary force in different ways which then vary in terms of directness. A speaker's intended meaning can either be formulated as a direct or indirect speech act. If the relation between linguistic form (locutionary act) and linguistic function (illocutionary force) is straight, the speech act's intention is rendered directly. If there is a discrepancy between form and function, the speaker carries out an indirect speech act. Interestingly, we tend to take advantage of indirect speech acts more often than we use direct ones. (Plag et al. 2015: 192-193) Those indirect pragmatic strategies also correlate with the pragmatic principle of *politeness* (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan 2010: 7; Plag et al. 2015: 193).

3.2 Politeness and face

If used in contemporary English, the word *polite* "often conveys the idea of superficial good manners purely as a matter of form" (Leech 2014: 6). The linguistic notion of politeness, however, slightly differs from this widely accepted innate idea (Plag et al. 2015: 207). The principle of politeness has been introduced to linguistics about 50 years ago and has become an essential and rapidly developing field of study (Lakoff & Lee 2005: 1). However, according to House and Kasper (2005: 157), defining politeness is no mean feat. Lakoff and Lee (2005: 5) agree with that and similarly argue that "finding an all-encompassing definition of politeness is no easy task". This is partly because social norms and interpersonal behavior vary across different societies. Even though politeness is considered a social value in all civilized cultures, social norms and interpersonal behavior may diverge. The idea of polite behavior might be entirely different – a notion that a certain culture considers as polite or appropriate might be found entirely inappropriate or even rude by another culture. (House & Kasper 2005: 157; Lakoff 2005: 1) Despite the fact that all civilized cultures have notions of appropriate and polite manners in certain situations, there is "no universal agreement" about what is considered polite behavior (Lakoff 2005: 1-2). However, people usually have a rather clear understanding of what they regard as polite or impolite (Plag et al. 2015: 207). During the process of socialization in childhood, being polite is already learnt (Leech 2014: 4). The majority of people would probably consent that shouting at somebody publicly is impolite, while giving way to elderly people is commonly regarded to be polite (Plag et al. 2015: 207).

Regarded a social phenomenon, politeness is “largely manifested through the use of language” (Leech 2014: ix). “[M]ost of the behavior considered ‘polite’ is accomplished through language” – so “[t]here is very little ‘politeness’ that is not ‘linguistic’” (Lakoff & Lee 2005: 1-2). Lakoff and Lee (2005: 4) consider politeness to have a dual position. Politeness involves both “consideration for others” and the “adherence to conventional standards” (Lakoff & Lee 2005: 4). Leech (2014: 3) defines politeness as

a form of communicative behavior found very generally in human languages and among human cultures; indeed, it has been claimed as a universal phenomenon of human society. What it means to be polite [...], is to speak or behave in such a way as to [...] give benefit or value not to yourself but to the other person(s), especially the person(s) you are conversing with.

Leech (2014: 4) further claims that politeness is normally “thought to be a good thing”. In his book *Pragmatics of politeness*, Leech (2014: 4-9) proposes eight characteristics of politeness. First of all, he remarks that politeness is not obligatory. People can be impolite if there is a certain occasion that induces them to. Secondly, Leech claims that there are varying levels of polite and impolite behavior. Thirdly, there generally is a “sense of what is normal” - we intuitively know how polite to be for a certain occasion. A fourth aspect Leech proposes is that the level of politeness that will occur is dependent on the situation - “there are activity types where impoliteness dominates over politeness”. Apart from that, Leech claims that polite behavior implies a reciprocal symmetry – giving high value to someone is considered as polite, giving low value to another person is impolite. A sixth characteristic he describes is the repetitive behavior of politeness – this would, for instance, be the case if two diners haggle about who pays the bill. Seventhly, Leech points out that politeness “involves the passing of some kind of transaction of value between the speaker and the other party”. Lastly, Leech regards the “tendency to preserve a balance of value between the participants A and B” to be a major attribute of politeness. (Leech 2014: 4-9)

One of the most vital concepts in pragmatic politeness theory is the notion of *face* developed by Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]). Leech (2014: 33) regards the concept of face to be “the key to the study of politeness”. Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) politeness theory and the notion of face traces back to Goffman’s (1967) theory (Plag et al. 2015: 207). Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]: 61) define *face* as “the public self-image that every [adult] member [of a society] wants to claim

for himself". So, they recognized that all members of society have similar face wants (Adhmadi Ghaznavi 2017: 1). Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) further distinguish between two different types of face – positive and negative face. Positive face is considered as “a social actor’s self-image of social membership and consequent desire to be recognised as a rational social being” (Conlan 2005: 131). In other words, positive face refers to the “desire to be admired, loved, and accepted by others” (Plag et al. 2015: 207). By contrast, the negative face has to do with a social actor’s self-image of individuality (Conlan 2005: 131) and his or her desire not to be disturbed in his or her privacy (Plag et al. 2015: 208). Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]: 61) define it as “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom of imposition”. All people host a positive and a negative face (Ahmadi Ghaznavi 2017: 2).

Consequently, we can also distinguish between two forms of politeness – positive and negative politeness. We speak of positive politeness if we address the interlocutor’s need for approval and belonging, and therefore gratify his or her positive face “by communicating solidarity” (Conlan 2005: 131). On the other hand, if a speaker addresses a hearer’s negative face, we speak of negative politeness (Plag et al. 2015: 209). This is accomplished “by the avoidance or minimisation of imposition and is communicated by speaker self-effacement, formality, restraint, and the use of conventionalised indirectness” (Conlan 2005: 131). Politeness can hence be defined as “a specifically urbane form of emotional control serving as a means of preserving face” (House & Kasper 1981: 157). It can be manifested in social interaction through three easy rules proposed by Lakoff (1973: 298):

- (1) Don’t impose.
- (2) Give options.
- (3) Be friendly.

If it is the case that an act of verbal or non-verbal communication “by [its] nature run[s] contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker”, a *face-threatening act* (FTA) comes to pass (Brown & Levinson’s 1987 [1978]: 65). Christopher J. Conlan (2005: 132) defines FTAs more precisely “to consist in speech acts which have the potential to violate face”. Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) distinguish between acts that threaten a hearer’s negative face and acts that threaten a hearer’s positive face. Negative face is first and foremost endangered by orders,

requests, suggestions, advice, reminders, threats, warnings and dares. By way of contrast, positive face is mostly threatened by expressions of disapproval, criticism, ridicule, complaints, insults, accusations and disagreements. (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 66)

It was Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) groundbreaking notion of face that led to an increasing interest in the study of speech acts. The complaint was amongst the speech acts that have received particular attention. (Salmani-Nodoushan 2007: 30) As negative *Tripadvisor* reviews encompass elements of complaining, the speech act of complaint is of high relevance for this study and will be discussed in the next section.

3.3 The speech act of complaint

Anna Trosborg (1995: 311) defines the genre of complaint

as an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his/her disapproval, negative feelings etc. towards the state of affairs described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he/she holds the hearer (the complaine) responsible, either directly or indirectly.

The speech act of complaint is said to cause offence and considerably endangers the social relation between speaker and hearer (Trosborg 1995: 312). It therefore undoubtedly is "an intrinsically face-threatening act" (Ahmadi Ghaznavi 2017: 2). House and Kasper (2005: 158-159) consider a complaint to be a "post-event" as the "complainable" has already taken place. The complaine must have performed an action that the complainer perceives as unacceptable – the complaint is the consequence. A complaint can generally be assigned to Searle's (1976) speech acts category of expressives. Sometimes it can take the form of directives if the speaker does not only blame the complaine for something but also "requests the hearer to perform a remedial act to compensate for the loss of the speaker". (Ahmadi Ghaznavi 2017: 1)

When complaining about something, both the complaine's positive and negative face are being threatened. Through damaging the addressee's self-image and accusing him or her, his or her positive face is being attacked. By requesting some sort of compensation for the hearer's misconduct, the speaker threatens the complaine's negative face. As a consequence of this "conflictive nature of

complaining”, the social aspiration of maintaining harmony and courtesy cannot be fulfilled. (Ahmadi Ghaznavi 2017: 2)

However, it is indispensable to say that the semantic label of the speech act complaint in English does not only account for what we intuitively think of if we hear the word *complain*. In fact, it is a generic term for a number of speech behaviors. Among those, two types of complaint excel: the direct and the indirect complaint. (Boxer 2010: 164, 168) A direct complaint (DC) typically is a face-threatening act. It does not only charge the addressee to remedy an unacceptability but someone or something is also accused of something during an interaction. DCs, for instance, would be expressed in restaurants or complaint departments. The indirect complaint (IC), also known as griping, cannot be regarded a face-threatening act. Within that kind of speech act, the responsible party or object of a complaint is not mentioned or present during an interaction. ICs rather serve to establish solidarity in social interaction. (Boxer 2010: 164-165; Salmani-Nodoushan 2007: 29) The IC “is directed to a person who is neither responsible for the offense nor responsible for remedying it” (Boxer 2010: 165). In early research on the speech act of complaint, direct complaints were the focus. Interestingly, indirect complaints are “far more common in spontaneous social conversation” than direct complaints are. (Boxer 2010: 168)

Apart from this twofold categorization of speech behaviors (DC and IC), a complaint can be expressed at varying levels of directness. An utterance can either be expressed indirectly in the form of a hint or mild phrase of disapproval or it could take the form of an explicit, direct speech act through which a complainee is accused or morally judged. Through the choice of a specific level of directness, “the complainer is able to decide on the conflict potential of the complaint”. (Trosborg 1995: 314) House & Kasper (1981) were the first to come up with a framework that determines the directness level of a complaint. Trosborg’s (1995) work built on this one and differentiates between the exact same factors. Contingent upon whether

- the propositional content (complainable) is or is not expressed explicitly,
- the complainer’s negative evaluation of the propositional content is or is not expressed explicitly,
- the complainee’s agentive involvement is or is not expressed explicitly, and

- the complainer's negative evaluation of both the complaine'e's action and the complaine'e's personality is expressed explicitly,

eight levels of directness can be distinguished (House & Kasper 1981: 159; Trosborg 1995: 315).

Level 1 is the most indirect one, while level 8 is the most direct one (House & Kasper 1981: 159). Trosborg (1995) grouped these eight levels according to four sets of categories: *no explicit reproach*, *expression of annoyance or disapproval*, *accusation* and *blame*. Category 1 (no explicit reproach) makes use of hints by not mentioning the complainable in the utterance. This strategy normally avoids conflict. By employing expressions of annoyance or disapproval (category 2) concerning a particular state of affairs which is considered to be bad for the complainer, the complainer indirectly implies that he or she holds the addressee responsible without explicitly considering the complaine'e as the guilty person. Within category 2, the complainer could also outline the ill consequences that result from an offence. Category 3 (accusation) already comprises more straightforward forms of complaints – direct and indirect accusations. These strive for determining the agent of an offence. When accusing the complaine'e indirectly, the complainer asks questions about a particular situation that relates to the offence in order to establish the addressee of having committed the offence. In a direct accusation, the addressee is directly accused of being the agent of the offence. The fourth category encompasses the most direct strategies of complaining. Through an act of blame, the complaine'e is considered guilty of the offence – the complainer expresses a value judgement. Within this category, three subcategories can be identified – modified blame, explicit condemnation of the accused's action and explicit condemnation of the accused as a person. A modified blame does not only consist of expressing modified disapproval of an action the complaine'e is responsible for, but it also includes a statement of an alternative approach that should have been taken by the accused. Apart from that, the complainer could explicitly condemn the accused's action in a face-threatening way. Lastly, the complainer can position the accused as a non-responsible social member through an explicit condemnation of the accused as a person. (Trosborg 1995: 316-318)

Figure 3 comprises all (sub-)categories of complaint strategies proposed by Trosborg (1995). Examples for each category are provided.

Complaint strategies (presented at levels of increasing directness)		
Situation: Damaged car Hearer has borrowed speaker's car and damaged it. Speaker complains.		
Cat. I	No explicit reproach	
Str. 1	Hints	My car was in perfect order when I last drove it. There was nothing wrong with my car yesterday.
Cat. II	Expression of disapproval	
Str. 2	Annoyance	There's a horrible dent in my car. Oh dear, I've just bought it.
Str. 3	Ill consequences	How terrible! Now I won't be able to get to work tomorrow. Oh, damn it, I'll lose my insurance bonus now.
Cat. III	Accusation	
Str. 4	Indirect	You borrowed my car last night, didn't you?
Str. 5	Direct	Did you happen to bump into my car.
Cat. IV	Blame	
Str. 6	Modified blame	Honestly, couldn't you have been more careful. You should take more care with other people's cars.
Str. 7	Explicit blame (behaviour)	It's really too bad, you know, going round wrecking other people's cars. How on earth did you manage to be so stupid.
Str. 8	Explicit blame (person)	Oh no, not again! You really are thoughtless. Bloody fool! you've done it again.

Figure 2. Directness levels of complaints (Trosborg 1995)

Apart from choosing between various levels of directness, the complainer can make use of a number of other strategies that “avoid a direct confrontation with the complaine” (Trosborg 1995: 313). Although a complaint is considered an intrinsically face-threatening act, the complainer can make use of a number of mitigating devices in order to decrease the impact a complaint has on the addressee (Trosborg 1995: 312-313). Through our language choice, quite different degrees of politeness may occur at one and the same level of directness. This is dependent on the kind and number of modality markers used in an utterance. (House & Kasper 1981: 166) These modality markers are considered a form of mitigating devices (Trosborg 1995: 313). House and Kasper (1981: 166) differentiate between two major forms of internal modifiers: *downgraders* and *upgraders*. *Downgraders* are referred to as elements that play down the impact a complaint is likely to have on the complaine (House & Kasper 1981: 166). If one includes them in an utterance, there is the possibility of making a complaint sound more polite (Trosborg 1995: 313). *Upgraders*, on the other hand, are “modality markers which increase the force of the impact an utterance is likely to have on the addressee” (House & Kasper 1981: 169).

4. Genres and the web

Information and communications technology (ICT) has had a major impact on human communication. It has affected our daily lives and routines fundamentally. Aside from face-to-face conversation, electronic chats, forums and social networks have become practically inevitable. Writing emails has replaced penning letters. In order to stay up-to-date, people no longer have to purchase print newspapers or magazines but instead consult news sites and online newspapers via the internet. A great deal of our everyday transactions therefore is done by computers. Hence, the term computer-mediated communication (CMC) has been coined. (Caballero 2008: 20-21)

4.1 Computer-mediated communication

From the early 1990s onwards, linguists have been increasingly interested in studying language, text, discourse, and social interaction in but also through digital media (Georgakopoulou & Spilioti 2016: 1) due to a massive increase in computer-mediated communication in the late 20th century (Derks, Fischer & Bos 2008: 766). Even though the first computer was invented at some time during World War II and the first email train can be traced back to the 1960s, the interest in CMC began to arise out of “the fast-growing and ubiquity of personal computers” in the mid 1990s (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic 2004: 14-15). Since then, computer-mediated communication has become a flourishing field within different linguistic disciplines such as discourse analysis, pragmatics or sociolinguistics (Georgakopoulou & Spilioti 2016: 1).

People habitually think of computer-mediated communication in terms of technology and mistakenly deduce that CMC only has to do with information exchange and retrieval on the internet. Rather, one has to see the bigger picture behind the concept of CMC and not “become baffled by its rising popularity”. (December 1997: 1) John December (1997) was among the first to propose a proper definition of computer-mediated communication. According to December (1997: 1), “computer-mediated communication is a process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes”. Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004: 16) define CMC to be “concerned [...] with human interpersonal communication on, through and about the internet and web”. This process of human interaction can either be *synchronous* or

asynchronous. Synchronous is used to refer to “real-time communication” such as in chat rooms and resembles offline communication types such as face-to-face discussions, telephone calls or lectures (Romiszowski & Mason 2004: 398). Asynchronous communication, by contrast, takes place if there is “a potentially significant time delay between sending a message and it being read” (2004: 398). Examples of asynchronous online communication would be emails or bulletin boards. This virtual form of communication is comparable with letter writing or sending faxes. In the online world, asynchronous forms of communication outweigh synchronous ones. (Romiszowski & Mason 2004: 398)

This new communication setting that has developed through the internet can be characterized by a few exceptional characteristics. These include a

vast and variable range, new pull and push mechanisms, new distance-synchronic forms of communication, new combinations of [...] the number of people speaking and the number of people receiving the communication [...] and the high speed as well as the archiving of interaction. (Giltrow & Stein 2009: 9)

CMC typically integrates elements associated with face-to-face interactions. It distinguishes itself from conventional communication through a combination of qualities such as “immediacy and informality of style, transience of a message, reduced planning and editing, rapid [or immediate] feedback” with features of written language such as a “lack of visual and paralinguistic cues, physical absence of the addressee, [or] written mode of delivery”. (Georgakopoulou 2011: 94)

Computer-mediated discourse (CMD) is a specialization of computer-mediated communication (CMC). Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015: 127) define CMD to be “communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked or mobile computers, where ‘computers’ are defined broadly to include any digital communication device”. This particular subfield of CMC stands out in terms of its focus on *language and language use* and its use of discourse analysis to approach that focus. Subject to the technical properties of a specific CMC system that is used, but also dependent on the social and cultural context, the nature of CMD may vary. In the beginning, the majority of CMC was text-based. This means that messages were typed via a computer keyboard and eventually read on a computer screen. These text-based types of CMC, for instance, include incorporated emails, discussion forums, blogs, wikis, chats or newsgroups.

(Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015: 127) Bulletin boards and computer conferencing also number among CMC. Through changes and innovations in technology, CMC forms have evolved immensely. (Romiszowski & Mason 2004: 397) These days a number of other CMC formats have developed and can be accessed through web 2.0 platforms, which later are to be explained in greater detail, and smartphones. These new modes of communication on the web include graphical, audio and video channels. Hence, “rich contexts in which to observe verbal interaction and the relationship between discourse and social practice” are provided by CMC for CMD analysis. (Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015: 127)

Even though a few studies on computer-mediated language have been conducted in the late 1980s, linguists have not taken serious notice of the discipline of CMD until the early 1990s. From then on, however, language scholars have focused on CMD “at an accelerating rate, broadening the scope of inquiry and generating an ever-growing list of published resources”. (Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015: 127) For CMD analysis, the development of so-called *web 2.0* applications has been of paramount importance. These preserve records of online interactions and display new types of content, new contexts and new usage patterns. (Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015: 130-131)

4.2 Web 2.0

Web 2.0 platforms, also known as participatory websites, are one form of computer-mediated communication systems (Walther & Jang 2012: 2). According to Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015: 130),

[w]eb 2.0 refers to Web-based platforms that incorporate user-generated content and social interaction, often alongside or in response to structures and/or (multimedia) content provided by the sites themselves; such platforms have been ascendant since the turn of the millennium.

These web 2.0 environments excel through “the co-occurrence or convergence of different modes of communication on a single platform” (2015: 130). Messages that are presented and juxtaposed via these participatory websites commonly differ in terms of authorship. They employ both central messages uploaded by a website’s owner, as well as user-generated content added by readers. Web 2.0 platforms include social media sites such as *Facebook* or *Instagram*, advice-sharing systems such as *Yahoo! Answers*, video-sharing platforms such as *YouTube*, user-generated rating sites which rate movies, restaurants or professors, consumers’ product reviews

on webpages such as *Amazon*, and last but not least, travel reviews on *Tripadvisor*. (Walther & Jang 2012: 2)

All those participatory websites integrate characteristics similar to conventional formats of computer-mediated communication. Web 2.0 systems enable larger and scattered groups of users to lead topical discussions by sharing concerns or cures and commenting on one another's contributions. Earlier forms of CMC also offered that opportunity; it was only the medium that was different – discussions were launched via email list systems. Another similarity has to do with authorship. Just as the traditional world wide web, web 2.0 pages usually have a page owner or authoritative source that manages the websites' textual and multimodal content. Yet, participatory websites differ from earlier forms of computer-mediated communication systems in that they combine all of the features mentioned above. “[V]isual informational and interface cues, a central authorial message source, plus the contribution and incorporation of visitors' input” constitute this new participatory format of CMC. (Walther & Jang 2012: 3)

Apart from such a participatory discourse type, CMD also manifests different genres (Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015: 129). The combination of the computer and the internet with its new form of communication led to the genesis of a new type of genre – *cybergenres* (Shepherd & Watters 1998: 97).

4.3 Cybergenres

“Genres are continually evolving and responding to the eternally changing human society” (Xia 2020: 156). The incorporation of digitality is regarded as the “first major development [...] in genre studies” (Xia 2020: 144). Digital advancement has facilitated “a new communication setting which reconfigures the conditions to which pragmatic features of language respond” (Giltrow & Stein 2009: 9). New technologies and the digital medium thus have had an enormous influence on the notion of genre (Caballero 2008: 21) and existing conventions of genre have been modified in new ways (Fairclough 1992: 69 in Xia 2020: 149). Eventually, cybergenres have evolved. Other than conventional genres that are marked by similar *content* and *form*, cybergenres excel through a “triple” of facets – *content*, *form* and *functionality* (Shepherd & Watters 1998: 102).

However, those genres that can be found on the internet, normally manifest variations in terms of the degree of digitalization and novelty (Caballero 2008: 21). Kwasnik and Crowston (2005: 79) point out that “[a]s documents have migrated to the web [...] their identity as genres has also evolved”. Reportedly, “[n]ew document genres have emerged [...], while older ones have blended, changed and been incorporated into different social endeavors” (2005: 79). So, whilst some digital genres resemble their “print counterparts” such as academic papers that can be accessed online, “others are unique to the online medium” such as social networks. Besides, there are online genres that “exhibit a mixture of conventional and new digital traits”. These would, for instance, include online dictionaries or encyclopedias. (Caballero 2008: 21)

Shepherd and Watters (1998) were the first to propose a twofold categorization of these new genres. According to them, cybergenres can either be *extant* or *novel*. An online genre is extant if it is based on an already existing genre in other types of media such as newspapers or videos. (Shepherd & Watters 1998: 98) It is novel if it does not resemble “any existing genre in any other medium” and has fully developed in the computer environment (1998: 98), or if it is based on genres originally replicated in the online world but has “evolved so far from the original that [it is] classed as being [a] new [genre]” as it manifests through a “level of functionality that makes it fully dependent for its existence on the new medium” (1998: 99). Both extant and novel genres can be divided into sub-categories. Extant genres can either be *replicated* or *variant*. *Replications* of an original genre are “relatively faithful reproductions of the genres as they appeared in their source media” (Shepherd & Watters 1998: 99). Both content and form stay the same in the online environment, and hardly any new feature accrues (1998: 99). *Variants* are “based on existing genres but have evolved by exploiting the capabilities afforded by the new medium” – their form and content differ from existing genres, and their functionality is significantly new (1998: 99). Hyperlinked documents with imagery or video components can be seen as variants of standard text documents. Novel genres can either be *emergent* or *spontaneous*. Emergent cybergenres “have evolved to the extent that they are new genres” (1998: 99). By comparison, spontaneous cybergenres “have no counterpart in other media” (1998: 99). Homepages, hot lists and FAQs would be examples for such spontaneous cybergenres (1998: 99). Figure

4 provides an overview of Shepherd and Watters's (1998) taxonomy of all reviewed cybergenre subclasses.

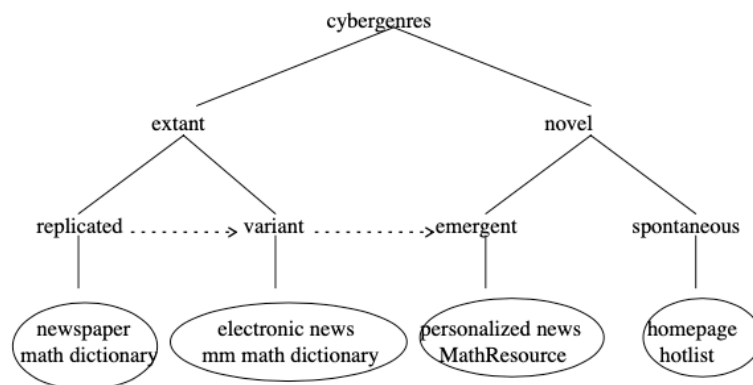


Figure 3. Taxonomy of cybergenres (Shepherd & Watters 1998)

4.4 Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

Another relatively new phenomenon caused by the rapid development of web 2.0 applications and other digital communication channels is the concept of electronic word-of-mouth, in short, eWOM (Ladhari & Michaud 2015: 36). This concept has initially been introduced by Strauss (2000) as “internet customer communication” (Lis & Korchmar 2013: 11). Through web 2.0, consumers have been converted from solely passive observers to active participants (Daughtery & Hoffmann 2014: 82). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004: 39) define eWOM as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”. Before the advent of the internet, traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) was used to refer to “informal communication, both positive and negative, between individuals about characteristics of a supplier and/or his products, and services” (Helm 2000: 158).

Wang and Rodgers (2010) divide electronic word-of-mouth communication into two major categories. While the first type is “information-oriented” (Daughtery & Hoffman 2014: 84) and enables consumers “to exchange their opinions about products and services” through online feedback systems and consumer review websites such as *Amazon*, *eBay* or *Tripadvisor* (Wang & Rodgers 2010: 214-215), the second type is “emotion-oriented” and is situated in “non-product focused online communities and social networks” (Daughtery & Hoffman 2014: 84) such as *Facebook* or *LinkedIn* (Wang & Rodgers 2010: 215). Consumer opinions of this second type are broader

and more subjective (Daughtery & Hoffman 2014: 84). This type could, for instance, be a *Facebook* posting shared with friends after returning from a vacation where the consumer is talking about details of his or her trip that includes information about and experience with hotels, restaurants or activities (Wang & Rodgers 2010: 215).

Electronic word-of-mouth communication occurs in a variety of formats. It could, for example, take place via web-based opinion platforms, discussion forums or news groups (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004: 39). A sector which has been highly influenced by eWOM is the hospitality industry. Through websites such as *Expedia* or *Tripadvisor*, tourists have the possibility of exchanging information, opinions and recommendations about accommodations, destinations and other tourist services. Users can “document and relive their travel experience” by “expressing their satisfaction level with the hotel stay experience”. (Ladhari & Michaud 2015: 36) Via these web-based consumer opinion platforms, consumers engage in information-oriented electronic word-of-mouth communication (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004: 38).

4.5 The genre of *Tripadvisor* reviews

One form of such electronic word-of-mouth communication is online reviews. This form of user-generated content is a relatively new textual genre (Compagnone & Fiorentino 2018: 270). According to Chatterje (2001: 131-132), consumers’ and customers’ reviews and ratings “represent the most accessible and prevalent form” of eWOM. Specifically within the hospitality and tourism industry, online reviews are omnipresent. These “written opinions of users that are transmitted to the online sphere” enable users to share their feelings and thoughts of tourism products and services with the public. (Maurer & Schaich 2011: 500-502) Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018: 271) describe online reviews as “spontaneously produced” contents that do not only contain “opinions, comments, preferences, [and] recommendations” but also include “personal narrative and emotional contents, connected to the travel”. Online consumer reviews therefore serve both as sources of information and recommendation in purchase decisions and product sales (Park, Lee & Han 2007: 125).

Furthermore, those reviews posted on platforms such as *Holidaycheck* or *Tripadvisor* are commonly accepted “as a further channel to articulate complaints as dissatisfied customers can voice their opinion about the perceived inequity of expectations and

quality delivery” (Maurer & Schaich 2011: 500). Consumers, hence, have the chance to express their dissatisfaction with a service or product in a convenient and time-efficient way (2011: 502).

Tripadvisor is considered “the most prominent travel review site” (Compagnone & Fiorentino 2018: 271) and “the world’s largest travel guidance platform” (Tripadvisor LLC 2017). *Tripadvisor* has been brought into being by Steve Kaufer in 2000. Initially, it was established as a platform for reviewing hotels by customers and therefore served as a tourist guide. Over the years, it has become a social network through which travelers from all over the world exchange pictures, impressions and opinions of hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions. Now, every registered member can post reviews by using their name or hiding behind a nickname. For registration, only an email address is required. After having posted a comment, all reviews are filtered by *Tripadvisor* before being published. For consulting reviews, no registration is necessary. (Compagnone & Fiorentino 2018: 272-273)

4.6 Previous studies on online reviews

As consumer-generated content in the form of online reviews has risen progressively, linguists’ interest in studying this young genre has likewise grown in the last decades. Various scholars have examined consumers’ reviews of products and services (Pollach 2006, Maurer & Schaich 2011, Skalicky 2013, Breur 2019). At the same time, there are a number of researchers who have at least partly investigated online reviews on *Tripadvisor* (Sparks & Browning 2010, Vasquez 2011, Cenni & Goethals 2017, Compagnone & Fiorentino 2018, Kilic Gönen 2019). However, an extensive genre analysis of negative reviews of hotels posted on *Tripadvisor* has not yet been published. The great majority of studies located in the tourist sector have either focused on investigating hotels’ responses to reviews (Levy, Duan, Boo 2013, Panseeta & Todd 2014, Thumvichit 2016) or have done a content analysis of the concepts rated such as cleanliness, staff, location, facilities or food (Zheng, Youn & Kincaid 2009, Maurer & Schaich 2011, Levy, Duan & Boo 2013, Lee et al. 2018). This literature review, however, is to focus on research that investigated lexicogrammatical features, moves and directness levels of (negative) online reviews of both products and services.

Pollach (2006) was among the first to conduct a genre analysis of online reviews. For her study, Pollach (2006) analyzed a corpus of 358 product reviews on digital cameras posted on *reviewcentre.com*. This study's focus was a broad lexicogrammatical analysis. Thereby, Pollach (2006) looked at word frequencies, the use of personal pronouns, formality, lexical richness, negation and also paralinguistic features used. Overall, Pollach's (2006) findings suggest that online product reviews are a quite informal genre where colloquial language such as *kinda* or *gonna* is regularly used and within which genre participants "are strongly emotionally involved with the subject matter" (2006: 7-9). Unlike Pollach (2006), Vasquez (2011) looked at lexicogrammatical features used in 100 negative *Tripadvisor* reviews. She reported that quite a few complaint messages included some form of expectation (*expect(ed)*, *expecting*), disappointment (*disappointed*), recommendation (*recommend*) or advice (*advise*). Apart from that, the words *but* and *however* were commonly used to juxtapose an overall negative remark with at least some positive comment. (Vasquez 2011: 1710-1711) Kilic Gönen (2019: 32) who analyzed a corpus of 100 Turkish negative *Tripadvisor* comments on five-star holiday destinations in Antalya reports that descriptive adjectives such as *bad*, *terrible*, *detestable* and *vile* were among the most frequent words used in the reviews.

Another study that has focused on lexicogrammatical characteristics of online reviews has been published by Cenni and Goethals (2017). Their corpus consisted of 300 negative reviews of hotels located in Rome, Italy posted on *Tripadvisor* by UK, US, Italian and Dutch citizens. Cenni and Goethals (2017) looked at hedging phenomena that are typically used for intensifying complaints, namely up- and downgraders, which they refer to as *up-* and *down-scaling* strategies. Upgraders that were reported by Cenni and Goethals (2017) to be typically used by complainers include expressive punctuation ("!!!"), empathic orthography ("HORRIBLE"), adverbial high degree markers ("awfully expensive"), explanatory aggravating comments ("I didn't sleep much even with windows and shutters firmly closed"), irony/sarcasm, rhetorical questions, description of a serious negative episode that took place during the stay ("We got robbed in the room"). Downgrading included adjectives, negation preceding a positive/negative adjective ("The breakfast wasn't so good."), underlining a personal point of view ("I don't mind that the rooms were old.."), juxtaposing a positive/negative comment ("I would have given this 1 star but the breakfast was

pretty good”) and explanation/justification attenuating the circumstances (“Our room was clean, at least, but our door handle was partially hanging off which made opening/closing traumatic.”). (Cenni & Goethals 2017: 26) A further research project that investigated lexical and grammatical features via a qualitative approach was done by Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018). Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018) gathered 1824 positive and negative *Tripadvisor* reviews of 20 Italian hotels. Via a qualitative analysis, they found out that “the use of the first person singular is predominant” (2018: 282). Besides the use of the first-person pronoun *I*, reviews frequently employ the personal pronoun *you* to include or directly address the reader. Another pattern that is found to occur regularly in *Tripadvisor* reviews are evaluation verbs such as *I consider*, *I find*, or *I propose*. (Compagnone & Fiorentino 2018: 282)

Two studies also investigated online review’s linguistic choice of word length (Pollach 2006, Maurer & Schaich 2011). Pollach (2006) analyzed the length of words and sentences used by product reviewers. By comparing it to two formal reference corpora, Pollach (2006: 5) drew the conclusion that sentence and word level of online product reviews reflected their lower level of formality. A possible explanation for the short sentences and words could be that reviewers usually make use of simpler structures and sporadically write incomplete sentences (2006: 5). Maurer and Schaich (2011) who looked at 352 negative reviews of Munich hotels on *Holidaycheck* investigated a link between a review’s word number and its degree of negativity.

Skalicky (2013) examined product reviews. More specifically, he obtained a corpus of 142 product reviews consisting of both positive and negative ratings of various products from *Amazon*. Skalicky (2013) aimed at devising a corpus-based move analysis. He identified nine moves in total, whereof four are composed of several sub-steps. These nine rhetorical structures are the following: *Evaluation*, *User information*, *Title*, *External information*, *Overall statement*, *Personal experience*, *Comparison*, *Background information* and *Refer to other reviews*. (2013: 87) Skalicky (2013) did not provide a fixed sequence of the moves, as he ranked them in the above order according to their frequency of occurrence (from highest to lowest). He further reported differences in the instances of moves depending on whether the review is a positive or a critical one (2013: 88). Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018)

argue for a tripartite textual structure. They claim that *Tripadvisor* reviews, in essence, consist of three main components: *description*, *evaluation* and *recommendation*. At times, these three moves are complemented by a fourth component which is referred to as *narrativity*. (2018: 279-280) Breur (2019) composed a move structure of online restaurant reviews after having analyzed 126 reviews of restaurants located in the US. She identified the following five moves: *Giving practical information*, *Describing the restaurant*, *Placing the restaurant in context*, *Assessing the restaurant*, *Recommending the restaurant* (2019: 121-123).

Sparks and Browning (2010) are the only study so far to devise a framework of the discourse structure of negative online reviews on hotels. After having gathered 200 complaint messages posted on *Tripadvisor* between 2002 and 2007, they analyzed the reviews' narrative structure and form, and eventually came up with five moves – *orientation*, *complicating action*, *evaluation*, *resolution* and *coda*. The first move (orientation) includes information about the setting, time, place, situation and participants. (2010: 809) Within the second move (complicating action), the complainer describes “what actually happened or was reported as failure” (2010: 809). By evaluation, Sparks & Browning (2010: 809) understand “word or messages that say this was frustrating, annoying, upsetting, or horrible; or amusing, hilarious and wonderful”. The last move (resolution) provides information about “how it ended; people left, got compensated, told others, posted the complaint” (2010: 809).

Another aspect that has been under investigation in previous research are the directness levels of negative online reviews. Vasquez (2011) examined that most of the reviews were in the form of indirect complaints and were directed towards other travelers via using the personal pronoun *you* or the imperative. Even though smaller in number, quite a few reviewers blamed hotels directly via their complaint message. Based on Trosborg's (1995) levels of directness in complaints, Kilic Gönen (2019) found out that the majority of the gathered reviews, namely 91 out of 100, were formulated in an indirect way and did not accuse the complaine. Most users offered direct advice to other travelers and frequently formulated their messages in the form of positive or negative imperatives such as “think about other hotels” or “don't go”. There was only one comment that targeted the complaine via a direct complaint message. (Kilic Gönen 2019: 33)

On the whole, it can be said that online reviews, be it of products or services, have become a growing field of research interest. In the last few years, studies on this particular kind of consumer-generated content have piled up. Yet, as an all-encompassing genre analysis of *Tripadvisor* complaint messages does not exist, further research is required. Thus, all the findings outlined above will inform this project and might contribute to taking a step forward in this particular research area.

5. Research design

5.1 The data

The present project employs data gathered from the webpage *Tripadvisor*. A corpus consisting of 100 negative online reviews posted on this particular travel review site has been compiled and will undergo genre analysis. The data set for this study was collected between March 1 and March 8, 2021. Screenshots of all reviews were taken, and all texts were saved both as Word and text document files (txt) for the purpose of analyzing them quantitatively and qualitatively. In the appendix, the bodies of all gathered texts that were taken for the lexico-grammatical analysis can be found.

In order to have a corpus of relatively homogenous samples concerning English language variation and culture, there was the attempt to collect reviews on US hotels located in areas that are first and foremost visited by American tourists. On that account, various native speakers from the US were contacted and were asked about holiday destinations that are popular among US citizens. Out of numerous suggestions, ten hotels in five different places were eventually chosen. These localities include hotels in Ocean City (Maryland), Panama City (Florida), Virginia Beach (Virginia), St. Pete Beach (Florida) and Myrtle Beach (South Carolina). For each city, two hotels were retrieved according to several predetermined criteria.

First of all, all of these hotels are situated on the beach which was thought to make the reviews' content more comparable. Apart from that, all hotels are so-called comfort or middle-class properties that are classified as 3-star places. All of them were further required to have more than 1000 *Tripadvisor* reviews already written by former hotel guests. Based on these criteria, the following ten properties were chosen for this project:

1. Grand Hotel & Spa / Ocean City, MD
2. Dunes Manor Hotel, Court & Suites / Ocean City, MD
3. Radisson Panama City Beach Oceanfront / Panama City, FL
4. Days Inn by Wyndham Panama City Beach/Ocean Front / Panama City, FL
5. Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront / Virginia Beach, VA
6. Best Western Plus Sandcastle Beachfront Hotel / Virginia Beach, VA
7. Grand Plaza Beach Hotel St. Pete Beach / St. Pete Beach, FL
8. Sirata Beach Resort / St. Pete Beach, FL
9. The Breakers Resort / Myrtle Beach, SC
10. The Patricia Grand, Oceana by Vacasa / Myrtle Beach, SC

For each hotel, ten representative reviews were chosen to be part of the corpus that will undergo investigation. Again, a set of specific criteria has been developed to compile that corpus of 100 texts in sum. Reviews were only chosen if they had a minimum word number of 89 in order to have sufficient textual elements to analyze. Shorter ones were omitted. The longest text was 668 words. The average word number of all reviews was 219. The reviews' title was included for counting word number. Obviously, the reviews had to be written in English, translations were not taken into account. The selected reviews all covered a case of unsatisfied hotel experience that led to travelers' ratings with scores of 1 or 2 on a 5-point rating scale. The vacation was hence described as either terrible or poor. In consequence of the Coronavirus crisis that has started in the early months of 2020 and has led to a lower travel volume, the data set consists of reviews already written in the year of 2019 only. In specific, all complaint messages were posted between June and August 2019 which is peak season in the US as of the summer holidays. Hence, a great number of Americans go on vacation and in return many write reviews. On top of that, all reviews were read before selection in order to ensure that each of them really described some kind of dissatisfaction and hence can be regarded as a proper complaint message. Reviews with inappropriate contents were excluded. Based on all afore-remarked criteria and with June 2019 being the starting point, the first ten eligible reviews of every hotel were collected.

5.2 Research questions and methodological steps

With a corpus consisting of 100 reviews, three research questions are to be probed for this study. Each research question will be addressed one at a time because of the different analysis procedures that are to be taken. First of all, genre-specific lexical and grammatical features will be analyzed. Thereby, the following research question is to be addressed:

1) *What lexical and grammatical patterns are typical of negative online reviews posted on Tripadvisor?*

As a first step, an analysis of lexico-grammatical features will be conducted by means of the software program *AntConc* coded by Laurence Anthony. Via the application of this corpus analysis toolkit, several units of language from the representative texts are to undergo investigation. Although one would usually start working with *AntConc* by creating a word list of all words in the corpus according to alphabetical or frequency order, the research question stated above will not be informed by the word list tool as it “usually tell[s] us little about how important a word is in a corpus” (Anthony 2005: 732-733). Instead, the corpus’ keywords are to be identified first as these provide information about the words that occur particularly frequently in a corpus when compared to a reference corpus (2005: 733). Hence, keywords are not the most frequent words among a collection of texts but those words that are “unusually frequent” (Walsh 2011: 96). According to Hyland (2012: 68), “[k]eywords are therefore useful for investigating a specialised corpus as they provide a way of identifying which words best distinguish the texts of a particular author or group of authors from another”. So, through this application one has the chance to obtain “information about register variation according to field of discourse” (Flowerdew 2013: 163) when contrasting two different data sets. The keyword list tool however does not only provide you with high keyness words, referred to as *positive keywords*, that have a significantly higher occurrence in the target than the reference corpus, but it also enables to look at negative keyness. *Negative keywords* are those “words which are significantly lower in [the] target corpus” when compared to the reference corpus (Knight 2017). For being able to analyze this corpus’ keywords, there has been the need to find a proper reference corpus. As the reviews were based on hotels located in the US with a high occupancy rate of US vacationers and the American English spelling therefore prevails, a wordlist edited by the Brown University, the Brown

University Standard Corpus of Present-Day American English (in short: Brown Corpus), was used.

Besides the investigation of keyness, the analysis will further focus on multiword sequences. The use of the concordance tool allows to investigate the “combination of lexical words with one another”. *Concordances* are the *node words* being in the center. These concordances are surrounded by their *collocates* on both their left and right-hand sides. (Flowerdew 2013: 163) *AntConc*'s concordance tool is called “Key Words in Context viewer” as it enables you to look up a keyword and find out about when and where the word appears in one's collection of texts and most importantly some context for it (Froehlich 2015). In short, Sinclair (1991: 32 in Cheng 2012: 72) defines concordances as “a collection of the occurrences of a word form, each in its own textual environment”.

As a second step, the reviews structural organization will be the focus. Thereby, the following question is strived to be answered:

2) *What is the move structure of negative online reviews posted on Tripadvisor?*

For being able to answer this second research question, a hand-tagged move analysis is to be executed. As of the rather large number of texts included in the corpus, a sample of 40 representative texts was chosen to be analyzed. Four representative reviews per hotel will undergo move analysis. Out of the ten reviews per hotel, the ones in the middle that lie together closest were chosen. This accounts for every fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh review per hotel. Hence, all four chosen reviews of one hotel are very close in terms of publication and were definitely posted in a time span of not more than four weeks. The samples used for the move analysis are tagged with a star (*) in the appendix.

As certain moves within the texts may consist of and may be realized by more elements and sub-ideas (Biber et al. 2007: 24), a categorization consisting of both moves and steps is to be proposed. Moreover, as the occurrence of certain moves may vary, and particular texts may not only include fixed moves, a classification system based on Henry and Roseberry's (1998) has been developed for identifying the moves' and steps' frequency. Moves and steps are to be classified as either

obligatory or *optional* (Henry & Roseberry 1998: 147). If a move or step occurs with a frequency of 60% and above in a specific corpus, it is referred to as a *conventional* (in this paper *obligatory*) move. Those moves and steps with a frequency rate somewhere below 60% are recognized as *optional* ones. (Kanoksilapatham 2005: 272)

The development of a move structure for the genre under investigation is informed by previous research. Sparks & Browning's (2010), Skalicky's (2013), Compagnone and Fiorentino's (2018) and Breur's (2019) frameworks of reviews' discourse structure – be it restaurant, product or hotel reviews – form the basis for the proposed model within this project. First, all 40 representative texts are to be analyzed with the help of a preliminary move structure. Then, the initial framework might be adapted or slightly changed, and the corpus will undergo a final move analysis with the help of the ultimate scheme that is to be presented in this paper. The move analysis will be executed with the help of the software *ATLAS.ti* which allows qualitative content analysis and coding.

After having performed the move analysis, a pragmatic analysis will conclude this project. Thereby, the following question will be answered:

3) What degrees of directness are observable in negative online reviews posted on Tripadvisor?

With regard to the last research question, again a qualitative approach is to be taken at this stage. In specific, a pragmatic analysis will be done. The analysis of the reviews' degrees of directness is to be performed via a coding process. Once more, the software program *ATLAS.ti* will be used for coding the speech acts of complaint in the representative sample of 40 texts already chosen for the move analysis. Codes have been established in line with Trosborg's (1995) directness levels of complaints which include *Hints*, *Annoyance*, *Ill consequences*, *Indirect accusation*, *Direct accusation*, *Modified blame*, *Explicit blame (behavior)* and *Explicit blame (person)* (see chapter 3.3).

6. Results and discussion

In this section, this project's results are to be presented and interpreted. The chapter's structure is in line with the three research questions. Initially, the genre's typical lexical and grammatical elements are to be investigated. A move analysis will follow. Subsequently, a pragmatic analysis with specific regard to directness levels will be undertaken. As a genre's purpose is said to be realized by its move structure and rhetorical strategies (Swales 1990 in Askehave & Nielsen 2005: 2), the final section will draw conclusions on the communicative purpose(s) and the discourse community of negative *Tripadvisor* reviews with regard to all findings obtained.

6.1 Lexical and grammatical features

This subsection discusses the results that have been gained from the analysis of the lexico-grammatical features of negative *Tripadvisor* reviews of hotels. For answering the first research question (*What lexical and grammatical patterns are typical of negative online reviews posted on Tripadvisor?*), Laurence Anthony's software program *AntConc* has been used. The corpus under investigation has been analyzed from multiple angles. For reasons of validity, the Brown Corpus word frequency list (Brown University 2020) has been employed as a reference corpus.

6.1.1 Keywords

In a first stage, *AntConc* was used to compile a word list of the most frequent words in the corpus under investigation. As this however is faintly informative, a keyword list was generated to identify keyness. Via comparing this project's collection of texts with a word frequency list of the Brown Corpus, words that are statistically significantly frequent to *Tripadvisor* reviews could be identified. The following table provides an overview of the top 90 positive keywords.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	256	1118.78	room
2	395	772.1	we
3	141	720.7	hotel
4	86	396.61	stay
5	184	374.75	our
6	53	350.87	towels
7	65	335.62	rooms
8	62	305.41	desk
9	61	300.42	beach
10	54	295.47	dirty
11	68	286.62	staff
12	160	277.89	my
13	356	266.46	i
14	486	255.53	was
15	35	217.26	resort
16	229	215	were
17	275	202.81	not
18	34	196.12	bathroom
19	45	194.52	clean
20	28	188.26	balcony
21	26	166.87	housekeeping
22	41	165.73	nice
23	57	163.29	front
24	91	149.71	very
25	43	147.8	pool
26	36	141.19	stayed
27	25	140.67	shower
28	37	136.83	check
29	22	124.17	toilet
30	22	124.17	tub
31	146	122.92	t
32	26	122.26	checked
33	22	118.75	cleaned
34	16	115.92	pm
35	21	113.82	disappointed
36	20	112.53	beds
38	18	109.57	filthy
38	75	107.98	get
39	17	105.06	rude
40	49	102.1	service
41	23	102.08	smell
42	13	100.33	elevators
43	13	100.33	roaches
44	22	99.18	parking
45	19	97.57	staying

46	23	97.41	guest
47	16	95.52	hallway
48	26	94.56	location
49	17	92.38	elevator
50	16	85.75	floors
51	33	83.97	floor
52	50	82.26	night
53	18	81.52	recommend
54	23	81.5	friendly
55	22	80.64	breakfast
56	10	77.18	ac
57	12	74.79	disgusting
58	30	73.85	property
59	14	72.67	overall
60	28	72.33	bed
61	170	72.19	they
62	45	70.7	told
63	58	70.56	us
64	9	69.46	oceanfront
65	17	68.51	nights
66	16	66.15	customer
67	16	65.32	sheets
68	11	65.23	checking
69	11	65.23	ok
70	38	64.48	door
71	42	63.18	didn
72	9	63	bathrooms
73	14	62.83	lobby
74	17	62.78	doors
75	8	61.74	sirata
76	8	61.74	website
77	16	61.53	ocean
78	22	58.92	someone
79	131	58.28	there
80	11	57.75	advertised
81	17	57.44	extremely
82	15	56.17	worst
83	12	56.16	horrible
84	9	56.09	trash
85	18	55.34	guests
86	18	54.45	broken
87	10	54.44	booked
88	10	54.44	disappointing
89	7	54.02	amenities
90	7	54.02	fridge

Table 1. Top 90 positive keywords sorted by keyness

As can be seen in table 1, content words outweigh function words with regard to keyness in the collected *Tripadvisor* reviews. The number of function words is significantly lower than the number of content words. Nonetheless, they are not of minor importance. The personal pronouns *we* and *I*, for instance, rank among the words with the highest keyness. The corresponding possessive pronouns *our* and *my* are also among the words that occur much more frequently in this corpus than in the reference corpus. The reason why the personal and possessive pronouns of first person are so commonly used certainly has to do with the fact that the writers talk about their very own experiences and tell their personal stories in reviews. The online reviews' authors seem to talk about themselves and their family, friends and other travel companions a lot. Previous studies have drawn similar conclusions. Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018: 282) consider the first-person singular pronoun *I* to be "predominant" in *Tripadvisor* reviews because of feelings and emotions that are linked to one's own experience. Similarly, Pollach (2006: 7) discovered that writers of online reviews repeatedly make use of the personal pronoun *I* for talking about themselves.

Surprisingly, the second person pronoun *you* cannot be found among the words with the highest rate of keyness, neither can the corresponding possessive pronoun *your*. These findings do not conform to what Pollach (2006) as well as Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018) found out. Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018: 282) claim that *you* and *your* are commonly used for addressing the intended readers directly and attaining their emotional involvement, but also for universalizing experience. Pollach (2006: 7) already concluded previously that the second person singular pronoun *you* is often part of reviews for addressing the audience directly or generically, even though not comparable to the relatively high number of first-person singular pronouns used.

What stands out most when looking at table 1 is that there is a great number of words related to accommodation or vacation. A considerable number of nouns resident in the tourist and hospitality industry can be found. Even the word *hotel* itself ranks among the words with highest keyness. Other than that, the corpus consists of ESP vocabulary located in the hospitality sector including nouns such as *towels*, *beach*, *housekeeping*, *service*, *guest*, *location*, *property* or *oceanfront*. Apart from these, a lot

of hotel facilities such as *room, bathroom, balcony, pool, shower, toilet, tub, elevators, hallway, ac* [air conditioner], *sheets* or *lobby* are among the most frequent words in the collected *Tripadvisor* reviews. One could infer that these nouns were the causes or agents of, or at least have to do with the complaint.

Interestingly, table 1 also illustrates that there is a high presence of negations in the corpus under investigation. The function word *not* is one of the top keywords. There are two more parts of a word that are high in keyness and that also indicate negation. These are *t* and *didn*. While there are 146 instances of a *t* in all 100 texts, *didn* occurs 42 times. The frequent use of negations in *Tripadvisor* online complaint messages implies that several things at the rated hotels did not turn out or were not as the vacationers might have expected them to be. Although dissimilar in focus, Pollach (2006) also examined negation to be a prevailing feature of reviews. However, she found out that product reviews rather tend to downplay negative information and therefore did not come to comparable results (2006: 7). Moreover, the presence of *t* and *didn* does not only indicate the multitude of negations that must have been used by the vacationers but also implies the informality of the genre as these signify contractions. Pollach (2006: 7-8) likewise noticed the consistent use of abbreviations and contractions in reviews.

Among the top 20 keywords are also the past forms of to be - *was* and *were*. This is quite unsurprising as people typically write reviews when having returned from a holiday and hence talk about their vacation in the past tense. In online reviews, travelers tell their own stories and evaluate their contentment with a certain property or service on holiday.

Another salient keyword that is particularly unique to the corpus under investigation is the word *very*. As people describe unsatisfactory vacation experiences in these *Tripadvisor* reviews, it is not surprising that they make frequent use of adverbs for emphasizing what went wrong or what was not as they expected it to be. That is why the word *extremely* also ranks among the top 90 keywords, as can be seen in table 1. The prevalence of the word *very* in reviews has already been determined by Pollach (2006). *Very* was among the words most represented in the corpus of product reviews under investigation and occurred far more frequently than in the reference

corpus (2006: 7). Pollach (2006: 7) regarded it as an *overstatement*. Cenni and Goethals (2017) also suggested evidence that words like *very* and *extremely* are recurrent in online reviews. They referred to these as hedging phenomena in the form of *adverbial high-degree markers*. (2017: 26)

Furthermore, a number of descriptive adjectives rank among the top keywords. These include *dirty, clean, nice, disappointed, filthy, rude, friendly, disgusting, ok, horrible* and *disappointing*. The majority of these adjectives (*dirty, disappointed, filthy, rude, disgusting, horrible, disappointing*) are somehow negative and are certainly used by the travelers to describe unpleasant hotel experiences. Interestingly, not all of them are negatively connotated. Some of the words are adjectives in a positive sense (*nice, clean* and *friendly*). However, it could be that these positively connotated adjectives are part of a negation and hence, are also not used in a praising way. The keyword analysis cannot tell with which words these adjectives go with, but the concordance analysis might be able to do so. Be that as it may, descriptive adjectives take a major role in online reviews. In the study conducted by Kilic Gönen (2019), descriptive adjectives were also found to be among the most frequent words. *Bad, terrible, detestable* and *vile* were the ones that were omnipresent. All these adjectives were used as a device for complaining about the hotels' negative aspects. (2019: 32)

Table 2 now depicts the top 20 negative keywords. It thus shows the words that occur specifically infrequently in this study's corpus when compared to the reference corpus.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	256	490.97	of
2	7	242.76	his
3	32	235.75	he
4	53	64.77	s
5	41	63	by
6	9	61.1	him
7	3	57.87	its
8	321	48.04	in
9	78	47.63	as
10	25	32.33	her
11	4	32.16	such
12	5	30.68	man
13	6	28.58	may
14	16	28.41	more
15	10	25.27	new
16	24	24.77	their
17	10	23.05	these
18	7	22.85	now
19	3	21.28	state
20	21	20.27	who

Table 2. Top 20 negative keywords sorted by keyness

As table 2 illustrates, mostly function words are among the negative keywords. There are only two content words (*man*, *state*) that occur particularly infrequently in the corpus under investigation when compared to the reference corpus. A significant observation to be drawn is that *who* is among the top 20 negative keywords. This indicates a relatively low number of relative clauses in the corpus under investigation. It hence seems as if participants are specified quite clearly. Apart from that, a lot of third person pronouns, both personal and possessive as well as object pronouns (*his*, *he*, *him*, *its*, *her*, *their*), rank among the top negative keywords. On the one hand and when compared to the findings from the top positive keywords, this seems to be legitimate as the writers talk about their (and their family's) personal experiences. On the other hand, one could argue that the infrequency of third person pronouns is untypical as travelers could complain about staff members and their services by addressing them via a third person pronoun. This, however, scarcely seems to be applicable to this study's corpus.

6.1.2 Concordances

As a next step, *AntConc*'s concordance tool was applied to the target corpus. Based on the results of the keyword list, concordances of the most outstanding positive keywords that have already been discussed in the previous section were identified. First of all, the personal pronouns *I* and *we* and their textual environments were examined. In total, the first-person singular pronoun is employed 356 times. By contrast, the first-person plural pronoun occurs 395 times. Out of these, a few representative passages were chosen. The following samples provide insight into where and how the pronoun *I* and *we* are commonly used in the representative reviews.

- (1) To begin with **we** arrived Friday the 26th of July. We were given
- (2) Breakers palmetto When **we** checked in at 3:30 our room was not ready.
- (3) for someone shining flashlights and making noise. **We** got maybe 2hrs sleep. The next day I went
- (4) the ice maker on several floors did not work. **We** had to go all the way to the first
- (5) so beyond disappointed with this property. When **I** arrived, the person checking us in was friendly
- (6) desk. They didn't seem to be surprised. **I** checked in on Monday july [sic] 15th and checked out
- (7) restaurant was overpriced and mediocre at best. **I** had a chicken caesar salad and the chicken
- (8) been experiencing here is less than good. **I** ordered a Long Island iced tea from the bar

As can be seen in the examples above, *we* and *I* are repeatedly used for narrating background information or describing experiences in greater detail. Especially information upon arrival time and check-in is commonly reported via the use of first-person pronouns.

Furthermore, *I* and *we* are often employed for predicting future actions or suggesting as can be seen in the following samples:

- (9) media sites. I definitely DO NOT RECOMMEND. **We** will not be returning.
- (10) only a short last outing for the summer. **We** will not be going back.

- (11) For the simple fact of how we were treated, **we** will NOT be returning to this hotel or
- (12) complaints. This was our first stay there and **we** would not stay there again. The most annoying
- (13) be back to finish but that never happened. **I** will not be staying here ever again. Worst
- (14) have stayed at several resorts on this beach and **I** will not come back to this one.
- (15) beach front room. But hey, the elevator was fast! **I** will not ever return.
- (16) in staff Barry was very helpful. Not sure if **I** would want to return o this property until major

In extracts (9) - (16) it comes apparent that the first-person pronouns are often followed by *will (not)* or *would (not)*. The reviewers employ *I* and *we* in combination with these modal verbs in order to talk about what the future will, or more precisely what it will not hold. They most often express that they will avoid spending their next holiday in the property reviewed. This seems to be an indirect warning for others to do so as well.

Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018: 282) investigated that the personal pronoun *I* is often accompanied by evaluation verbs such as *consider*, *find* or *propose*. Concordances including these verbs cannot be found in the corpus gathered for this study. Instead, some instances of other evaluation predicates following the first-person pronoun can be found (samples 17 - 20).

- (17) if we were there during palmetto bug season, **I believe** it's just a nice way of saying that
- (18) the tables in that section don't have umbrellas! **I guess** smokers are expected to hide under the rock
- (19) are so many places to stay in PCB and **I think** a motel would've been nicer than
- (20) talking about, just said we were wrong! **I think** Angela should be the manager-hint hint. She

When assessing hotel experience, from time to time, travelers reporting in this project's corpus employ evaluation verbs such as *think*, *guess* and *believe*.

Compared to the ones found earlier by Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018), these evaluation verbs are less formal.

Even though the second person pronoun *you* is not among the most frequent keywords, its concordances were investigated as earlier studies proved its importance in reviews (Pollach 2006, Compagnone & Fiorentino 2018). Examples (21) - (29) reveal in which contexts *you* is most commonly used:

- (21) It was green looking and cloudy to where **you** could barely see the bottom and what you could
- (22) daily. We arrived in a carpeted room that **you** could feel the sand in the carpet. Room resembled
- (23) in all the corners of the rooms so **you** could tell they just didn't clean the floor after
- (24) the wrong way. The windows were so bad **you** couldn't see out of them. My daughter was given
- (25) the ocean and beach, and it slowly rotates as **you** dine. This I recommend, the rooftop restaurant is
- (26) the cost, it is not a good value. If **you** are looking for a hotel experience, go elsewhere.
- (27) If **you** are wanting a nice family vacation **you** may want to consider other offerings in the area
- (28) area and only three elevators. Be careful when **you** book a room and plan on using the
- (29) but our hard earned [sic] money will be spent elsewhere. **You** should do the same.

First of all, *you* is repeatedly used for generalizing experience (see samples (21) – (25)). This confirms Compagnone and Fiorentino's (2018) findings. The two researchers already said that via the use of *you* personal stories are universalized (2018: 282). As can be seen in extracts (26) – (29), the second person pronoun is further frequently used to warn others or give them advice. Vasquez (2011) made similar observations. According to this American applied linguist (Vasquez 2011: 1713), the second person pronoun “generally occurred in the context of giving some type of advice, directive or warning”. So does the imperative (2011: 1713).

That is why *stay* is another word worthy of analysis. This word that can either be used as a verb and in the form of an imperative or as a noun is among the top 5 words with highest keyness and is used 86 times in the corpus under investigation. It is thus among the most frequent words in the representative texts. Samples (30) – (35) show how travelers employ *stay* in their negative reviews.

(30) satisfactory and efficient!. In summary, our **stay** at the Dunes this year was less than adequate.

(31) We had a couple of issues during our **stay** but the biggest concern was the lack of

(32) the way I did. I did not enjoy my **stay** here nor will I stay here again. Overpriced

(33) visited last week and for the most part our **stay** was average. We arrived early to get a parking

(34) Worst **stay** ever! We stayed at this hotel for one week,

(35) Disappointing **stay** Our family had two rooms and stayed 3 nights

In examples (30) – (35), travelers report about their holiday by employing *stay* as a noun. *Stay* is preceded by the possessive pronouns *my* or *our* in two thirds of the samples. Most extracts have to do with expectations not being met during the complainers' sojourn. The word is first and foremost employed when evaluating holiday experiences. In extracts (30) and (31), *stay* is combined with superlative lexical expressions which according to Cenni and Goethals (2017: 26) are typically used in *Tripadvisor* reviews.

Extracts (36) – (41) look at how *stay* is commonly used elsewhere as a verb.

(36) for the inconvenience however we will never **stay** at this hotel again.

(37) you do not get good service here. I will **stay** elsewhere next time

(38) the hotel was in poor condition. Will never **stay** here again

(39) The rooms were clean, but overall I would not **stay** here again. The furniture [sic]was run down, and

(40) was absolutely terrible! I will never **stay** here again. The pool area was also extremely dirty

(41) to this hotel or recommending anyone else to **stay** here.

Again, *stay* is used for evaluation - only as a verb now. Interestingly, most samples are formulated in a way that expresses the vacationers' firm belief or prediction not to

ever return to the reviewed property. Negative forms of the modals *will* and *would* were used for that. A lot more instances for that could be found in the texts. The last sample (41) employs *stay* in order to formulate a piece of advice.

The majority of instances of this word found in the corpus utilize *stay* as an imperative. Extracts (42) – (47) provide evidence for that:

- (42) So if you are considering staying here, trust me, **stay** anywhere else, a motel would probably have better
- (43) some time. My advise [sic], spend a little more and **stay** at a real hotel.
- (44) go back to St. Pete or Clearwater, most likely **stay** at Don Cesar Which we have stayed at in
- (45) Roaches roaches and filth! NEVER I repeat NEVER **stay** here! I wish I had read reviews or been
- (46) **Stay** away!!! Family vacation from hell. Save your
- (47) NOT good -- **stay** somewhere else if possible! First of all, I [sic] love

By the use of *stay* in the form of an imperative, these complaint messages combine features of both recommendations that take a negative form and warnings to make fellow travelers aware of properties that should be avoided at all costs. Some of the instances above even give advice for where else to stay in order to have a more pleasant sojourn. Vasquez (2011) was the first to gain this insight. She found out that “most advice [...] took the form of an imperative” (2011: 1712).

After having investigated the concordances of *not* and *t* that are both among the most frequent keywords, a large number of further references to avoid a certain property taking the form of imperatives could be obtained. The following samples demonstrate further occasions on which imperatives are used in the target genre:

- (48) all paper in the elevator is torn and hanging off. **Don't** unpack until you look at the room and even
- (49) arrive or leave your stay. It's not worth it, **don't** waste your money on this crap. The only pro:
- (50) promptly removed them. My advice to everyone, **don't** waste your money at this low end [sic] motel. Drive
- (51) was a resort and what we were expecting here. **Don't** waste your time and end up with an awful

- (52) was horrible and could care less about his job. **Do not** book this hotel!!!!
Not worth \$0.01.
- (53) we were leaving the next day and gave up. **Do not** expect much from
this place. I would highly
- (54) **DO NOT STAY AT BREAKERS** This place is terrible and
- (55) **DO NOT STAY HERE!** We stayed here for 5 nights

Again, these imperatives are employed to advise strongly against a certain property. Besides using the second person pronoun, imperatives are a popular form of addressing fellow vacationers and warning against a hotel (Vasquez 2011: 1713).

As various descriptive adjectives rank among the top keywords, concordances of a few of these are to be investigated now. This section, however, is to focus on the positive adjectives only as it is quite striking that positive adjectives (*clean, nice, friendly*) are highly recurrent in negative reviews. The following examples show how these descriptive adjectives are commonly used in the corpus under investigation:

- (56) must have been short on employees? The rooms were **clean**, but
overall I would not stay here again.
- (57) We get to our room and the bedding was **clean** and that was it.
Bathroom was disgusting there we
- (58) resort by any means, but it was not kept **clean** at all. Wallpaper in the
elevator is torn and
- (59) up. Beside our door the moulding was hanging off. **Clean** towels are
almost nonexistent. We finally had to
- (60) servers at the restaurants. Yes, the pools look **nice** and the view is
beautiful but I would never
- (61) or on the elevators, just overall not a very **nice** place. Spend your
money elsewhere! I gave one
- (62) thankfully has none of the above. Sorry Serata, **nice** staff but we won't
be coming back.
- (63) Beautiful Views, **Nice** Staff, but Beware of Bugs I stayed at the
- (64) There were only 3 Hotel staff that were **nice** and **friendly**. They need to
be recognized and they
- (65) is a balcony overlooking the ocean. The staff is **friendly** and
responsive. Unfortunately, all of these

(66) touch of love! The staff used to be so **friendly** but they were quiet and standoffish this time.

(67) tables with no linen. The staff is not **friendly** or helpful. The pool was okay, the views are

(68) this is not a well run [sic] hotel. Not very **friendly** or organized. I will not be staying there again.

The above samples reveal that adjectives are commonly used to report dissatisfaction as some sort of negation precedes (*not*) or follows (*nonexistent*) a lot of the positive adjectives. Sample (64) stresses that there were *only* a few staff members that were considered likable. According to Vasquez (2011: 1714), it is not unlikely that negative reviews often contain positive statements that are “framed as ‘the one’ or ‘the only’ good thing”. However, in Vasquez’s (2011) study it was only few online complaints that included any positive reference. The same is true for this project’s corpus. The negative statements clearly prevail. It could however be the case that a statement including a positive adjective is juxtaposed by a negative comment. In this corpus, juxtapositions were achieved through the use of *but*, *unfortunately* or the phrase *that was it*. Cenni and Goethals (2017: 26) consider such juxtapositions as down-scaling strategies typically used in *Tripadvisor* reviews.

Lastly, it is worth to analyze the textual environment of the word *recommend* which also ranks among the top keywords in the corpus under investigations. Extracts (69) – (73) exhibit in which context it is used:

(69) BREAKERS This place is terrible and I would NEVER **recommend** it to anyone traveling to Myrtle Beach. To start,

(70) bed linens were up to standards. We would not **recommend** that people stay there.

(71) open when there was sufficient [sic] staff. I would not **recommend** this dump to my worst enemy. I don't usually

(72) control issue is the deal breaker. I do not **recommend** this hotel.

(73) not expect much from this place. I would highly **recommend** you stay elsewhere. Although the kids will find

As can be seen from the samples above the word *recommend* is often used to establish the converse impact of wanting to visit a certain hotel. This is what Vasquez

(2011) already found out earlier. According to her (2011: 1712), recommendations often take a negative form.

To summarize, this subsection demonstrates that negative *Tripadvisor* reviews comprise several characteristic lexico-grammatical features. The corpus-based analysis of keywords and concordances revealed the high prevalence of the personal pronouns *I* and *we* for the purpose of narrating personal experiences and forecasting future actions. The personal pronoun *I* was further found to be commonly used with evaluation words such as *believe*, *guess* and *think*. Contrary to earlier findings, the personal pronoun *you* is employed less often. If used, vacationers try to universalize experience. Apart from that, ESP vocabulary indicative of the tourist and hospitality sector such as *guest*, *stay*, *pool* or *lobby* could be identified as typical of complaint messages posted on *Tripadvisor*. Other salient features repeatedly used in the corpus under investigation are imperatives and negations. Lastly, the use of descriptive adjectives such as *nice*, *clean* or *friendly* was found to be characteristic of the genre of negative *Tripadvisor* reviews.

6.2 Move analysis

With regard to the second research question (*What is the move structure of negative online reviews posted on Tripadvisor?*) this section is to deal with the discourse structure of the genre under investigation. An ESP move analysis served to determine the move structure of negative *Tripadvisor* reviews. 40 out of the 100 texts gathered were analyzed. After having examined all representative reviews, a move structure consisting of ten key elements could be identified. Each move fulfills a different purpose. The analysis further found that several steps for performing a certain function are possible within a move. The development of this project's move structure was informed by Sparks and Browning (2010), Skalicky (2013), Compagnone & Fiorentino (2018) and Breur (2019). Several moves and steps were taken over from earlier research (see section 4.6). The following table summarizes the move structure that was found to be typical of *Tripadvisor* reviews.

Moves and steps		Frequency	Percentage
M1	Header	40	100.0%
	S1: Profile picture	40	100.0%
	S2: (Nick)name	40	100.0%
	S3: Publication date	40	100.0%
	S4: Place of residence	21	52.5%
M2	Image of evidence	8	20%
M3	General rating	40	100.0%
M4	Title	40	100.0%
M5	Orientation	24	60.0%
M6	Complaint	40	100.0%
	S1: Addressing an issue	40	100.0%
	S2: Elaborating an issue	37	92.5%
	S3: Providing background information	25	62.5%
	S4: Expressing presumptions	8	20%
	S5: Stating resolution	27	67.5%
M7	Addressing some sort of positive aspect(s)	21	52.5%
M8	Coda	39	97.5%
	S1: Evaluation	33	82.5%
	S2: Warning / Advice	20	50.0%
	S3: Prediction	22	55.0%
	S4: Suggestion	14	35.0%
	S5: Comparison	9	22.5%
	S6: Sign-off	2	5.0%
M9	Personal information	3	7.5%
M10	Footer	40	100.0%
	S1: Date of stay	40	100.0%
	S2: Trip type	39	97.5%
	S3: Room tip	3	7.5%
	S4: Specific rating	20	50.0%

Table 3. Moves (M) and steps (S) in *Tripadvisor* reviews

As table 3 implies, a great number of strategies can be applied when formulating a complaint message in the form of a negative *Tripadvisor* review. At the outset, all 40 reviews feature a move referred to as *Header*. This structural element hence can be defined as being obligatory in *Tripadvisor* complaint messages. The *Header* is made up of four steps whereof three seem to be required for posting a review. The fourth one can but does not necessarily need to be included – it is optional. Step 1 which is called *Profile Picture* refers to the reviewers' image chosen for representing him- or herself as a person. Sometimes this image is a portray of the vacationer, but it can also depict any other subject chosen by the vacationer such as scenery. As a next step, all analyzed reviews host a *Nick(name)*. This name refers to the reviews' authors. Some authors choose to stay anonymous by employing a nickname

whereas others are not hesitant about sharing their complaints whilst indicating their real first and surname. The reason why some decide to remain nameless may have various reasons. It could be that some people simply do not want to share personal content on the internet that can be read by anyone in the world. Another motive might be that some tourists are afraid of consequences when posting offensive or insulting messages via their real name. Another step included in the *Header* is the *Publication date* (S3). Reviews feature the month and year that a complaint was published on *Tripadvisor*. The one step that is optional and only found in 21 out of the 40 reviews is the *Place of Residence* (S4) of the person having reviewed a property. About half of the reviewers were happy to share their state and hometown. Others were not willing to reveal where they are from. Again, this might have had similar reasons as choosing a nickname has had. Figure 4 reveals a paragon of how M1 is performed in the reviews including all four steps (S1-S4).

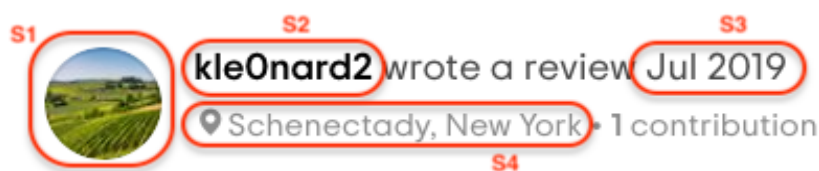


Figure 4. M1 – Header (text 4)

As can be seen in figure 4, the review's writer stays anonymous for the most part. He/she does not provide his/her real name, nor does he/she have a portray of himself/herself set as profile picture. The only thing he/she discloses is his/her *Place of Residence*. In comparison, the author of the review that can be seen in figure 5 reveals a lot more personal information.

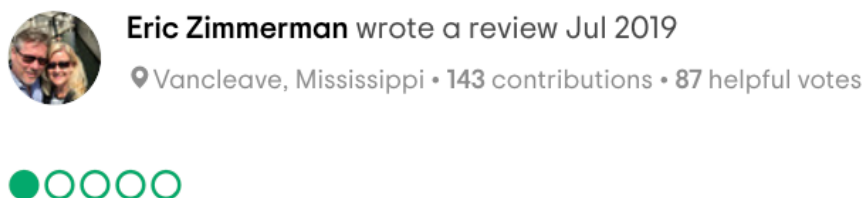


Figure 5. M1 – Header (text 26)

The number of contributions and helpful votes (see figure 5) were excluded from the move structure as these elements are automatically provided by *Tripadvisor* itself and do not account for information shared directly by the reviewers.

As a next structural element, an *Image of Evidence* (M2) can appear in *Tripadvisor* reviews. This move can either consist of one or more pictures. Some of the vacationers seem to have uploaded images to grab their readers' attention and shock them, or for exemplifying why people should not visit a certain place. Such pictures are therefore commonly used for spreading further displeasure. They can also serve as proof of the things complained about as travelers frequently posted pictures of damaged or stained facilities. However, only eight out of the 40 reviews, accounting for a percentage of 20, make use of images. Hence, it is an optional move. Figure 6 exemplifies how M2 is employed by travelers.



Figure 6. M2 – *Image of evidence* (text 65)

Next, *Tripadvisor* reviews always feature a *General rating* (M3) of the hotel experience. On a five-point rating scale ranging from terrible to excellent, vacationers can assess their overall contentment with a certain property. Move 3 is an obligatory one as all of the 40 representative texts employ a *General rating*. As this project investigates negative reviews only, all representative texts have ratings with one or two out of five points only. Figure 7 depicts what such a rating scale looks like.



Figure 7. M3 – *General rating* (text 65)

After the *General rating* comes the *Title* (move 4, figure 8). M4 is obligatory, all 40 representative texts include a headline. The title usually summarizes the hotel experience in one phrase or sentence, hints at the unacceptability of the sojourn or is

phrased in such a way that tries to prevent others from choosing a certain property. Just as in Skalicky's (2013: 87) *Amazon* product reviews, the reviews' titles are in bold and very prominent as of their bigger font size.

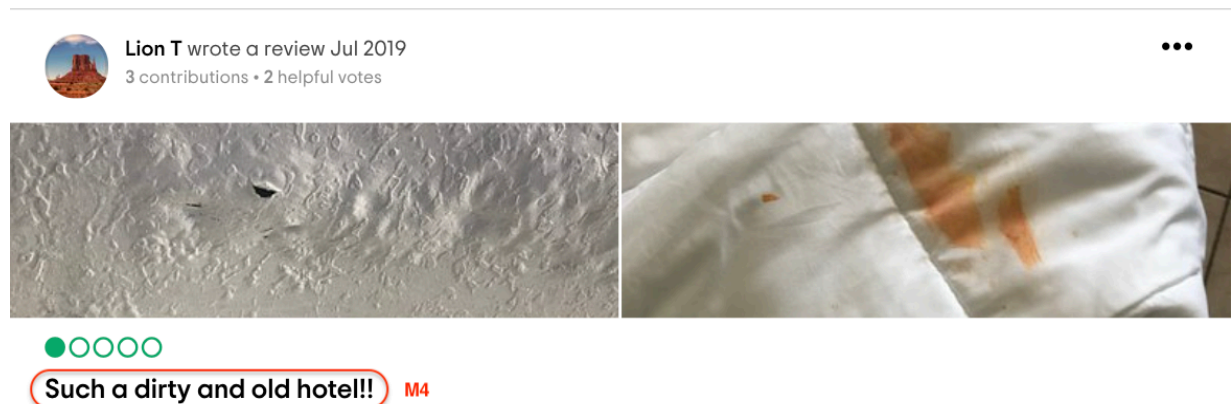


Figure 8. M4 – Title (text 65)

The next move (M5) is already part of the review's main text. M5 is entitled *Orientation*. This move has been adopted from Sparks and Browning's (2010) narrative analysis of *Tripadvisor* complaints' structure. They refer to *Orientation* as of being "information about the setting; time, place, situation and participants" of a review (2010: 809). So does this study. 60% of the analyzed reviews include the *Orientation* move. Even though it follows the title in the proposed framework (table 3), M5 does not necessarily need to be at the beginning of the main text. Some reviews also include information about setting, time, place and fellow travelers in the midst or at the very end. Examples (74) – (77) depict how and when M5 is employed:

(74) I stayed with my husband for 3 nights but I would have left earlier if we hadn't paid so much per night.

(75) I just stayed here for second time. My first experience was wonderful therefore I came back. I absolutely love this hotel, especially, the teatime and English decor. I was very disappointed by the customer service the second time around, when I stayed there from Aug 3rd to 5th.

(76) We stayed here for 5 nights and 6 days the week after the Fourth of July. We were in the Palmetto Tower room 1003, our room was terribly dirty!

(77) NEVER I repeat NEVER stay here! I wish I had read reviews or been warned before I booked this roach, filth, and bed bug infested hotel! Our softball team booked this hotel for nationals week...

What follows is the *complaint* (M6). It is at the heart of a negative online review and is unsurprisingly an obligatory move with 100% of occurrence. M6 is composed of five steps. Four of them (S1, S2, S3, S5) are obligatory and occur with a percentage of above 60. S6 is a step to be included optionally. S1 is entitled *Addressing the issue*. Therein the complainer broaches the subject matter that is being complained about without providing any details. It may be that several issues are addressed at a time in just one review. S2, *Elaborating the issue*, then includes all the details of the complainable that is being addressed in S1. The reviewer elaborates on what went wrong or what was not the way he or she expected it to be. S2 regularly follows S1 as most vacationers provide details about a certain issue. There are only a few samples wherein no further information in the form of an elaboration is included. Out of 40 texts, 37 include S2. The following samples (78) – (84) feature elements of S1 and/or S2. S1 is in italics, while S2 is in bold.

- (78) *AC not working in the bathroom, hallway or game room. Safe not working in the room.*
- (79) *Staff was rude and unaccommodating. Parking sucked. Our room was dirty when we got there and smelled like sewage. Toilet leaked and there was severe water damage in the bathroom.*
- (80) *We had smokers next to us so had to close balcony door often.*
- (81) *They don't clean the rooms very well. **Urine on the bathroom floor, hair strands by the bed.***
- (82) *Limited parking. **Have to park across the street in a dark parking lot. Only about 1/3 of the rooms have parking close.***
- (83) *bad service **they never pick up the trash on the room.***
- (84) *Check-in was a nightmare. **Two people working the main desk answering phones along with trying to check in about 30 people in line. They had no idea what rooms were cleaned so had to keep contacting housekeeping to find out which ones were available. Took about an hour to check-in.***

62.5% of the reviews also included some sort of *Background information* (S3) when complaining about an improper service or facility. This is content which is not explicitly relevant for the complaint but nonetheless included in the text. Examples (85) – (88) suggest how S3 is employed:

- (85) Rooms are very dirty (**had 2** and both were in the very bad shape).
- (86) Stove and oven didn't work, **when we specifically paid for a working kitchen.**
- (87) For what we paid, it's a scam. **I have a video of the toilet sound but I can only post pictures.**
- (88) It's a shame that management has let it run into the ground. **For the past 8 years, it's the only hotel my family has stayed at in Virginia Beach.**

Another sub-step of M6 is *Expressing presumptions* (S4). This is a rather rare step as it only occurs in 8 out of the 40 representative reviews. By employing this step, the writer makes a supposition about why certain aspects of a hotel might be so terrible or unsatisfactory. The following examples feature S4:

- (89) Then found the same hair inside one of the "supposed" to [sic] clean towels. **Means they were not changed after the previous guest.**
- (90) **Someone must have been feeding the seagulls** because they were so loud and swarming right below our room the entire trip.
- (91) The box spring was so dusty and dirty, **I don't think it was cleaned ever.**

Lastly, 67.5% of the reviewers make use of S5 *Stating a resolution*. This is another element taken over from Sparks and Browning's (2010) proposed structure. According to them, a resolution refers to "how it ended; people left, got compensated, told others, posted the complaint" (2010: 809). Hence, numerous vacationers address the outcome of an act of complaint. Samples (92) – (96) provide evidence of how this is done:

- (92) Complained and got some apologies from the staff.
- (93) They send a maintenance man to my room to fix the AC.
- (94) Upon our request, we were comped an upgraded breakfast.
- (95) Will leave review on Google and other social media platforms.
- (96) We ended up finding a much nicer and cleaner hotel that night and was [sic] refunded the entire amount back.

Move 7 moves away from the act of complaining, it is referred to as *Addressing some sort of positive aspect(s)* as people sometimes mention things they were satisfied with even when at the same time complaining about other aspects. Surprisingly, more than half of the vacationers bring up at least one thing they liked about the hotel often by juxtaposing a negative point via the use of *but* or *however*. It still remains an optional move. Move 7 is featured in the examples below:

- (97) **The view is incredible** but without good sleep it doesn't mean much.
- (98) **Our stay was pleasant...** however I would not recommend to anyone based on house keeping [sic].
- (99) **The rooms were clean**, but overall I would not stay here again.
- (100) **The evergreen water is amazing**, you just can't wake up to it.
- (101) **Balcony overlooking the ocean was wonderful** BUT the ac unit from the unit above you leaks on you as you sit there
- (102) **Location is fantastic**. That's where it stops.

Another obligatory move occurring with a percentage of 97.5 is the *Coda* (M8). Again, this expression has been taken over from Sparks and Browning (2010). Other than their definition of *Coda* referred to as an element that "returns perspective to present, back to the now; comments like, 'anyway I never go there again'" (2010: 806), this study's *Coda* encompasses more elements. It consists of six steps in total, whereof only one is obligatory (S1). All the others are optional (S2-S6). Step 1 which is entitled *Evaluation* occurs in 82.5% of the reviews. As in Sparks and Browning's (2010: 809) report, *Evaluation* refers to "word or messages that say this was frustrating, annoying, upsetting, or horrible; or amusing, hilarious, and wonderful". Travelers voice their opinion about several aspects of a stay. In the case of this study's reviews, evaluation first and foremost is in a negative sense as people were writing complaint messages. The reviewers, hence, assess how satisfied they were with their stay. Extracts (103) – (109) exemplify how S1 is employed:

- (103) Overall, it was a huge disappointment for the price
- (104) In summary, our stay at the Dunes this year was less than adequate.
- (105) We were very disappointed in the Manor Suites location and overall treatment. We felt as if we were being sent to a warehouse
- (106) I was completely dissatisfied [sic] in the service and mismanagement.
- (107) We stayed at this hotel for one week, and it was awful.

- (108) This is the worst hotel that I had ever stayed at
(109) So I am disappointed to say this hotel was appalling!

As a next step, half of the 40 reviews include some kind of *Warning* or *Advice* (S2). These structural elements are mostly used to beware other travelers from making the same mistake and staying at a certain property which is rated as bad or even terrible. The following samples feature the use of S2:

- (110) based on our treatment, no recommendations to colleagues, our travel agent/her associates and future guests will be made
(111) don't expect towels. Bring your own toilet paper.
(112) Spend your money elsewhere!
(113) The parking garage is tight, bring your good driving skills.
(114) Don't waste your time or money on this!
(115) We would not recommend that people stay there.
(116) never stay there if you value cleanliness

Apart from that, vacationers also frequently make use of *Prediction* (S3). This step refers to actions to be or not to be taken in the future based on one's experience with a certain property. This is how S3 is employed in the *Tripadvisor* complaint messages:

- (117) Will not stay there next year or ever again!!
(118) I won't be returning.
(119) I will find other accommodations on our next vacation.
(120) I will be going back to my cheaper but far nicer hotel down the road.
(121) For the simple fact of how we were treated, we will NOT be returning to this hotel or recommending anyone else to stay here.

Step 4 which is referred to as *Suggestion* occurs with a smaller percentage of just 35. 14 out of 40 travelers employ that element in their reviews. Unlike S2, this move does not address fellow travelers but instead is directed towards the hotel (staff or management) in order to propose improvements to be made in the future. Examples (122) – (126) feature *Suggestions* made in the representative texts:

- (122) They should put a terrace there on top of roof of stores below instead a place for birds to sit and scream every 6am.

- (123) I hope some improvements can be made before it has to be shut down.
- (124) I think Angela should be the manager-hint hint.
- (125) The balcony overlooking the beach needs a good power washing.
- (126) the owners and management to this hotel could make better things for their guests!

Next, 22.5% of the reviews include some sort of *Comparison* (S5). Such a move has already been proposed by Skalicky (2013) with product reviews. He refers to this structural element as that of an “author [comparing a] product with other products” (2013: 87). This is similar within this study. First of all, S5 features all elements that include a *Comparison* of one hotel with another, usually a better one. Then, *Comparison* to earlier stays at the same property can be drawn via the use of S5. Lastly, S5 also employs sayings that contrast the promises made on the hotels’ websites and the reality. Examples (127) – (130) show how S5 is used in the reviews:

- (127) We were very disappointed in what appeared to be a lack of qualify staffing and service which in the past we enjoyed greatly.
- (128) It was not as attractive and to be honest, as clean and inviting as your website portrayed.
- (129) There are so many places to stay in PCB and I think a motel 6 would’ve been nicer than legacy by the sea.
- (130) While the resort said gulf front, the rooms are in the front facing the street and the living area faces the shore.

Finally, there are two reviews that end with a *Sign-Off* (S6). This means that the travelers end their reviews via a greeting through giving their names. This is done in the following complaint messages:

- (131) The Snedaker Family.
- (132) Jody Stopiak

Move 8 then is referred to as *Personal information*. This move is not necessarily situated at this stage. It may occur earlier in the text. It is the most uncommon move occurring with a percentage of 7.5 only. It provides personal details about a review’s author. Samples (133), (134) and (135) feature how this move is employed:

- (133) I am a Hilton Diamond member, and have stayed in hotels over 60 nights so far this year.
- (134) As a blogger and influencer in the community
- (135) We're pretty faithful Best Western guests

Lastly, all 40 reviews feature a *Footer* (move 10). It therefore obviously is an obligatory move and might have to do with *Tripadvisor* settings asking for specific information to be included. The *Footer* is composed of four steps (see figure 9). Two of these (S1 and S2) are obligatory as they occur with a percentage above 60. S3 and S4 are optional elements. Step 1 refers to the *Date of stay*. It specifies when a review's author has visited the hotel that is being rated. S1 does not provide a specific date but instead exhibits the month and year in which the reviewer stayed at the hotel. Step 2, the *Trip type*, refers to the kind of vacation a traveler was on. This has to do with who someone went with. As can be seen in figure 10, one option of *Trip type* would be 'Traveled as a couple'. Other reviews that were analyzed upon move structure display the vacation types 'Traveled with family' and 'Traveled with friends'. Step 3, the *Room tip*, is an extremely rare and optional move. It is applicable in only 7.5% of the representative texts. This move provides the reader with some kind of advice. It is not included in the main text but sticks out at the bottom of the review. Reviewers might include it to let the reader get a quick idea of the hotel without having to read the main text. Finally, reviewers can rate particular aspects of their hotel. Half of the complaint messages include step 4 which is referred to as *Specific rating*. In figure 9, three features are being rated. These include *cleanliness*, *sleep quality* and *service*. However, reviewers can rate up to six subcategories (see figure 10). Apart from the three mentioned above, *value*, *location* and *rooms* can be rated too. Again, this can be done via a five-point rating scale. Unlike the *General rating*, higher ratings are possible here with certain categories as some travelers might have find at least some of the hotels' offerings to have been sufficient even when regarding the hotel experience as overall terrible or poor.



Eric Zimmerman wrote a review Jul 2019
 Vancleave, Mississippi • 143 contributions • 87 helpful votes



Seems like they gave up.

“What a waste of a great location. The best part was the elevator was really fast and smooth. Seriously, that was the best part. The view from the balcony was pretty amazing also, but that was not because of the hotel. They don't clean the rooms very well. Urine on the bathroom floor, hair strands by the bed. It's just run down. The "free breakfast" was the most minimal of any hotel I every stayed. For \$254, I wanted more than just a beach front room. But hey, the elevator was fast! I will not ever return.”

[Read less](#) ▲

Date of stay: June 2019 S1

Trip type: Traveled as a couple S2

Room Tip: I would choose a room at a different hotel. S3

[See more room tips](#)

●○○○○ Cleanliness	●●○○○ Service	S4
●●○○○ Sleep Quality		

This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC.

3 Helpful votes

Helpful Share

Figure 9. M8 – Footer (text 26)

Date of stay: July 2019

Trip type: Traveled with family

●○○○○ Value	●○○○○ Rooms	S4
●●●●● Location	●○○○○ Cleanliness	
●○○○○ Service	●○○○○ Sleep Quality	

Review collected in partnership with this hotel ⓘ

This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC.

Helpful Share

Figure 10. S4 – Specific rating (text 4)

All elements following step 4 (information on partnership, cross-reference to authorship, helpful vote, social share button) were excluded from the proposed move structure as this is content developed by *Tripadvisor* that the reviewers did not come up with themselves. Apart from that, it has to be said that the proposed move structure is not fixed. Moves and steps may not appear in the suggested order and their place in a text may vary.

In sum, the findings of this section reveal that negative *Tripadvisor* reviews manifest a generic discourse structure. Despite possible variations in sequence, *Tripadvisor*

complaint messages typically consist of ten moves (*Header, Image of evidence, General rating, Title, Orientation, Complaint, Addressing some sort of positive aspect(s), Coda, Personal information, Footer*) whereof seven are obligatory. Four of these (*Header, Complaint, Coda, Footer*) divide into multiple steps.

6.3 Levels of directness of the complaints

The investigation of the last research question (*What degrees of directness are observable in online messages of complaint posted on Tripadvisor?*) will result in a detailed description of how explicit vacationers blame a hotel and its staff when addressing their expectations that were not being met in their complaint messages. Again, the afore-mentioned 40 representative samples were chosen for analyzing online reviews' differing degrees of directness. Table 4 provides an overview of how often reviewers make use of Trosborg's (1995) directness levels.

Levels of directness		Frequency	Percentage
Cat. I	No explicit reproach	5	12.5%
Str. 1	Hints	5	12.5%
Cat. II	Expression of disapproval	40	100.0%
Str. 2	Annoyance	40	100.0%
Str. 3	Ill consequences	27	67.5%
Cat. III	Accusation	18	45.0%
Str. 4	Indirect accusation	0	0.0%
Str. 5	Direct accusation	18	45.0%
Cat. IV	Blame	12	30.0%
Str. 6	Modified blame	12	30.0%
Str. 7	Explicit blame (behavior)	9	22.5%
Str. 8	Explicit blame (person)	4	10.0%

Table 4. Levels of directness in *Tripadvisor* reviews

Interestingly, most reviewers employ more than one of these strategies. There are only few reviews that are consistently written in one tone of directness. The majority of reviewers make use of at least two different directness levels.

The category which is used the least is Cat. I (*no explicit reproach*). Only 12.5% of the representative texts, accounting for a number of 5 reviews, employ some sort of *hint* (Str. 1) "to avoid conflict" (Trosborg 1995: 316). Even though the complainers are aware of what went wrong, they do not explicitly state the complainable when formulating a complaint (1995: 316). Examples (136) – (140) feature the strategy of *hints*:

(136) when we made reservations we were guaranteed to get rooms next to our family members we travelled there with.

(137) Free breakfast, good luck, 50+ people wrapped around the check in waiting to get a plate

(138) that night the bar downstairs had live music outside. They started around 7pm. With my 2 little boys we were read [sic] for bed at 930, the music was still playing.

(139) Perhaps we are used to getting more for our money

(140) Our softball team booked this hotel for nationals [sic] week... almost all of us (who got lucky) checked out.

All examples hint at what might have been troublesome, but the writers do not “directly say that something is bad” (Trosborg 1995: 316). They thus make use of a rather “weak complaint strategy” (1995: 316). *Hints* may however be used to induce the reader to “more forceful strategies” (1995: 316). Trosborg’s (1995) conception can be confirmed within this study. With every complaint message that employs a *hint*, more vigorous complaint strategies follow. Therefore, hints hardly ever occur on their own. This study’s reviewers hence seem to rather address a problem explicitly instead of only implying it.

Among all categories, *expressions of disapproval* (Cat. II) outweigh. All 40 reviews include some sort of expression of disapproval. Each complaint message makes use of formulations that express *annoyance* (Str. 2). By that strategy, a reviewer talks about a specific state of affairs which he or she regards as unacceptable. And although it becomes evident that the reviewer indirectly reproaches the complainees to be responsible, he does not name the guilty party (Trosborg 1995: 316). A substantial amount of these expressions of *annoyance* are accompanied by also stating the *ill consequences* (Str. 3) of a negative state of affairs that is regarded as bad (1995: 316). Complainers thereby address the effects that the complainable caused. Extracts (141) – (147) show how *annoyance* and *ill consequences* are expressed in the representative texts. Expressions of *annoyance* are in italics; *ill consequences* can be found in bold:

(141) *Very dirty, ants in corridor near elevator. Pool filthy, refrigerator in room did not work properly* **our food spoiled**

(142) *Not enough hotel carts* **so had to carry all of our stuff.**

(143) *The building itself was run down, the hallway was incredibly hot and dirty.*

(144) *Smoking is prohibited but someone was smoking in the room below us and I couldn't enjoy the "view" on our balcony because of it. I'm pregnant and don't want to breathe in second hand [sic] smoke.*

(145) *The air-conditioning in my (room 1116) was very loud and it was making an extra noise. The noise was so loud that it prevented me from sleeping.*

(146) *The "free breakfast" was the most minimal of any hotel I ever stayed.*

(147) *Our room wasn't ready until about 5:40, which created a problem because we had an event we needed to get to by 5:00 PM but couldn't shower and change after a long travel day.*

As of not referring to the responsible party when expressing *disapproval*, IC statements clearly outweigh in the corpus under investigation. The hearers' face is not being threatened as these *expressions of disapproval* are directed towards people that have nothing to do with the complainable (Boxer 2010: 164-165).

Category III (*accusation*), by contrast, is employed less often. None of the reviewers make use of strategy 4 which is referred to as *indirect accusation*. This means that no establishes "the hearer as a potential agent of the complainable" via, for instance, asking a question (Trosborg 1995: 317). Writers only take advantage of *direct accusations*, 18 out of 40 do so. They thereby directly accuse the party addressed of being responsible for an offence (1995: 317). The following samples (148) – (153) demonstrate the use of strategy 4:

(148) We waited 30 minutes to give our order because the bartender kept disappearing to get orders.

(149) house keeping [sic] never cleaned our room. The garbage cans were overflowing [sic]. The carpets looked as though they were never vacuumed [sic].

(150) Every day I asked the cleaning person to be sure to NOT use any room deodorizer in our room and I feel sure she did not.

(151) She said she'd like to accommodate us with a dinner voucher & that she'd return with it within 5mins. She NEVER RETURNED.

(152) I text Kevin because he told me to text with any problems and I NEVER heard back from Kevin the remainder of the trip.

(153) I want to start off with that my housekeeping service had went [sic] through my luggage and used my cell phone associates without my knowledge.

The authors of the above extracts clearly perform a face-threatening act. Via making use of accusations that fall into the category of DCs, they threaten the addressees' positive face (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 66).

The last category (Cat. IV) which is at the same time the most forceful strategy is *blaming*. Via an act of *blame*, “the complainer formulates his/her moral condemnation of the accused” (Trosborg 1995: 318). In this study, Cat. IV is used by 30.0% of the chosen reviews only, meaning that a great number of vacationers rather remain objective instead of accusing or assaulting the ones responsible. This is in line with Vasquez's (2011) and Kilic Gönen's (2019) findings according to which the majority of reviews were formulated indirectly. Nonetheless, 12 reviewers employ some form of *blame*. This may be the case as they may simply be so angry that they do not flinch from attacking someone.

Blame can be achieved via three different levels (Str. 6-8). First, a complainer can express *modified blame* (Str. 6). Thereby, “modified disapproval of an action for which the accused is responsible” or “a preference for an alternative approach to be taken by the accused” is being voiced (Trosborg 1995: 318). In this study, this is done by 30% of the reviews. Examples (154) – (157) display how such modified blame is being expressed:

(154) They should put a terrace there on top of roof of stores below instead a place for birds to sit and scream every 6am.

(155) I wish they would fix the way [sic] treat their customers or they won't have any customers left!

(156) Apparently when they clean the room, they do not replace towels. For a beach resort this doesn't make sense.

(157) But seriously take care of business or give me my money back.

Other than that, some complainers make use of *explicit blame* (Str. 7) with regard to behavior. 22.5% of the reviewers indicate “that an action for which the accused is held responsible [...] is bad” (Trosborg 1995: 318). The following are extracts of how *explicit blame* towards behavior is being uttered:

(158) It's a shame that management has let it run into the ground.

(159) Just makes me angry that the manager herself (wish I could remember her name!) didn't come up to see what we were talking about, just said we were wrong!

(160) She tried to bully my young adult daughter and this is completely unacceptable.

(161) BUT IT GETS WORSE! Not only do they forget to clean the rooms but they left one of our doors open

(162) The customer service and cleanliness of the rooms was beyond horrible.

Last but not least, every fourth reviewer employs the strategy of *explicit blame* directed at one person or more. When using strategy 8, the tone is not a friendly one anymore, people are being assaulted because of the reviewers' anger. By explicitly blaming someone, the complainer accuses the complainees to be an irresponsible member of society (Trosborg 1995: 318). Most often the staff is condemned, sometimes the reviewers even mention specific names. This is done in the following instances:

(163) The front desk staff was overall rude, non-apologetic, and seemed not to be bothered.

(164) Staff was rude and unaccommodating.

(165) I got to the hotel and Erick was extremely rude to our family

(166) Rude staff, no greetings, thanks, or apologies for being rude.

All of the above statements including some form of blame (154) – (166) clearly represent face-threatening acts. Via expressing great disapproval or insulting someone, reviewers endanger the complainees' positive face (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 66). Again, DCs are being voiced (Boxer 2010: 164).

In a nutshell, the results of the preceding pragmatic analysis show that a range of different degrees of directness are used in negative *Tripadvisor* reviews out of which

expressions of disapproval clearly prevail. All reviewers employ some formulation of *annoyance* or talk about the *ill consequences* of the complainable while at the same time they do not directly address the responsible party meaning that positive face is not being violated. However, in the course of the reviews, a number of writers commonly employ more forceful strategies in the form of face-threatening acts such as *direct accusations* or *expressions of blame*. *Hints* are among the strategies that are used the least. The reviewers, hence, tend to address the complainable explicitly.

6.4 Implications on communicative purpose and discourse community

Based on all the findings conceived, it seems as if negative *Tripadvisor* reviews intend to fulfill two primary communicative purposes. First, they are a means of warning fellow travelers of improper hotel facilities or services. This purpose is achieved through the use of several rhetorical strategies including the use of imperatives, the use of the second person pronoun and the use of negative evaluative adjectives. Reviews even include characteristic moves that establish warnings. All these strategies serve to prevent others from going to a specific hotel. Reviews are therefore also seen as a form of altruism as “guests [are showing] concern about the welfare of others” (Sparks & Browning 2010: 807). Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018: 279) came to similar results and claimed that reviews primarily “intend to provide recommendations to other potential customers”. Second, negative *Tripadvisor* reviews certainly serve to utter one’s anger. Via the use of several complaint strategies such as expressions of disapproval or accusation, travelers can air their inner feelings. Sparks and Browning (2010: 807) drew similar conclusions and regarded negative reviews to be an “opportunity to vent”.

With regard to *Tripadvisor* reviews’ discourse community, two parties could be identified. On the one hand, reviewers themselves form the major party. Reviewers are travelers who recently returned from a vacation to a certain property that they rate now. On the other hand, the discourse community includes potential travelers consulting reviews before deciding which property to visit for their next vacation. As the reviewers themselves could also be possible future travelers that in turn consult other reviews when traveling elsewhere, these two parties can be regarded as discourse communities as they “form in order to work towards a set of common goals” (Swales 1990: 9). The ultimate goal of these reviews for vacationers is to

avoid properties with low ratings and find a hotel which meets the expectations of the vacationers. The actual and potential travelers hence use their “participatory mechanisms to provide information and feedback” to one another (Swales 1990: 26).

7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to conduct a corpus-based genre analysis of a relatively new cybergenre, namely negative hotel reviews from *Tripadvisor*. By following the ESP approach to genre, 100 complaint messages were analyzed. The main purpose was to investigate genre-specific features of negative online reviews.

First, lexical and grammatical patterns typical of negative online reviews were identified via the software program *AntConc*. The keyword analysis revealed that reviews employ numerous content words that occur unusually frequently when compared to another corpus. Among these are ESP vocabulary of the tourist sector such as *beach, guest, housekeeping, balcony, oceanfront, room, stay* or *ac*. Apart from that, descriptive adjectives such as *clean, filthy, rude, disgusting, friendly* or *horrible* are an indispensable part of reviews as these are a requirement for describing or evaluating one’s hotel experience. Besides these content words, there are some function words that are of equal relevance. These include the first-person pronouns *I* and *we* and their possessive counterparts (*my, our*). Reviews were found to often employ these pronouns when reporting about deficiencies via personal narratives. In contrast to earlier research, the second person pronoun could not be identified as a keyword. If used, it either universalized experience or was employed to address fellow travelers and warn them or give advice. Imperatives, whereof some were also identified to be words with a high degree of keyness, were used for similar reasons. For the sake of warning someone, a great number of imperatives (*stay, don’t*) were included. These were often combined with some sort of negation. Other than that, adverbial high-degree markers such as *very* or *extremely* are commonly employed in negative hotel reviews.

On top of that, a move structure that extends the ones that were already developed for negative *Tripadvisor* reviews could be obtained. The structural analysis suggests that negative hotel reviews typically show a ten-partite move sequence (*Header, Image of evidence, General rating, Title, Orientation, Complaint, Addressing some*

sort of positive aspect(s), Coda, Personal information, Footer). Some of these ten structural elements are optional, whereas the majority is obligatory. Discourse structure therefore is relatively fixed. The obligatory moves are further composed of several steps.

Eventually, a pragmatic analysis brought up the rear. Complaint strategies according to levels of increasing directness were obtained. The strategies used most often were some sort of expression of disapproval such as indicating annoyance or discussing ill consequences. Thereby, the accused was not mentioned but instead the complainable was being described. Acts where neither the complainable nor the complainees were addressed were rare – hints were only used by 12.5% of the reviewers. In comparison, direct accusations or blame were more frequent. Still, they did account for less than 50%. As indirect complaints within which the responsible party is not mentioned outweigh, less than half of the reviews were found to be face-threatening acts.

By means of all gathered results, the genre's communicative purposes and discourse community were identified. Reviews serve two main communicative purposes. They intend to warn fellow travelers and enable to vent one's anger. Negative *Tripadvisor* reviews' discourse community includes actual and potential travelers that are writing or consulting reviews.

Despite all the valuable findings that could be obtained, a set of limitations has to be discussed. First, this project included a relatively small set of representative texts meaning that the results might not be applicable to all negative reviews on *TripAdvisor*. A larger corpus would definitely provide more valid results. It is further needless to say that there would be a range of other aspects that could be investigated in future research. Much work remains to be done in order to establish a fuller picture of negative reviews. Future research will also need to confirm this study's findings. Out of personal concern, the genre at hand could further be investigated from a pedagogical perspective. I see the urgent need to make ESP learners familiar with this web-based genre and introduce it when teaching the genre of complaint letters/emails which is part of the Austrian Centralized Matura, also known as the Standardized skills-oriented diploma and matriculation examination. As

negative online reviews resemble complaint letters and emails to a certain extent, they may replace these forms of formal complaints in the future. That is why ESP students should become acquainted with this young genre and draw parallels between negative online reviews and complaint letters/emails via ESP genre-based language teaching. Future research could hence also focus on the pedagogical implications of these negative online reviews in the classroom.

All in all, this project has however been relatively successful in investigating characteristics of negative hotel reviews posted on *Tripadvisor*. The findings obtained via this genre analysis may have contributed largely to this relatively underexplored genre in language and discourse studies and may have reduced the current research gap.

8. References

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Appendix

Text 1

Disappointing, horrible communication. DO NOT RECOMMEND

We were looking forward to our stay because it seemed great online and the reviews were pretty good. We had a couple of issues during our stay but the biggest concern was the lack of communication. One night during our 4 night stay the fire alarm went off at 2am. The alarm just stated "An Alarm has been reported. Please go outside and do not use the elevator". We had no idea what the alarm was for. I woke up and got my family up and headed outside. We were on the 8th floor so it took longer to get outside, especially because a slower guest without assistance was slowing the flow of the exit on the stairway. When we got outside we did not see any workers, just all of the guest gathering around the parking lot. This is a large hotel with 12 floors, 2 pools, and 5 restaurants, we did not see one employee telling the guest where to go, helping guest or making sure the building was cleared. We watched a person go back into the building and come out 5 minutes later with a couple who needed assistance down the stairs. 2 Ambulances and 4/5 firetrucks arrived. We still had not heard anything or seen an employee. No one seemed to know what was going on or where to go. Around 3:30am a fire fighter had to tell us and other guests that we could go in the lobby and floors 5-8 had zero power. He said it was up to the GM on what would happen then. Keep in mind that for over an hour families sat outside, after it had just rained and was chilly. Parents were holding children in blankets they had grabbed on their way out. Around 4am an announcement was made that guest could go to their rooms but the elevators weren't working. We walked to the 8th floor to find out we did not have power. We asked the front desk what was being done; are we being relocated, will the electricity come on again, or were they figuring it out. He said "I don't know". Finally after still not hearing something or any answers from the staff, everyone from our floor decided to just go to bed without electric. We did the same thing not knowing when we would have electricity or what caused the alarm. We were woken up at 9:45am (4 hours and 45 minutes since everyone on our floor got back to our rooms) by two employees wearing Grand Hotel polos knocking on our door with the "please do not disturb" sign hanging on the door knob. By the time we got to the door they were down the hall knocking on other guests' doors claiming to be from housekeeping but were only holding a clipboard and were not pushing a cart around. We were not even acknowledged when we went out into the hallway to see what they wanted. The power to our room finally came on at 10am. We have already checked out, it has been two days and we still don't know what the emergency was, or if it was safe to return to our room. No one apologized for the 3 hours we were standing outside in the middle of the night or addressed it. The only time we heard from staff concerning the alarm or electricity was over the speaker when they said people could go to their rooms, failing to mention that certain floors did not have electricity. They did not even announced when the elevators could be used. Several elderly guests were stuck in the lobby until the elevators were able to be used. Highly disappointed in the communication and customer services. They have the guest email address on file during their stay. There is no reason they couldn't send updates to guest emails or on their social media sites. I definitely DO NOT RECOMMEND. We will not be returning.

Text 2

Not quite Grand

It's high season right? So why do you have new people from another country manning the front desk? Oh I get it you're saving money by having the students from Europe come over and work during the high season. But did you ever consider that this could be highly frustrating to your customers?

Especially when the foreigners, seemly have a superiority complex. They give off the air that they know more than the customer. Minority customer beware!!

OK so the hotel is called the grand spa, don't let that fool you. You will have to bus your own bags and beach gear to your room. There seems not to be any support in that area. Not a big deal unless you're a woman, or an elder or both.

When you reach your room you will notice that the furnishings may be broken, chipped or have missing pieces. The room that I had was rather spacious and large. However it seemed as if the cleaning wasn't done with any sincerity. I understand that the foreign students that work in the hotel during the summer, are not used to that kind of work, and often just give a basic or less than basic cleaning. They want to learn English and travel and see America not clean toilets. The kitchenette does not even have a plastic fork. Nor does it have plates it does have paper cups. The refrigerator in my room did not have a freezer. This was cumbersome as I could not refresh my ice pack for my cooler. The bed was very comfortable. The deck was pretty unsightly as my room was right next to the end roof. The view of the dirty roof was not intriguing. The location is outstanding with 24 hours shops on the main floor so you can eat and drink all night. But just let me remind you bring your own wine because a glass of wine will cost you \$10. Yikes! Not a whole Lotta food for vegans, but vegetarians will be happy. The hotel does not furnish an area outside on the beach with umbrellas and chairs, you must buy your own. The umbrellas rent for \$22 a day. I don't know about the chairs I brought all my own gear. Parking is plentiful, but you may have to go across the street. This hotel is large maybe that's what they mean by grand, because it certainly is not grand in terms of customer service. It's pretty basic for the Ocean City area. However you will pay higher prices. This place is a mixture of plus and minus is

Text 3

Outdated, dirty, rude staff

Aside from the obvious problems with the room—dirty carpet, dirty upholstery on the chairs, musty smell made worse when the AC clicked on, cheap beds and bedding—I had an experience with the staff that I'd never had before and hope no one else ever has to. The hotel ran my credit card twice on arrival, which triggered a fraud alert and locked up the card. The hotel felt that it hadn't gotten paid but took ZERO steps to remedy this. No calls or messages to room. No calls to my cell to leave a message. No notes in room.

You know what they DID do? Sent a manager to bang on my door at midnight the night we were supposed to leave! With security! They said pay the bill right now or they'd call the cops.

So to recap, they screwed up the billing and the credit card and made no effort to let me know there was a problem until the middle of the night when we were supposed to leave, waking and scaring the kids, threatening me, accused me of trying to "duck

out” on the bill when they screwed it up in the first place!! Their only lame explanation was they called the room (no one was there, they didn’t leave a message on the system), and they were trying to “catch up with me” in the lobby. In a hotel with hundreds and hundreds of guests? Please. I walked through the lobby a dozen times in four days and no one stopped me.

The staff at this hotel was generally unpleasant (housekeeping gave my wife a lecture that she put the privacy sign out too late in the day). No one apologized to me or the family for what they did the night before we left.

Run down and dirty hotel with rude staff. You’d be better off in Ocean City staying in a name brand hotel that might have some semblance of policies and standards.

Text 4*

Horrible experience!!!

Very dirty, ants in corridor near elevator. Pool filthy, refrigerator in room did not work properly our food spoiled, when we made reservations we were guaranteed to get rooms next to our family members we travelled there with. We also called 2 weeks before and a week before and were told that was not a problem. At check in we were rudely told it was not possible to get rooms next to each other even though it was noted in the computer. Will not stay there next year or ever again!!

Text 5*

Just one word - horrible

Rooms are very dirty (had 2 and both were in the very bad shape).

Checked in and found hair on the bathroom floor and shower wall. Then found the same hair inside one of the “supposed “ to clean towels. Means they were not changed after the previous guest.

Carpet hasn’t been vacuumed in weeks. My 2 year old found a small earring peace on the carpet floor as soon as we checked into the room is a proof of that.

Complained and got some apologies from the staff.

AC not working in the bathroom, hallway or game room.

Safe not working in the room.

Text 6*

Not worth the money per night.

We stayed for 3 nights at \$400 a night. No money is put into this hotel for upgrades so everything is run down. Beds are very uncomfortable like boards. We had smokers next to us so had to close balcony door often. Balcony has nice view of ocean but no privacy. When you look down it’s a roof full of seagulls. They should put a terrace there on top of roof of stores below instead a place for birds to sit and scream every 6am. Pool is smaller than it looks in photo. Not enough hotel carts so had to carry all of our stuff. Cafe that offers 24 hour service- went twice both times given stale food. Made us have to eat outside of hotel every time.

Text 7*

Old, dirty, and rundown.

I stayed with my husband for 3 nights but I would have left earlier if we hadn't paid so much per night. The only good thing about the property is the location right on the boardwalk. The building itself was run down, the hallway was incredibly hot and dirty.

We walked into our room and overcome with the mold/mildew smell. The sheets were dirty, they made my skin itch and the beds were very uncomfortable. The bathroom was dirty, moldy, old and the fan didn't work. All of the furniture was peeling, chipping and falling apart. The rug was damp and had stains all over it.

I tried the 24 hour cafe downstairs and it wasn't good. The eggs were gray and overall it was just as run down looking as the rest of the hotel. The balcony wasn't private, and the plastic furniture was dirty with holes and cracks. Someone must have been feeding the seagulls because they were so loud and swarming right below our room the entire trip. Smoking is prohibited but someone was smoking in the room below us and I couldn't enjoy the "view" on our balcony because of it. I'm pregnant and don't want to breathe in second hand smoke.

Overall, it was a huge disappointment for the price and I won't be staying there again.

Text 8

Not a safe hotel

Not a safe hotel. Our room was entered at 2:30 in the afternoon and left open. After a lock audit was performed, I was told that housekeeping was there at 12:00 and a guest key was used at 2:30. I had both guest keys with me at the time..there is no way possible that a guest key was used. Either I was lied to that it was a guest key, and housekeeping left it open or another guest entered our room. My daughter entered the room, thinking that we were there, when we were at the pool. She could have walked into a very dangerous situation. The response I received from management was terrible. No compassion or understating of the situation. Just this is the result of the lock audit and that's it. I asked to be moved to a different room but I was told that was not possible because of full bookings. My only option was to bring my guest keys and have new ones reprogrammed. No other options were available. Maybe credit me for my last night and suggest another local hotel that would be more accommodating. Nothing. Customer Service was absolutely horrible. I felt very unsafe. There was no reason for this to happen. If it was housekeeping then they need to audit their housekeepers. I felt like they did not believe me that I had both keys. I was traveling alone with two daughters. My husband was not with me and I was in possession of my keys.

Text 9

NOT WORTH IT..

Pros : Accessibility to the beach, boardwalk and shops. Friendly staff. That's it !!!

Cons: The common areas, (hallways, game room etc..) were not air conditioned.. Games in the game room were not working and staff told us to go to the front desk for a refund.. We went to the 8th floor to the laundry room and it was extremely hot

and unkempt.. The room was roomy but the furniture was dated and the rugs were filthy.. The balcony door did not work and we had to call maintenance.. The balconies are designed so that you can step right onto the next door balcony which is a privacy and safety concern.. The bathroom was very small.. We had to ask housekeeping several times to swap out towels as the ones we were given were dirty. All this for \$435 / night... NOT WORTH IT AT ALL.. Management needs to focus on upgrades.. We will definitely be visiting OC again but our hard earned money will be spent elsewhere. You should do the same..

Text 10

Very disappointed with the lack of amenities

We switched properties for our family vacation in OCMD this year after using another property for many years. The only good thing was that the property had larger and cleaner rooms. Other than that, we were very disappointed. The coffee supplies were never restocked each day and I had to call for them. The toilet was stopped up two times during our week stay. We requested a crib for the baby and was charged \$10 per night when this was always complimentary. We were very disappointed that there wasn't a hot tub and the pool was crowded. As a family of 5 with small kids, we requested a kitchenette but there were 0 supplies available. No utensils, plates, dish soap, we had to go buy it which was always provided complimentary at the other property. There wasn't even a pen in the room. The pool was very crowded and in the back of the hotel, not oceanfront. Our direct oceanfront view was beautiful, but the guests feed the birds so they were always flying around us to eat from the other rooms. NOT worth the cost!

Text 11

stay at Dumes Hotel

This stay for questionable. Initially, when we arrive the room appeared to be stripped down and cleaned. Hopefully, Tuesday was ok. Not sure if maid service was changed but Wednesday, Thursday and Friday was terrible. Had to get after the maid person to do her job. not sure what Country she was from. That bologna about not understanding English does not work for me. The one day I looked for her , her cart was outside in the hallway for the longest time and she was in one of the rooms. TV was on and loud, she was on her cell phone sitting on the bed. If Ocean City continues to hire these individuals they are going to ruin their businesses. Da Vinci's by the sea used to be a good restaurant along the board walk but past two years very bad. I sent them an email as well. Stopped going there. Phillips does not hire these out of Country people and the service and food it good.

Thursday I got the sheets off the cart myself and changed my sheets and pillow cases. Had to ask her for maid service and ask for each item to be done, it was obvious she did not want to do it and was very quick about it and I suspect that some of the rooms were probably not cleaned down after YOUR quests left. If any body gets sick do not wonder why. Not sure if will be returning.

Text 12

Very disappointing.

I cannot believe the high rating people are giving this place!

My sister and I were excited to stay here on a last minute trip to OC. What a disappointment. Though the room was decorated nice and clean, the bathroom tub area was a different story. Years of soap scum around the tub and the side of the wall/baseboard at the faucet end of the tub was dark brown with crud.

The pool is worthless. It's small and filthy. There is no filtration system at all and apparently they change the water sometimes. It was green looking and cloudy to where you could barely see the bottom and what you could see looked black/dirty. We complained twice and they scrubbed the tub better but not the brown crud on the outside and of course nothing was done about the foul pool. The only pool I've ever seen that bad was in Jamaica and we didn't get in that one either.

The food at the restaurant was overpriced and mediocre at best. I had a chicken caesar salad and the chicken consisted of small pieces that looked flash fried. Total for salad with 4 small pieces of chicken, one rum punch and a tip was \$30. I don't mind paying for a good meal but at least give me some decent chicken on my salad. My sister ordered a chicken quesadilla and it was all cheese and a few pieces of chicken.

Though the staff is very nice, nothing was done to make up for this disaster other than re-cleaning the tub.

It was our first stay here and our last. For that kind of money it should have been the actual 4+ stars per the other reviews.

Text 13

Over -promised, never delivered

Arrived to malfunctioning AC and fridge, no luggage cart in our separate building, balcony furniture sized for children, and a toilet that tilted so badly I thought I'd fall off. Day 2 brought rain that came through the front door so badly that we had to use all the towels to sop it up and plug the bottom of the door. The sheets were not changed, the carpet wasn't vacuumed, the counters were not wiped, and the bathroom wasn't cleaned... but the tip was taken. Management was slow to respond and inept. Location is the only good thing about this place and not enough for me to ever step foot on the property again.

Text 14*

Disappointment This Year!

Upon arrival to the room, we found the shower handle almost falling off and unable to completely turn off the water. We asked for 2 more blankets and sheets and received one of each.

-Over the next few days, our floors were not cleaned (even when we asked at the desk to have them cleaned).

- Several hours on two different days we found the lobby (piano area) floor and furniture full of crumbs (hours after the snack/cookies were removed).

-We used to enjoy nice lunches on the back deck by the dining room. The staff used to be plentiful and attentive. This year we had to order a limited menu at the upper bar. The staffing was poor and not attentive. The Bar tender was overwhelmed with

limited help. We waited 30 minutes to give our order because the bartender kept disappearing to get orders. Several tables next to us were not cleaned for over forty minutes (after the initial 30 minutes to order) while we waited and finally ate. (We did however find the service at the lower bar on the back deck much more satisfactory and efficient!).

In summary, our stay at the Dunes this year was less than adequate. We were very disappointed in what appeared to be a lack of quality staffing and service which in the past we enjoyed greatly.

The Snedaker Family.

Text 15*

Loud AC unit / Staff that doesn't care!

I just stayed here for second time. My first experience was wonderful therefore I came back. I absolutely love this hotel, especially, the teatime and English decor. I was very disappointed by the customer service the second time around, when I stayed there from Aug 3rd to 5th. The air-conditioning in my (room 1116) was very loud and it was making an extra noise. The noise was so loud that it prevented me from sleeping. When I asked the front desk if they can switch my room, they were unable to accommodate me. They send a maintenance man to my room to fix the AC. He did absolutely nothing. All he did was close the curtains, which did not block the noise at all. I am sorry but for \$400 a night I deserve better and I should be able to get a good nights sleep. The view is incredible but without good sleep it doesn't mean much. Dunes Manors hotel, just lost a customer for life time, I wish they would fix the way treat their customers or they won't have any customers left!

Text 16*

Dirty!

Our stay was pleasant... however I would not recommend to anyone based on house keeping. I made the beds 4 out of 6 days. When we asked for extra towels, they were not given and house keeping never cleaned our room. The garbage cans were overflowing. The carpets looked as though they were never vacuumed. The shower and bathroom floor was never mopped. Sand was all over. The toilet was not wiped down. Nor was the sink or mirror. We had to look for the house keeping cart and ask for towels and toilet paper on a daily basis. We were told to leave our dirty towels outside the door. The box spring was so dusty and dirty, I don't think it was cleaned ever. I won't be returning.

Text 17*

location was disconnected from resort and offered no services

We were very disappointed in the Manor Suites location and overall treatment. We felt as if we were being sent to a warehouse, detached from the Main Building with limited services. We had no idea that housing anywhere other than the Main Building was sub-standard. It was not as attractive and to be honest, as clean and inviting as your website portrayed. At check-in, your front desk agent exclaimed, "you should have book with us directly", insinuating that booking with your Expedia source was an inferior method. Hence, our trip was far less than expected and based on our

treatment, no recommendations to colleagues, our travel agent/her associates and future guests will be made.

Text 18

Filthy Hotel

My family has been staying at the Dunes Manor for the past five years and unfortunately we have witnessed the quality go terribly downhill. The hotel rooms are in need of a remodel. The paint is chipping off the doors and walls, the floors are shabby and the mattresses and pillows are very uncomfortable.

The worst part is how filthy the rooms are. I have my doubts as to whether my room was even cleaned from the last guest. The sheets were stained, there was sand left in my tub from the last guest, there was a ton of hair on the bathroom sink and on my towels, the doors were covered in greasy handprints, the table in my room was sticky, the floors were stained and grungy and there was disgusting thick mold near the tub. Disgusting and disturbing. No hotel should be this filthy let alone a hotel that charges nearly \$400 per night. The worst part is that even after I brought these issues to the front desk supervisor, nothing was done until I had to complain to the General Manager of the hotel. The experience ruined my vacation. The restaurant is also disappointing. Poor service and terrible food. Overall a very disappointing experience.

Text 19

Disappointing stay

Our family had two rooms and stayed 3 nights in the Suites building. To say our rooms were disgusting is an understatement. There were two crawling babies with us and we could not even let them crawl on the ground because their legs and feet became BLACK after crawling for a minute. The cleaning staff was awful and barely cleaned our room as well. The location is good, but I do not recommend this property if you are someone who likes a clean place to sleep at night.

Text 20

Dunes Manor - smoke central

Stayed here every summer. (sometimes multiple times a summer) for many years. This trip may be our last. Check in was late, found soiled ladies underwear behind the dresser, and despite marketing themselves as a non smoking property there was CONSTANT smoke from other patrons. Numerous calls were made to the front desk. Each time they said they would send security. A short time later the smoke would be back. It was so bad we could not take advantage of the balcony or open our window to hear the ocean.

If a person wants to smoke that is their right but it should not be done in an area where it ruins the experience for other guests.

Text 21

Overpriced & bad customer service

It's on the beach, that's the best I can say. And Tracy Ann...you need an attitude adjustment!!! Speak up where people can hear you....explain the rules & heck even explain where to park why don't ya! (Parking sucks here!) and don't slap a paper down & say nothing! Explain what you need us to do & what/why we are signing for Gods sake! I stood in line to get checked in for a ridiculous amount of time to get up there & get treated the way I did. I did not enjoy my stay here nor will I stay here again. Overpriced & no toiletries in the room which is the first I've ever seen. Also the room just made me feel like i needed to shower after touching anything.

Text 22

Third Visit. Maybe the Last

First off, I realize that there was a major hurricane that came thru just east of here just last year, so this review is written with that in mind.

Check-in was amazingly slow. I literally stood in line, along with others, for 20+ minutes, just waiting to get to the counter. Then, once I got to the counter, the lady didnt have my reservation among the pile of others, even though we reserved thru Legacys site way back in mid March. She eventually found it. Seemed very un-organized.

The room was ok. Just ok. Like I said, this is our third visit, and the room condition has went down each visit. Mattress was very worn. We stayed 4 days, and by the 4th day, the a/c in the living room still hadn't really cooled the room. The a/c in the bedroom worked fine though. Our comforter had a good size blood colored stain on it, so we had to get a new comforter. The bathroom wasnt much better. The shower rod seemed like it was ready to fall off the wall, and be prepared to either use their body wash from the dispenser, or, bring your own soap. I don't remember it being like this on our last visit. I didn't really like this surprise, but, my wife didn't seem to mind. The best parts of the room; the strong water pressure in shower- loved it, and the fact that we could sit on the balcony, watch/listen to the waves, and see the TV inside, because we could watch the NHL playoffs, while drinking on the balcony.

Due to the salty air, and the storms, some of the outside trim is very rusty. I know this is probably an endless issue, but, if we had our 4 yr old grandkid with us, I would be pretty concerned about it.

That all being said, the Springhill Suites down the street should be open by the time we visit again. Given that we're Marriott members, we'll most likely stay there going forward, UNLESS, either that place is twice the price, OR, the owners of the Legacy start putting significant money into this place. This was a nice place a few yrs ago, but, has diminished quickly.

Text 23

Will Not Return

My family and I stayed 4 nights and the overall stay was less than average. Our room was clean except for the microwave. The building has not been kept up. Beside our door the moulding was hanging off. Clean towels are almost nonexistent. We finally had to call the front desk and practically beg for clean towels. They made us bring all our dirty towels to the front desk and swap them out for clean ones. Said

housekeeping "should" knock on our door and offer clean towels. Never happened. There isn't a trash chute so you have to pile your trash by the trash cans at the elevators. The pool was dirty two of the days to the point my kids didn't want to swim in it. There is no vacuum or broom to clean the floors and when you have kids it is impossible to keep sand out. We had to go buy a broom and dust pan so we could keep the floors clean. Parking is a nightmare so go ahead and plan on parking across the street and walking through traffic to get to the bldg. For the price, I expected more.

Text 24*

Unfriendly staff

We visited last week and for the most part our stay was average. We arrived early to get a parking pass to go to the beach a few hours before check-in. At 4:25 (after the 4:00 check-in time), I went to pick up our room key. I was told it would be a few more minutes as housekeeping was inspecting the room. I was patient as I thought they were busy and trying to ensure our room was adequate before we arrived up there. At 4:45, after standing in a long line again, (patience was thinning) I asked for our room keys thinking housekeeping surely inspected and was ready. At 4:50 I was told the air conditioner in the living area was broken. They were sending maintenance up. I said , well is there another room we could have as I had 3 teenage girls waiting in lobby ready to take showers. The answer was , "There is no other rooms available." They finally offered that we could go up to the room at 5:00 , but advised the maintenance crew would be coming in. I noticed the hotel was not sold out as I was looking at reservations on line for availability ..., Now thinking after doing a precheck in at 11:30 that the A/C repair surely could have been completed between 11:00 and 4:00 when this was a window when housekeeping was cleaning rooms, I was completely dissatisfied in the service and mismanagement. The front desk staff was overall rude , non -apologetic , and seemed not to be bothered. I asked them how would they feel if they paid for a hotel stay with teenagers in tow and told their room was not ready as guaranteed at the check / in time?????

The hotel grounds were dirty. As someone spilled food by the entrance door to the basement level the night before , 7:00pm , and still was not clean at 10:00AM the next morning???? Unacceptable. The whole staff seemed to be mismanaged and the hotel must have been short on employees? The rooms were clean ,but overall I would not stay here again. The furniture was run down , and needs attention. There are too many hotels in PCB that I can choose from. The stay was disappointing.

Text 25*

Worst stay ever!

We stayed at this hotel for one week, and it was awful. Staff was rude and unaccommodating. Parking sucked. Our room was dirty when we got there and smelled like sewage. Toilet leaked and there was severe water damage in the bathroom. Stove and oven didn't work, when we specifically paid for a working kitchen. Our room keys stopped working 5 times. When we complained about all this, staff told us they couldn't do anything because they were booked. Not even a refund! There are so many places to stay in PCB and I think a motel 6 would've been nicer than legacy by the sea.

Text 26*

Seems like they gave up.

What a waste of a great location. The best part was the elevator was really fast and smooth. Seriously, that was the best part. The view from the balcony was pretty amazing also, but that was not because of the hotel. They don't clean the rooms very well. Urine on the bathroom floor, hair strands by the bed. It's just run down. The "free breakfast" was the most minimal of any hotel I ever stayed. For \$254, I wanted more than just a beach front room. But hey, the elevator was fast! I will not ever return.

Text 27*

Advisory warning

Unfortunately this place is old and in need of major revision and upgrades. While the resort said gulf front, the rooms are in the front facing the street and the living area faces the shore. The evergreen water is amazing, you just can't wake up to it. The housekeeping NEVER cleaned our rooms the entire stay. The microwave was filthy. The keys NEVER worked. They were replaced daily. The parking lot is minuscule at best. The resort sits on a strip, similar to Las Vegas so it's busy. I will find other accommodations on our next vacation. By the way, we were there for 3 nights.

Text 28

Tired of being ripped off

Been staying at Legacy for 15 yrs. last stay a month ago and was disaster - tv didn't work- called 2x - no one came. Hair dryer rusted & sparks flying- called 4x- gave up. Said they had to send someone from another of their properties - FOR A HAIR DRYER. New staff at front - rooms shabby, nasty and all bath access (towel racks etc) are rusty. I let it go. Came back 7/15 on a gift certf from family- with my young granddaughter and she watched as a young, poorly trained desk "clerk" told me off- then proceeded to tell anyone in the lobby that I am a "rude" person, blah blah. My g-child cried. Reserv gave me a "guaranteed early check in- at in 2;00 rather than 4" as I was coming in by air this time. Desk took about 15 people ahead of me ~ many w/no reserv, cash payers- all the time saying they had no "early check ins" policy yet each one moved ahead of me was going up to their rooms - EARLY. I was given the "manager" # To call (I demanded it) he was combative and unprofessional. Got to room at 3:50- to no hair dryer- ripped off the wall. Called 3x allowing over 50 rings each and finally going down to again ask- w/wet hair for dinner. Grand child same. The photos show the shabby filth of the room. Chk'd our at 9 next morning. Ive been going to Legacy since 2004. Member of their Select Club for so many stays. Ms. Karen was Mgr all these yrs til a few months ago & they moved her to another property I'm told. She was tops!! The Legacy now staffs 12- yo nasty talking uninformed and illiterate desk clerks who have no clue. And can be downright mean. Check the pix to see just what crappy rooms they have for \$300 nite (or 4/5pm til 10 am) - good thing Hampton, Holiday exp & others are opening on these gorgeous beaches and have some inkling what "hospitality" means at any price —DO NOT STAY AT THIS HOTEL- EVER (yep that's a hole in the bottom of the tub!) Rusty everything- dirt- holes- even bed springs pop up when you lie down!!

Text 29

Worn out- NOT A THREE STAR HOTEL!!

Service was nice...got there before 4:00 and they checked us in but room was not ready so they called us when it was. So we went next door to eat lunch where we were told that with our check-in we would get 10% discount. Told that to waitress twice still no discount.

Room was worn out! Location is great and the kitchenette was okay but the fridge couldn't open fully because of the small space. Couch which to be a pull out sleeper was nasty! Outer portion was worn and ripped, and the inside mattress was thin and falling apart. Fortunately I brought simple blow up mattresses for the kids. My husband and I had to sleep in the two Full-size beds not queens as we were told they would be. We told them we have a family of four!! And I'm the shortest at 5'11"!! Fortunately only a short last outing for the summer. We will not be going back.

Text 30

Not the Hotel For Me

Front desk clerk was extremely rude upon check in. Pre-registration did not work. Ceiling in the room in need of desperate repair. Hideaway bed was worse than expected with springs popping through, we ended up buying an eggshell mattress just to make it through the trip. Stove eyes were uneven making it difficult to use. No pans so yeah we bought one of those too. Toaster didn't work. Not enough towels and very difficult to get clean ones. Pool was dirty so we didn't swim. Only a couch for seating, not nearly enough for 3 people. On the plus side the beach was beautiful and the weather was great. Just not the right hotel for me at a price of over 1k during off season I think I could have found a better arrangement. Never again.

Text 31

Absolutely Disgusted

I am still waiting for Billy Alam to contact me regarding my last nights stay. During my stay I was able to look past a broken air conditioner, a broken safe, black mold in my room, I broke an elevator, missing nightgown, and missing ear buds. The last night of my stay I called security all night long about a barking dog in the adjoining room and nothing was done. Finally at 3:45 a.m. the person in the room opened the door for security after they banged on the door all night. I finally gave up at 5:30 in the morning and checked out leaving very specific instructions for the general manager to contact me. I still have not heard from him. The floors of my room were not mopped one time while I was there. They're filthy! There were days that the pool was absolutely filthy as well. They do a really good job of providing entertainment to try to make up for the lack of cleanliness, service, etc..

Text 32

Disgusting

This hotel could be a great place to stay but it really needs some work. There was mold by the pool area and in our room. A chunk of our room door fell off and paint was peeling off the walls. Half the hot tub jets didn't work and the other jet's pressure

was so hard you couldn't sit by them. The breakfast was pretty good but don't pick this hotel because it has free breakfast... definitely not worth it. There was one employee who stood out "Iashia Bryant" worked in the kitchen area and was a very good worker. She was efficient without getting in anyone's way. The other kitchen worker was always in the way and kinda rude. I would look elsewhere. It's a shame cause this could be a nice place.

Text 33

Friendly service is not here

Service was difficult to work with. Apparently they only clean room every other day, so I went to get towels. They were supposed to send them up. Two hours later nothing so I went back down and they said they are coming. At 9:00 at night they brought me towels and I told the woman I would like room service tomorrow. She barely spoke any English. I get a knock on my door at 11:00pm from a lady wanting to clean my room. I was totally surprised on this one. Service is a big role for me. And you do not get good service here. I will stay elsewhere next time

Text 34*

Go somewhere else

So, unfortunately my family and I had to find a place to stay for 1 night before we could check into our condo. This rip off of a place was almost 400 dollars for one night on a Friday night. It's nice that all the rooms face the ocean. Free breakfast, good luck, 50+ people wrapped around the check in waiting to get a plate. The pool is so small for the amount of people, it was a joke, Wooden pool chairs broke, good luck sleeping with slamming doors and your toilet making noises all night. If the price matched the quality, the review would be higher. For what we paid, it's a scam. I have a video of the toilet sound but I can only post pictures.

Text 35*

Rude Staff, Horrible Parking, average rooms

The cons outweigh the pros here. I got an email saying my room would be ready from 11-12. I got to the hotel and Erick was extremely rude to our family telling us we cannot check in until 4. Most of the staff were extremely rude except for the bellhop and the bartender were very nice. Then we got put on the 6th floor which has an excellent view of the ocean. The room was average. Expect a small bathroom with the sink and everything in the hall. Firm beds... Would have been rated higher but from the very second we walked through the door and how rude staff we (Erick and the parking security guard) this hotel dropped way down. Nobody should be treated the way we were. Just apologizing for not having a room ready would have been okay for us. But we were treated as idiots who didn't know what we were doing. Even with and email from the hotel.

Pros:

- Nice pool
- Nice bartender
- Nice ocean view
- Fun for kids

- Short walk to beach
- fridge, microwave, and Keurig

Cons:

- Limited parking. Have to park across the street in a dark parking lot. Only about 1/3 of the rooms have parking close.
- 20 minute wait to eat breakfast (the whole time breakfast ran) line wrapped around entire lobby. And not enough seating. Shoulder to shoulder with people next to bathrooms
- Rude staff, no greetings, thanks, or apologies for being rude. Only one bellhop helped us. And the bartender was nice
- small bathrooms
- Very firm bed
- left note telling us not have items on floor or beds, or else a cleaning charge would be added
- only changed towels once out of 4 days
- doors didn't shut, have to force all the doors shut
- bathroom doesn't lock

In total we will not be staying here again! The pool drags people in and makes the hotel seem allot nicer than it truly is. I will be going back to my cheaper but far nicer hotel down the road. I wanted this hotel to be nice but it didn't pass my already low expectations.

Text 36*

Stray Cats GALORE

Every bad review you have seen.... BELIEVE them. The Amount of stray cats was disgusting and they are everywhere. Parking is a nightmare, we had to wait 4 hours to shower because we had no clean towels, Forget trying to get breakfast there is no place to sit and the line is in the lobby. which blocks the doorway. Complete fire hazard. Being a Diamond member I have been seen such a run down property. Oh and the doors to the room and balcony are not the greatest. If you are looking for Bates Motel.... This is it!

Text 37*

Horrible Hotel skip

This is the worst hotel that I had ever stayed at, it was filthy, rooms were really dated and did I mention DIRTY, there were huge gaps on the doors, any bug can come in . bad service they never pick up the trash on the room. the pool wasn't even heated. And had trash floating on it. To top it all there was just one set of elevators working. The property was roaming with stray cats, disgusting smell from all those cats. Completely disappointed.

Text 38

Days Inn is OUT !

To begin with we arrived Friday the 26th of July. We were given a ground floor room with no balcony because we had reserved our room the day before, too late to get a balcony she said ! The room was an old one, hole in the door stuffed with tissue, tub took all night to drain after a shower, a/c unit loose with an outside view, filters in a/c unit were nasty, sheets had holes. They clearly need to light up the beach access area ! Very dark, and the metal handrails need to be painted a color other than black. These handrails get Extremely hot during the day ! Saturday, day two, we went to the Smoking Area of the pool so we could cook in the sun because the tables in that section don't have umbrellas ! I guess smokers are expected to hide under the rocks ! Then around 7:15-7:20 or so they shut the pool down because they said someone had went to the bathroom in it...ok ! No one there who could deal with this issue, had to wait for the pool guy to come Sunday morning ! Pool re-opened about an hour and a half late, so no early swim before checkout ! Guests pay a lot of hard earned money and expect better for a national chain hotel ! Let's not forget the standing water in the elevator, no juice offered either day of our stay at breakfast and last but not least...desk clerks never asked if we enjoyed our stay or apologized for not being able to use the pool ! I will stay elsewhere next time, because that's a whole lot of money to spend just to put up with a greedy hotel who does nothing to make up for a lousy stay.

Text 39

First family vacation

I brought my family to Panama for our first vacation since my husband died in 2017. We have on the 28th and stayed at Tidewater Condominiums which we loved but we decided to extend our vacation and checked into the Days Inn. Upon arrival I was ok with the look and excited to see the mermaids but shortly after we were approached by another guest who was clearly drunk. Him and his wife constantly argued near us so I complained. When we left for dinner that night we walked by the lady who was passed out drunk in her vehicle with the door wide open. It immediately traumatized my 5yr old daughter who lost her father to suicide just 2yrs before. We checked to make sure she was alive until staff arrived. The entire night we watched as the lady along with staff members searched for someone shining flashlights and making noise. We got maybe 2hrs sleep. The next day I went to the owner and asked for a complimentary night which they agreed but then 2 came and the drunk people were still guest and causing a scene again so we left. I will never stay there again

Text 40

Worst customer service ever

Overall service, really really bad. Room Service: they made several times just one bed, the other, they didn't mind, it was dirty and dust everywhere, short supplies, not enough pillows, no USB ports anywhere, so be aware of that, old decoration. The top rack for clothes broken, toilet and sink clogged, no soap holder, rusty balconies and water leaking too. The breakfast, same old same old. The staff: not even a smile when you arrive or leave your stay. It's not worth it, don't waste your money on this crap. The only pro: is a front beach hotel

Text 41

Place is VERY run down

I had read the reviews before I booked. I wish I would have believed them. The place is very run down. There's chipped paint and cracks throughout the hotel. Everything looks worn down and dated. Our room never got clean towels. We had no microwave and the ice machine's never worked. They ran out of regular coffee pods for our room. The food is very expensive and not good at all. I don't understand how the hotel chain does not want to fix these problems seeing everyone seems to have the same problems. I have stayed in nicer motels than this place. Do yourself a favor. Pick a hotel down on the boardwalk. This place is not worth the money they charge you per night. On a good note, they had hot water at least.

Text 42

Needs updating.

I was in town for a conference and it was held at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront. The Bad: The place needs a complete renovation. The halls, elevators and public areas are in poor condition. Ice was a hard to find commodity, several of the vending machines were either out of service or it would take your money and not dispense the product. Public areas were very hot and meeting rooms were extremely cold. My room was also sub-par, with an access panel hanging open, the room was serviced very late in the day and 2 nights had to go looking for towels. The sliding door to the balcony was extremely hard to open and was very noisy.

The Good: Restaurant service for breakfast was good and wait staff were very friendly, compared to other staff members. The check in staff (Barry) was very helpful.

Not sure if I would want to return to this property until major renovation is undertaken.

Text 43

Beautiful Views, Nice Staff, but Beware of Bugs

I stayed at the Wyndham hotel for a business conference. The oceanfront guestrooms offer a beautiful view and there is a balcony overlooking the ocean. The staff is friendly and responsive. Unfortunately, all of these positive aspects were negated by the presence of cockroaches. I found rather large roaches in common areas (restroom, hallway) and in the bathroom of my room. As a result, I opted to checkout and stay at another hotel for the remainder of the conference. The staff was quite understanding and made the necessary adjustments to allow me cancel my stay and leave.

Overall, this hotel has great potential because of the view and location in a quiet, safe neighborhood. Unfortunately, in this case, potential is not enough. The hotel is located about 20 blocks away from restaurants, bars, activities, and the most populated area of the beach. There is one restaurant onsite, but the food was just okay. In addition, the hotel is a bit dated.

While the location and food options are just a matter of personal preference, the pest control issue is the deal breaker. I do not recommend this hotel.

Text 44*

Bring your own towels and toilet paper

We have been staying here for the past two nights- along with 4 other families for a tournament. There has been no toilet paper or towels available to all 4 rooms. Apparently when they clean the room, they do not replace towels. For a beach resort this doesn't make sense. It should not take numerous phone calls, trips to the front desk etc to simply get towels to take a shower with. Luckily we bought our beach towels, but seriously for the money paid per night, one should get clean towels AND TOILET PAPER! The location is lovely, cleanliness is questionable and don't expect towels. Bring your own toilet paper.

Text 45*

Used to be a great place to stay

The shuttle drivers were the only friendly staff. Hotel needs attention. Broken hot tub, broken outside shower, broken faucet in our bathroom. The sliding glass doors in our room would not open and shut without muscle. We registered 6 people to our suite- couldn't get enough clean towels for everyone. Had to go get towels and toilet paper because hours later, after calling the front desk, no one had shown up with towels. We asked for 2 comforters for the sofa bed, and were brought one. We were told they were running low on comforters. Someone pulled the fire alarm on our last night there. No one from management came out to check on us or tell us anything. We were outside 30 minutes waiting for the fire department to clear our building. The firemen told us we could go back to our rooms. No one from the hotel even apologized for us having to evacuate at 11:00 at night. The maintenance worker told us if the elevator wasn't working we were out of luck, because he wasn't climbing all of those steps again to reset the elevator. I'm not sure if even one person that works there cares about that hotel. It's a shame that management has let it run into the ground. For the past 8 years, it's the only hotel my family has stayed at in Virginia Beach. I hope some improvements can be made before it has to be shut down.

Text 46*

Hotel was very dirty with cockroaches

disappointed and disgusted during my stay. First of all, there were cockroaches. I will be VERY upset if I bring any home. Second, the air conditioning in the hallway did not work

. It was like walking out to a sauna in the hall. Third, the ice maker on several floors did not work. We had to go all the way to the first floor to get ice from the restaurant. Fourth, the hot tub was not working. Fifth, there was no microwave in the room as advertised. Finally, we had to ask several times from housekeeping to get towels. We eventually had to go get them ourselves. After returning from sight seeing, the room was not cleaned properly. There was a note though stating that they would be back to finish but that never happened. I will not be staying here ever again. Worst hotel ever! I even showed a picture of the cockroach to the front desk. They didn't

seem to be surprised. I checked in on Monday July 15th and checked out on Thursday July 18th.

Jody Stopiak

Text 47*

Would not recommend!

Disappointed upon check in to our Queen, Queen Oceanfront room (RM 401), to find it to have 2 doubles instead. And I mean doubles, not even full size. Called down and they said "no way, all our rooms oceanfront have either queens or kings", transferred me to the manager and she said the same thing after minutes of arguing about it...offered to send "engineering" up so I said fine. Waited an hour and a half and still no engineering (what, were they going to build us a couple of new beds?!) finally this girl Angela who was bringing up a cot we requested knew we were upset and got us a key to see another room, (she totally agreed that there was NO way those were 2 queen beds!) We switched to 408 which definitely had 2 queens. Just makes me angry that the manager herself (wish I could remember her name!) didn't come up to see what we were talking about, just said we were wrong! I think Angela should be the manager-hint hint. She knows how to deal with customers! Anyways, no AC in the hallways or on the elevators, just overall not a very nice place. Spend your money elsewhere! I gave one star for Angela and the ocean view.

Text 48

Wyndham Virginia Beach Bust

The Hotel is old and in need of major renovation. Carpets are dirty and the odors in most areas of the property are offensive. The air-conditioning systems are non functional in most common areas and the presents of common House Fly's in the public areas bring to question the overall property cleanliness. We stayed for 3 nights and the cost for the stay was outrageous based on the condition. I have stayed in more appealing Motel 6 properties. Very unusual for Wyndham Properties. My prior experience with the Wyndham brand has been much more elevated. Generally they compete with the higher end Hotel Resorts. Wyndham should consider closing the property and not re-opening until a major Renovation is completed.

Text 49

Hotel from Hell

This was the worst hotel experience of my entire life. My suite was just plain dirty and in disrepair. The hallway air conditioning was not functioning, and the temperature in the hallway was easily over 120 degrees because it was the hottest days of the year, the hallway was glassed on one side, and there were drink and ice machines cranking out heat directly into the hallway, As a result, my suite was hot, especially the bathrooms, which were closest to the hallway and farthest from the room air conditioning units, even though I kept the units on the lowest setting throughout my stay. Stepping out of my 18th floor room into the hallway was so hot my clothes and hair were always drenched by the time the elevator arrived. The carpeting and upholstery are old, worn, and dirty throughout the hotel. The view was nice, and the restaurant was good. But the rest of the hotel was just gross, and the service,

including housekeeping and the front desk, were just awful. In addition, the parking is wholly inadequate. I could not warn strongly enough against this place.

Text 50

How to not run a property

Came to Virginia Beach for two nights for a friend's wedding at the hotel. Any one thing I might have overlooked but they just kept adding up. As a convention center they have no provisions for parking. Multiple times we could not park on property and the staff was ambivalent to the issue. The room was falling apart... chips in the tub, handles falling off the cabinets, doors that hardly moved. The power was out when we were trying to get ready for the wedding, the AC was off when we tried to go to sleep. The TV remotes were replacements and did not effectively control the TVs. The mattresses were in desperate need of replacement. Signage for pool and beach access was nonexistent leaving people to ask one another how to get around. Finally, the staff seemed to want to be there less than we wanted to. The only thing this place has going for it is location. It is three miles from the heart of the Boardwalk and as such the beach was far less crowded. But despite this fact, this is a definite "never again" property.

Text 51

Poor customer service

The location might be great, but we encountered some problems. We went for a girls weekend and booked a hotel for 6. The website stated free parking. However, upon arrival we could only get one hotel spot, something not clearly stated online. The associate stated that they used to let guests buy additional parking for \$10, but this was discontinued. When I spoke to the manager she said there was nothing she could do and that though they may consider updating the website, that it was my fault for not calling to clarify the parking situation. But, I didn't call because the website wasn't vague, it was just wrong. Their website. She then, without checking my reservation, wanted to charge me extra for having 6 people in the room. When I mentioned I booked for 6, she placed the onerous on me to prove this without checking in the system. The room was nice, but they didn't have the towels or bedding set up for 6 people. We had to call for the bedding multiple times. We also noticed the room mirror was missing and an elevator was broken. The breakfast and location was great. But, I recommend the manager get a refresher in customer service, especially about checking a reservation in the system before accusing guests of bringing too many people.

Text 52

Not happy

Elevator was down apparently it's been down for more than 2 months. Then the other main elevator was taken down for a while. Real inconvenient. Bugs in the room. Could feel the box springs in the bed. Pull out couch was uncomfortable and made my child's back hurt. Stained bathroom towels. Exposed wires in the hallway. Banging on walls at 5am. Check in lady had a rude tone. I stayed here in the past and it was way better back then than now. Will not come back.

Text 53

Location

Stayed here for two nights with my family when visiting Virginia Beach. This place is only about the location which is great. Almost everything else about the property is of low quality. It's very old and run down. In desperate need of refurbishment. Or demolishing. It feels a bit like Eastern Europe during the seventies. Dark rugged hallways and the place has a weird smell about it. You get a feeling that it's falling apart. All sorts of stuff that didn't work. One elevator was out of order. The phone and the safe in our room didn't work. Broken lights etc. The only reason this property doesn't get the lowest score from me is the staff. They really try to do what they can. Problems are dealt with swiftly and politely. I really feel sorry for them because they are so hampered by the poor state of the property.

Text 54*

Mediocre hotel with excellent staff

Stayed here for three nights. Check in time is 3:00 PM. Our room wasn't ready until about 5:40, which created a problem because we had an event we needed to get to by 5:00 PM but couldn't shower and change after a long travel day. We left without changing our clothes and returned about 6:30 for check in. Upon our request, we were comped an upgraded breakfast. However, the next morning when I showed the comp to the person in the breakfast room, she had no idea what it was and so we paid for the upgraded breakfast. (\$20). The excellent staff person returned our money. By the way, the breakfast buffet is quite sufficient. No need to purchase an upgraded breakfast. The biscuits are really exceptional!

Also, I notice that someone mentioned a weird odor. I only noticed it in our room (#208) and only when the air conditioner would kick in. It smelled like the room was being sprayed with room deodorizer, one of those sickly sweet smells. Every day I asked the cleaning person to be sure to NOT use any room deodorizer in our room and I feel sure she did not. I can't imagine what the A/C had to do with that smell, but ugh.

Room 208 is considered a handicapped accessible room. I was grateful for the large bathroom. However, the bathtub is VERY hard to get into. It's a very high step over the side.

In addition, the entrance door is extremely heavy. Fortunately, my travel partner was strong enough to open it for me otherwise I could not have managed it. I do not use a wheelchair but can't imagine someone who uses a wheelchair being able to open that door.

The bed is placed in such proximity to the air conditioner that the person who takes the right side of the bed has the A/C blowing right into their face. There is no way to adjust the direction of the A/C vent. We moved a chair in front of it and draped a towel over the chair so as to not have the air blowing on us.

The hotel location is excellent. The balcony overlooking the beach needs a good power washing.

We're pretty faithful Best Western guests but I am sure we won't go here again.

Text 55*

NOT good -- stay somewhere else if possible!

First of all, i love the VA Beach area and I wanted to love this hotel. Unfortunately, that did not happen. First the positives: The hotel has a great location and is right on the beach. The included Breakfast Buffet is excellent and way better than any other free hotel breakfasts. Now for the negatives: Check-in was a nightmare. Two people working the main desk answering phones along with trying to check in about 30 people in line. They had no idea what rooms were cleaned so had to keep contacting housekeeping to find out which ones were available. Took about an hour to check-in. No complimentary water in the lobby area while you waited and bathrooms were locked and could not be opened without a room key and no room key since you are waiting in line with about 30 others. After finally checking in, we made our way to our room and unloaded. Rooms are outdated and not clean. Sheets are too small for the mattress and kept coming off. Room smelled musty. Balcony overlooking the ocean was wonderful BUT the ac unit from the unit above you leaks on you as you sit there, We quickly changed and headed to the beach. We spent a few hours there and my 20 year old adult daughter headed back to the room only to find out we had been locked out. She went to the front desk to find out what happened and was treated very badly and told we had not paid and needed to leave immediately. The woman at the front desk was very loud trying to embarrass my daughter who had no idea what was going on. My daughter asked to go to the room to get her cell phone to call me to come back from the beach to resolve the issue and was told very rudely she could NOT do that. Finally a man working at the hotel said he would escort her to the room to allow her to call me. I immediately came in from the beach to resolve the issue. I spoke to the same front desk lady that had belittled my daughter and treated her like a criminal. She sang a completely different tune to me and kept apologizing for the "mistake -- she made" but never once apologized to my daughter. She tried to bully my young adult daughter and this is completely unacceptable. We decided to make the best of the stay since it was my daughter's birthday but unfortunately things did not get any better. Our bathroom leaked and we got wet as we sat on the toilet-- we called maintenance immediately and he put some towels in the ceiling to catch the drip. My boyfriend asked why repairs are not being made and he just shrugged his shoulders. I'm very disappointed in Best Western and this hotel. i stay in a lot of hotels including Best Western and this one definitely needs LOTS of work. For the simple fact of how we were treated, we will NOT be returning to this hotel or recommending anyone else to stay here.

Text 56*

Not the hotel for you if you enjoy sleep

We checked in on a Monday. That night the bar downstairs had live music outside. They started around 7pm. With my 2 little boys we were read for bed at 930, the music was still playing. We were on the 3rd floor right above the bar. We called the front desk and they said they don't stop playing music until 11pm. This is on a Monday! Not a weekend. No sleep for us until 11 when they stopped playing. So if you don't mind going to bed late this is the hotel for you. Other than the music, the pool is nice, my kids enjoyed the kiddie pool. The free breakfast was good. The location is nice, right by the pier, and its oceanfront. The parking garage is tight, bring your good driving skills. The staff is friendly.

Text 57*

Would not recommend!!

The only 2 good things about this hotel is the location and the beach view. This hotel is very over priced for the quality. When we checked in and went to the first room, it had a crack in the ceiling and the commode seat was broken. So we notified the front desk and switched rooms. The second room had a crack in the ceiling, no wash cloths, and no tv remote. So I went down to the front desk to get wash cloths and see about a remote. The guy gave me wash cloths and said he would find a remote and call the room so we could come back for it. Which he never did. While at the front desk another guest was inquiring about a maintenance issue they had notified them about earlier and the employee was a little short and rude with them, telling them they only had one maintenance worker and they would get to them when they could. The room itself was ok. The bed clothes had some stains on them the floors could have used a good cleaning. We also found out that the sink did not want to drain very well. The next day our room was not cleaned. We had to call the front desk to have them send someone up to clean the room. The cleaning person was helpful in finding a remote for us and leaving extra towels and wash cloths. On 2 different occasions our room key cards quit working, so we would have to go back to the front desk to have them re-activated. My husband tried to speak with the manager a couple of different times, but the manager avoided him. He never did call us back, once he had another employee call us back but he would not talk to us himself. The hotel also has an attached restaurant that has live music being played until 11 at night. So don't plan on going to bed early. We were on the 4th floor and it was still very loud. I do not recommend this hotel and I do not plan on staying here myself again. When you take a family vacation and pay the kind of money we did, you do not want to have to deal with all of these different issues.

Text 58

Worst hotel ever

Went to Best Western and had the worst stay ever. Left room in morning came back at four o'clock still had no maid service went down asked for service gave room number said they would send someone right up. At 7:30 still had no service had to go down to front desk again to ask for service. When service did finally come in she gave us towels and half made beds. The outside door to the deck did not lock the hotel was in poor condition. Will never stay here again

Text 59

Poor housekeeping, excellent views

I am disappointed with our stay. The room itself, balcony, and halls were dirty. There was garbage left on the balcony including drinks from the people before us. There was debris in all the corners of the rooms so you could tell they just didn't clean the floor after the last guests. There was old twizzlers and ketchup packets left behind the dresser. The window was smudged up as well. Day after day the same garbage was seen on the steps and in the doorways. The doors, walls, and window frames were chipped up and in need of painting. The breakfast was nice, but even the conference room seemed cheap with beat up tables with no linen. The staff is not friendly or helpful. The pool was okay, the views are spectacular. We didn't spend much time there and at least there wasn't bugs.

Text 60

At least you might have a view!

Let's start with their rates. A room runs about \$350 a night. I personally did not pay this but the average person would.

When my family and I arrived after driving 13 hrs from Cleveland our reservation had somehow disappeared! We waited an extra 3 hrs for a room. Fun times I tell ya!!! Then we get our room that was dirty I might add. Carpet had clearly not been vacuumed and a bug was squished on the ceiling over the bed closest to the balcony. Oh the balcony! I love it and hate it at the same damn time.... You see you have this fantastic view of the ocean and the pier but the door is broken so you might get locked out of your room. 😬 Luckily my husband was fortunate enough to not be alone when it happened. Within the first five minutes of being in the room he was locked out on the balcony and I had to call the front desk to have a handyman pry him out. Then they point out the rotting locking mechanism. But at least you got a view! The free breakfast was pretty much a disaster try to get in and out if you can lol. The elevator takes forever and there's only 9 floors. Most of the people that work there are careless and will pretty much say anything to get you to go away. Pretty much if you're not somehow staying there for free you should stay away. Don't waist a dime on this place!

Text 61

Run down, poor service, needs a remodel

We stayed here due to a wedding on the beach that we were attending. The rooms are run down, the tub slicker almost came out of the wall when we tried to use the shower. The bathrooms are tiny with little to no where to even put your toiletries. Vending machines don't work or are empty and room service was not available due to a worker who never showed up. The beach towels are thread barren and are monitored in case you want yo steal one. I would not stay here again; although the beach wedding setting was beautiful.

Text 62

Wedding weekend

We stayed at Grand Plaza for a long weekend for our friends wedding on pass a grille beach. The hotel is old but parts of it have been updated. They charge \$50 to check in early which is absurd. The bathrooms are small with little to no counter space. The closet door cannot be fully opened because it bangs into the hinge on the door to the room. There is a mini fridge, microwave and safe in the room. The housekeeping is definitely poor. We came back to our room one day at 3pm and it still had not been serviced. Another day it was after 2pm before being cleaned. The website advertised Bath and Body Works products which was not what we had. The pool and pool area is very small. They also advertised a drink cart at the beach which we never saw over a 5 day stay. When we asked about it they said it was broken down but that we could go get drinks from the bar and bring them to the beach. That's great but I'm on vacation and don't want to do that. I want someone to provide the services advertised. The beach bar Bongos does have good food and drinks. And the chairs and umbrella or cabana is included in the fees which is nice. I have stayed at several resorts on this beach and I will not come back to this one.

Text 63

Disappointed. Not at all like the pictures advertised. This place is tired!!!!

We booked this hotel for our 40th anniversary. The room was advertised at \$189 but after fees and "resort fee" it came to \$256 per night. We booked a partial ocean view room with a King and queen bed and balcony. Check in was at 4pm and we arrived early, at 2:30, and asked if we could check in early. Room wasn't ready so they set our bags aside and we went upstairs to the rooftop restaurant lounge, Spinners, for cocktails. The restaurant has a nice panoramic view of the ocean and beach, and it slowly rotates as you dine. This I recommend, the rooftop restaurant is nice. We checked with the front desk at 4:15 and our room was still not ready. It was Sunday, and it was not busy. We finally got our 7th floor room around 4:40. It had a lovely view with a couple resin chairs and table outside. The air conditioning unit from the floor above, however, was dripping water on the railing. The room had a very small bathroom with only a few inches of counter space. I had to put the toilet seat down and use it as counter space for my cosmetic bags. The faucet had the handle replaced with a mismatched piece, and the sink didn't have a stopper in it, just a big gaping hole, and the water shot out of the faucet splashing everywhere including your clothes if you weren't careful. The fixtures were worn and rusty, and the outlets were yellowed and the exhaust was noisy. There was a lack of comfortable seating and beds were uncomfortable. The whole hotel is tired and needs a facelift.

Text 64*

Needs improvement!

We have visited the Grand Plaza four times. Our previous experiences have been good thus we returned. This time we could smell the smoke from the top and bottom of the upstairs and downstairs room balconies, so we could not sit on our balconies since the smell of smoking was too strong. The elevators for 3 days had a terrible smell. The Wi Fi did not work the first day of our arrival, then just on and off the following days. Spinners did not have the service available before. Very disappointed.

Someone needs to do more training!

Text 65*

Such a dirty and old hotel!!

Don't waste your money! From the moment we walked in I knew we were in for a rough experience. The building smelled like sewage, we had blood stained sheets, dirty towels, hair on the bathroom floor that was from the previous guests, chipped paint on the ceiling box of water damage, and the pool was so dirty it had white froth floating on top of the water!!! We couldn't even use the pool! We had to drive into town to let the kids swim at the aquatic center!! Don't waste your time or money on this! We purchased through Groupon and it was the worst experience ever! They wouldn't even refund us back all our money!

Text 66*

I DON'T RECOMMEND IT AT ALL

I don't recommend it at all, this hotel ruined my staying!!! This hotel is dirty and old, hallways, rooms, bathrooms and amenities. The whole hotel has bad smell as

bathroom gas, humidity and dirty water (sewer). When we got the room we noticed the toilet was open and it had dry pee like a man used it hours ago, this bathroom was really nasty and old, dirty bath walls, the room was the same with a stranger smell as humidity, the mattress was a nightmare because it was old not conform at all, the same with old pillows, the terrace was dirty and a lot of water because the air conditioner of another room up and next to us, the air conditioner of our room didn't work well (we couldn't change temperature because it is setting and blocked, so we were sleeping in a hot ambiance). It is so sad because we went to Publix and bought candles and Lysol disinfectant spray to sprinkle the whole bedroom and bathroom. We had the opportunity to watch how the staff made the hotel cleaning services in two different rooms next to us and we could understand why the completely hotel including hallways are dirty and bad smelled. I'm adding some pictures, I wish can add smell in this review that way many people could understand me and why this hotel is not a good option!!! Hope my complains when I made the check out and this review could help to your future decision to stay here or the owners and management to this hotel could make better things for their guests!

Text 67*

Disappointing for the Price

We checked in and were so excited to stay at the Grand Plaza. Once we checked in, we went to the beach bar and sat for 20 minutes only to be completely ignored by both bartenders. When we asked for menus the bartender snapped at us and said "don't you see I'm busy". So we got up and just went to the beach.

That night we were asleep in bed at at 230am 2 guys were screaming and fighting in the hall. We let it go for 15 minutes then they started banging on doors and a girl was getting involved so we called the front desk. They said someone would be up shortly. This went on until 445am. Between that and the highly uncomfortable beds, we didn't sleep AT ALL. we called the desk in the morning and asked for a late check out since we didn't sleep at all and were told "absolutely not unless we wanted to pay \$50". We will not be back and we will not be recommending this property. As a blogger and influencer in the community I'll make sure to let my friends and followers know to choose a different beach property.

Text 68

Save your money, not worth it.

This is the first of many reviews of this horrible place. I travel often, I love St. Pete. The service I've been experiencing here is less than good. I ordered a Long Island iced tea from the bar and it came tasting like someone dumped a crap ton of cough syrup in the drink. When I asked the server Paul about the ingredients he immediately got defensive and stated "our bartender knows how to make a Long Island." Please keep in mind that I've bartended for years so I know what a Long Island should taste like and this was not it. By the way this happened at BONGOS beach bar.

Text 69

Avoid at all costs!

I'm so beyond disappointed with this property. When I arrived, the person checking us in was friendly and informative. It only went downhill from there! The next morning we went to have breakfast at the lobby restaurant. They were so rude and so nasty to myself and my mother. After waiting forever for our waiter to come back, my mother raised her hand to get the attention of someone. The host rolled his eyes, mouthed a nasty profanity to himself, and angrily said "yes ok I see you." Then, our waiter came over and acted as if we were a burden to him! On top of that, the food is terrible and extremely overpriced. What's even worse is the CEILING started falling apart as we were sitting there and the back was flooding! They were in the middle of a rainy season but come on! It's a HOTEL!! The rooms were terrible condition. The bathtub had the stopper just sitting on the ledge where the soap is usually placed, there was dirt on the floor and the towels had yellow stains. Our balcony door was hard to shut, and the beds were terribly uncomfortable. Additionally, the hotel charges a resort fee which covers beach chairs, towels, cabanas, etc. I knew this before traveling and was prepared to pay this. However, it rained our entire first day there. As a hotel, they shouldn't be charging for amenities that clearly can't be used. I wouldn't have minded it so much if the rooms were clean and the service was tolerable. I am so bummed that my vacation turned out to be absolutely terrible!

Text 70

Do not recommend

Not happy with my stay there, this is not a well run hotel. Not very friendly or organized. I will not be staying there again. Upon checking in the whole hotel and my room smelled like bleach/sewage.

The front desk staff gets the job done but were not very friendly, very average and seemed like they had worked there for a million years.

The bellman who took my bags to the room just pretty much threw them in, didn't get out the luggage rack and again wasn't very friendly, it seemed as if he had worked there a long time as well and was pretty much over it.

Towels were old and rough, as well as cheap toilet paper. I felt like things were being done to "save money" Not something you would expect from a hotel that portrays a high end image online.

The Rooftop restaurant and gym were closed, I was not made aware of this until after checking in, honestly no one seemed to care and one of the reasons I chose this hotel was for the rooftop dining.

The pool bar was old and dirty. The bartender had her Chick Fil A lunch on the counter and was eating it as she made my drink, Gross. The service was slow and she questioned me when I wanted to put it on my room, she said I wasn't on her "list" and wanted me to pay cash. I insisted she call the front desk. This happened twice while I was there.

When I went to the front desk to discuss these matters and I asked for a supervisor they said one wasn't there.., that I could check back later..

The other thing that was questionable was that if I wanted my room ready before 4:00 I had to pay \$25, I did this because it was going to rain and then magically my room was ready in 30 minutes. Charging people in this matter is tacky. I travel a lot and have never had this happen. Most hotels are very accommodating and do their best

to get guests in their rooms asap without and extra charge.

In my opinion this is a very poorly run hotel. I will not be returning and will not recommend

Text 71

Oh Dear disappointed

We arrived at the Serata to find our room bore no resemblance to the website. The room smelt of disinfectant and there were chipped tiles on the floor. The rooms were very dated (certainly didn't look like they had been upgraded as stated on website) and it felt like a prison cell.

The staff were very nice at trying to sort this out by offering an upgrade to a suite. This was even worse with people hanging around the landings drinking and smoking and kids on the rampage. We have a young child ourselves but quite frankly we didnt feel safe.

We decided to move to another hotel which thankfully has none of the above. Sorry Serata, nice staff but we won't be coming back.

Text 72

If you want to stay in a run down frat house....you've found the place!

We planned a couples retreat to Sirata the first week in June. When we arrived, they were having computer issues and the line was out the door. The manager gave everyone free drink tickets and a key card to retrieve beach towels for the inconvenience. We stuck it out in the line for an hour and a half. When we got to the desk, the employee was very kind and got us our rooms quickly. We were given room 2230. We were told many times about a billion dollar remodel that the resort had undergone. The remodel that they referenced was basically putting lipstick on a pig. In our room there was mold seeping through the paint in the bathroom and there were little bugs crawling on the floor. GROSS! Our friends room wasn't any better. You could see into there room because of a gap that went all the way around the door. We decided to try to make the best of a bad situation and go see what the rest of the resort (that word is stretching it!) had to offer. The courtyard reeked of marijuana and there were teenagers using beer bong on the entry ways to the rooms overlooking the restaurant. We decided right then and there that there was no way we were staying the week. We paid over \$350 for our room for 1 night. The rooms are what you would see in a low end motel. Needless to say, we left out bright and early the next morning. Had the resort next door had a room on the day we arrived, we wouldn't have even stayed a night! When we went to check out, there were several charges on my bill that were not from me. I requested a copy of the receipts that made up the charges and they promptly removed them. My advice to everyone, don't waste your money at this low end motel. Drive an hour further and go to Sarasota/Lido Key. There are classier resorts with private beaches for less expense.

Text 73

Disappointing family vacation..

Hi all! It pains me to type this since the last few visits to the Sirata were as good as it could get (even through the remodeling). This last trip was extremely disappointing to say the least. From a family vacation standpoint which is what we look forward to all year long the Sirata is probably not the best choice.. While the resort is beautiful and well maintained our last 9 day \$2000 stay was frustrating as we had to call and ask for housekeeping 3 times which was just for new towels & washclothes, the air conditioning stopped working properly on 3 separate days (3 calls to the front desk), and the non stop weddings that caused us and many other non wedding vacationers to be redirected by hotel staff to park much further from our building entrance, and the unannounced pride party that no one communicated to us prior to our booking our stay in which we were given the choice to join in OR take our families to the other side of the property and taking away some of the amenities we paid for.. I have young children at a very impressionable age that should not have been subjected to some of the things they saw or some of the questions we were forced to answer because of the oversight of management. With my frustrations out of the way I will commend the Sirata again for the upkeep, the amenities (when available to you), very nice rooms, and overall very pleasing and helpful staff. If you are looking for a beach wedding, the Sirata would be a great place as the weddings are clearly a much bigger priority than regular guests. If you are wanting a nice family vacation you may want to consider other offerings in the area where they at least separate the wedding venues off to another part of the property. Sadly we are now in search of a new resort that has the best interests of ALL guests in mind.

Text 74*

What housekeeping????

So I am disappointed to say this hotel was appalling! Despite its fantastic location, it lacks the staff and modernity to keep up with today's present society. The decor is out of date and has shoddy paintwork. The rooms themselves are fine. But there is a resort fee which is not mentioned when you book?

But the biggest disappointment was the staff at this hotel, you would expect more than this motel standard staff. The worst was the housekeeping, not only did they miss out cleaning our rooms 3 times in total but when called upon they said they would come straight away to clean it, 45 minutes later, still nothing so yet again I had to call reception to get them to send them up ONCE AGAIN! And 3 times is a ridiculous amount, this should not be happening. BUT IT GETS WORSE! Not only do they forget to clean the rooms but they left one of our doors open with the latch across and the door leaning on it, they leave it like this whilst cleaning and left ours like it when they left! Where anyone could have come in and taken what ever they wanted!!! Absolutely appalling and not what you would expect in any hotel!!!

So housekeeping was shocking and then the bar, mostly fine but we got raw salmon on one salad, and a cold burger and the grilled cheese element wasn't cooked either, I think you need to address the cook staff.

The fridge in my room, when I opened it to store water at the start of my stay, I found a cookie in the fridge which should have been checked prior to my arrival, that's

standard but yet again something else the sirata failed to do.

So if you are considering staying here, trust me, stay anywhere else, a motel would probably have better staff than this place. A disappointing end to our holiday, we will NOT be returning

Text 75*

Disappointed

I typically don't write reviews, I do recognize when people go above and beyond, however I don't have time to be negative. I am a Hilton Diamond member, and have stayed in hotels over 60 nights so far this year. We were so looking forward to some R and R after a week of volleyball in Orlando with our daughter. Perhaps we are used to getting more for our money, I don't feel we received that at this resort. Other than Bill at Beach Services, most of the staff didn't seem to want to be at the resort. This started at check in, where the staff seemed understaffed, and uninterested. Bill on the beach was awesome; happy and helpful. The rest of the beach service staff seemed preoccupied, and on there cell phones. I walked by and there was a dirty diaper in front of there hunt, which was picked up after I commented on it. The staff at Harry's was inattentive, we ate there twice and the waiter took our order once, didn't check on additional drinks and we had to wait for the bill. The young man/bus boy did come by and filled up our water. We are also used to having a waiter take orders at the pool, which didn't occur at this resort. It also appears that Harry's is open to the public, including the pool.

We asked what the resort fee was for, and were told it was for the pool, parking and internet. We didn't understand why the resort pools appear to be open to the public. Locals seemed well aware the pool was open to them, they made sure to tell us this too. My wife asked why they didn't have resort bands on.

The first day when we arrived there were dust bunnies in our room on the ceiling, and not just a few. There were also pubic hairs in the tub. Guest services did clean this up, at 10 pm when we wanted to go to bed. we heard nothing from management. The rooms were very small, which is fine, my inlaws room appeared to be updated, ours didn't.

When we checked out of the resort, we were asked how the stay was, we shared our experience and some concerns, and the gentleman checking us out simply replied, OK. Again, perhaps at \$300 per night we had higher expectations. Probably just disappointed more than anything.

The location is great, the beach was nice, the water was awesome, and the weather was fantastic. I would like to give another shout out to Bill; super friendly, informative, and really seems to love what he is doing! I would go back to St. Pete or Clearwater, most likely stay at Don Cesar (Which we have stayed at in the past, simply awesome), or a Hilton Property in Clearwater.

Text 76*

Poor Management

Just got back from a weekend at the Sirata with our children. The moment we opened our door to our room we were blasted with the smell of Marijuana. EXTREMELY POTENT. Very strong. I called front desk to be told housekeeping would come clean & spray. 20mins later the fire alarms were set off in the entire building. No maid showed. The next day figured it would be gone. No it was worse.

The maid came to drop off towels and asked if I had marijuana. Really!! I expressed to her that we have reported this several times with no concerns from hotel staff. She radioed supervisor. The supervisor came to our room to take a smell. She agreed that the smell was VERY STRONG. She said she'd like to accommodate us with a dinner voucher & that she'd return with it within 5mins. She NEVER RETURNED. No voucher. She also stated she'd send someone to deep clean. No one ever showed. We again called the front desk to be told Marijuana is legal. Yes this might be true however would it be ok to sit and smoke cigarettes in the room?! I don't smoke & prefer for my children & I not to smell & breathe it for 3 days. This is my first time ever complaining/leaving a bad review. Just not my character. But seriously take care of business or give me my money back. I would have stayed elsewhere. Upon checkout my husband was extremely upset & asked to speak to a supervisor. We were told she was busy. The front desk clerk returned our resort fee & said the manager would mail us a voucher for 1 complimentary night. Just overall disappointed in the way the management treated this situation.

Text 77*

Horrific Experience!!

My wife and I took the kids back to Sirata following there "renovations". Upon arriving we were given the incorrect room and then advised our type room was not available. That evening we were credited the resort fee and \$75 food credit, which I thought was a nice gesture. The following day we could not get into our correct room until 2pm. Upon getting the new room, we found it to have an empty hole where the microwave was suppose to be and no towels. Ultimately, the Director of Operations Kevin told my wife he would come up personally. That conversation was at 3pm, we waited until 3:50pm, and sure enough no Kevin. The following day we woke up to the smell of urine. I take off the top sheet to find a urine stain. I finally spoke with Kevin and expressed my frustration. Following my conversation with Kevin I received a text msg from him advising our room was being listed as a VIP therefore himself or Housekeeping Mgr would inspect our room each day, also our beach amenities would be covered, to put our food/beverage on the room because credits would be applied, and finally the resort wanted to provide a dinner for my family on our last day. That evening we sat on the bed to watch a movie with the kids and there was the smell again of urine (so much for the VIP inspection) I again took off the sheets and found the exact same urine stain. I text Kevin because he told me to text with any problems and I NEVER heard back from Kevin the remainder of the trip. We NEVER heard back about the family dinner. Upon checking out NONE of the credits had been applied. While checking out I met the Director of Accounting (Rick) who applied the credits and apologized, which was nice of him but not his place to have to apologize. Also the ONLY meal applied to the room beyond the first day was the last day because we were anticipating the apparent family dinner. Rick advised I would be hearing from either Kevin or the General MGR, Pat. I have been back home from over TWO weeks and still no contact from the resort. I was not looking to get a free trip, although I was looking for quality customer service, especially when dealing with Directors. The customer service and cleanliness of the rooms was beyond horrible.

Text 78

Horrible!

If I could give this horrible hotel a -10, I would!! Nothing but a disaster. When we arrived, we learned that the Deluxe King one bedroom Oceanfront Suite was “not available”. So they stuck us in a double queen room with a lovely view of the hotel rooftops and the ocean beyond that. It was old and outdated. TINY. We were assured we would not be charged the resort fee. We were. We were in fact triple charged for our stay and asked to move rooms in the middle of our stay. The desk manager was horrible and could care less about his job. Do not book this hotel!!!! Not worth \$0.01.

Text 79

Stay away- not as advertised

This is my first trip advisor review- I only thought it fair to let others know that this resort is NOT as advertised. To start off.. I was looking forward to staying at a nice resort with my husband- the pictures were beautiful. I have stayed at four star hotels (for work) and also at motel 8s (with my fam growing up) and I figured this hotel would be somewhere in the middle. However the rooms at this resort are comparable to rooms at a dirty, old roadside motel.

I have to say, I was appalled by the state of the rooms. The first room we checked into was dusty, dirty and had pubic and long hairs in the shower. The bathroom was old, small and outdated. We went back to the front desk and requested a clean room and we were “upgraded” to a bigger room with a kitchenette. This second room had a dehumidifier that had spilled and released water all over the floor of the room. There was black mold on the ceiling, the bathroom again- was dirty, and there was a blood stain on the shower curtain. We requested a diff room again and the third room was dirty too! (hairs in the tub, on the bed pillows and literal poop on the seat of the toilet) however at least there was no mold. My husband didn’t want to go through the hassle of finding another place and told me he would clean the room. I, however, did ask to speak to a manager. The manager offered us several free drink coupons and breakfast coupons and offered to VIP clean our room and have a manager double check it. (Shouldn’t all rooms be VIP clean??)

Even after our room was cleaned again there were still long hairs strewn around the room and we found an old blood stain on the comforter that was hidden beneath a sheet. Our sheets were not switched out during our three day stay and the floors were never mopped or swept. The shower drain was clogged which led to standing water in the tub during showers. The first day our room had no washcloths or bath mat. The second day we got two stained washcloths. The shower was never re-cleaned.

The rooms look updated from a distance but upon closer inspection the furniture is rusting out, the walls are streaked with dirt and food, and the laminate floor is warped and sticky/dirty.

The only saving grace at this resort was the beach outside of the resort and the friendly servers at the restaurants. Yes, the pools look nice and the view is beautiful

but I would never stay here again. I can deal with outdated but I cannot deal with dirty disgusting rooms.

Text 80

Disgusting

This hotel is nothing like the photos advertised! We stayed here for a family wedding (2 nights) and we couldn't wait to go home! The rooms were absolutely FILTHY! The floors haven't been swept or mopped (our feet turned black from walking from the bed to bathroom). The AC was loud and in the other room, broken! The bathroom was not clean nor were the sinks! Nothing was wiped down. The room has a smell like urin (3 other family members said theirs smelled the same). Parking is extremely limited, customer service was the worst. Oh and if you like roaches, this is the place for you! A very overpriced MOTEL! I'd give it 0 stars if I could. The beach location does not make this place any better!

Text 81

Terrible staff

I was charged \$107 for attempting to bring two guest into the club. As soon as he (think his name is Ed) charged me at the podium I told him forget it we will leave and to remove charge. He said he removed charge but he lied. He also lied about us leaving before entering the club to hotel management (they took his side), not believing we never entered the club. Only when I told them to look at security footage to time of corresponding charge did they "take my word for it.". Uphill battle with them for days! The staff lied to get me an unjustified charged of \$107. He should be fired and managment should treat customers better... they want to investigate, that is fine...then listen to me and when I say he was a lying and review security tapes which don't lie. You're staff sucks!

Text 82

Breakers palmetto

When we checked in at 3:30 our room was not ready. We were told 10-15 minutes and someone would call us to come pick up our keys. No one called. I had to call 45 minutes later. We get to our room and the bedding was clean and that was it. Bathroom was disgusting there were stains on the curtains and walls. My daughter called to get extra towels and we were told we would need to come down to get them. There was a constant smell of weed coming from the balcony and hallways. Very disappointed and will not return.

Text 83

DO NOT STAY AT BREAKERS

This place is terrible and I would NEVER recommend it to anyone traveling to Myrtle Beach. To start, the photos they have uploaded online are fake and not representative of their properties. It is NOT a resort..it is a hotel, and cannot top a motel 6. The carpets were wet and moldy, we had mold around our sinks, the water

coming out smelled like sewer water, two people couldn't shower at the same time and have hot water, our maid service would pick up dirty towels & empty trash...that was it. Beds never made, new towels never left, sand never cleaned up/room not vacuumed. It was a complete joke! We were fortunate enough to finally be able to find a place towards the end of our trip to move to...and that was a resort and what we were expecting here. Don't waste your time and end up with an awful stay. We couldn't sit down and relax in our room, the furniture was disgusting.

Text 84*

Do your research!

I want to start off with that my housekeeping service had went through my luggage and used my cell phone associates without my knowledge. I came back to the room and caught her in the act after leaving the beach. She was in a panicked state where she did not finish her job and just laid towel by the TV and left, she even left her phone hooked up to my charger and on my mount. We had brought our 8month old and had to lay her down for a nap after she left because it was that time of day. She must have know she was in the wrong because she sent someone to our room to retrieve the phone, waking my baby which lost me time because we had to sooth her back to sleep. Very concerning. Second, on my day of check the concierge seemed to be preoccupied with her cell phone and unaprochable. Now some of the front desk ladies had good spirits but some seemed they hated their job and as a HR Rep. that concerned me. Did not feel like a customer but more as a cow being herded into my pen. There was no elevator in my building which was an inconvenience due to luggage and dealing with the baby stroller, this was not digressed in the description of my room during booking. Need to improve on building and room descriptions for booking. The customer service I received in the restaurants was excellent! The room was advertised as "newly renovated," this did not seem the case. The drawer fell out of the night stand like it was broke. The TV remote was broke, the gentleman who came and fixed this was extremely nice. Shower head had poor pressure. Patio door looked like someone tried force the door open and had the frame bent. Overall my experience with the hotel was poor and I dont believe I would recommend this to friends and/or colleges. Will leave review on Google and other social media platforms.

Text 85*

DO NOT STAY HERE!

We stayed here for 5 nights and 6 days the week after the Fourth of July. We were in the Palmetto Tower room 1003, our room was terribly dirty! There was mold growing around the seal of our refrigerator which I had to clean before I would even put food in the fridge. The bath tub was so disgusting I refused to shower in it without my shoes on!

The tile in the bathroom was also gross, had visible dirt everywhere. Our room was only cleaned once the whole time we were there. We had to repeatedly track down a housekeeper to get clean towels. We also ran out of toilet paper and called for a whole day straight to try to get some and the front desk would never answer. When we did finally get ahold of them it took 6 hours for them to get us some. And then we only got one roll and we were staying in a room with two queen beds and 4 people. It was absolutely terrible! I will never stay here again. The pool area was also

extremelydirty and not kept up. Trash everywhere.
Spend your money elsewhere.

Text 86*

Location is great. That's it..

Location is fantastic. That's where it stops. Restaurants, Starbucks, dessert and shopping in walking distance. Hotel sits directly on the beach which is convenient. This property has on-site water slides, a lazy river and several small pools. The main pools are incredibly small so they become crowded quickly and are very noisy. Patrons are allowed to bring whatever they want to the pools. Coolers, boom boxes, etc. It can become very loud and obnoxious. Sweet Home Alabama for hours. Children will enjoy the outside attractions but adults will not. The hotel rooms are awful. They are outdated both with technology and furnishings. There are rugs which are filthy. Walls are covered in wallpaper that is peeling. Bathrooms are outdated and showers are dirty. You can feel the slime under your feet as you step in the tub. There are wet floors in the lobby from the pool area and only three elevators. Be careful when you book a room and plan on using the pull out sofa. You MUST move the other furniture in the room out of the way first before turning out the sofa bed or it will not open. When it is fully open, there is no room to walk past. Therefore you will not be able to access the balcony or the kitchenette area. Housekeeping was definitely not the best. They were not friendly and they only came one time the entire week. We had to ask for towels and toilet paper every day then wait. At times we went downstairs to collect them because housekeeping took too long to deliver them. Calling the front desk is an issue as well. They do not pick up the phone. Although in person, the front desk employees were friendly, helpful and accommodating. My family checked in late at night. We dropped our luggage and went to sleep after a 12 hour drive. When we woke up we noticed a substantial amount of black mold on the ceiling which was coming from the air conditioning vent. There was so much mold that it spanned across the entire ceiling and down the wall directly over the beds. The rug was saturated with water. The front desk staff was quick in executing a plan to change our room and was extremely helpful and accommodating in rectifying the situation. We were given the same room on a lower floor. The room seemed ok at first until we noticed there were roaches. At this point we were leaving the next day and gave up. Do not expect much from this place. I would highly recommend you stay elsewhere. Although the kids will find it fun, you won't when you have to come home after a 12 hour drive and spend hours cleaning all your belongings (including your car) in hopes of not bringing roaches into your home. Beware...

Text 87*

Your hearing is at risk, load afternoon pool noise!

We stayed at the Breakers (Pirates Cove) and have several complaints. This was our first stay there and we would not stay there again. The most annoying situation was the noise level of the all afternoon DJ music at the pool. It was way too load even with all doors closed and must have exceeded the legal dB level, it was enough to cause hearing damage. Other problems were related to the room we stayed in: the toilet was not cleaned properly (very dirty under the rim); the cleaning service missed our room the first day (they said a regular cleaner was out that day); no cups or glasses were provided in the room; all drains (toilet, sink and tub) were very slow;

and the second day they did not vacuum the room. At check in, we tried to claim our AARP discount and they rejected our request saying that the rooms were already discounted. This seemed like bait/switch situation because the AARP discount was not advertised that way. On the positive side, the AC worked well and all towels and bed linens were up to standards. We would not recommend that people stay there.

Text 88

A palmetto bug is still a roach, and doesn't belong in my room

I hate leaving bad reviews, but this "resort" is a mess. We had a king suite, you enter from the hallway straight into the bedroom. The hallway is so noisy at all hours, no sleep to be had. We moved to the living room, but we couldn't open the balcony because the amount of marijuana being smoked must've been so great that we couldn't smell the ocean, and while out to dinner, I could smell it in my daughter's hair. We had roaches/palmetto bugs staying with us too. They were the fastest ones I've ever encountered. Gave up trying to kill them. I discreetly let the front desk know of our issues, as I'm aware it's difficult to police every room and hallway, and I get that whether you see them or not, roaches are everywhere around us. But I requested to speak to a manager, left my number and never received a call. We ended up checking out a day early. No one really seemed to care our trip was cut short. Very happy to be home!

Text 89

Wrong room, dirty upon entering, windows were filthy, mold, mildew, dirt, bad beds, burnt food, ROACHES!

After staying on the phone for an hour trying to book the room we wanted, we got there and was given everything we didn't want as far as a room! The room was still filthy with food on the counter and the floors were disgusting. Housekeeping did return to clean up with an attitude and let's just say she didn't clean! Thank God I brought a cleaner and paper towels and finished the job myself. The beds were sloppily made. Pillows facing the wrong way. The windows were so bad you couldn't see out of them. My daughter was given a burnt hot dog that night for dinner, that obviously we sent back and received a proper hot dog. 🤢🤢 Then we were greeted with roaches in our room! 🦋 We stayed in a two bedroom suite and they were in every room! They were crawling out behind the mirrors in the bathrooms. I literally killed one in every room. Multiple in the kitchen! As I was finally crawling in bed after murdering all the bugs I found another one on the wall by my head! Let's just say I had nightmares that night! 🤢 There was mold and mildew in lots of places throughout the Paradise Tower. I understand that this location is right on the beach, but please understand this was what we considered our home away from home for close to a decade, that used to be well maintained and had a touch of love! The staff used to be so friendly but they were quiet and standoffish this time. I don't know if they have new management or have lost the good employees they had. But it has completely went downhill and we will not return! It's super sad to see some place that you love for so long literally fall apart. I don't care if we were there during "palmetto bug season", I believe it's just a nice way of saying that we do have roaches. Then to literally try to force bug spray on people while they are staying in a room blows my mind. Like I have read from other reviews maybe they should just tear all those buildings down and start over. The only thing they have going for them is they are right on the beach!

To have to spend hours literally shaking everything out and packing everything before you leave the night before and making sure that it is hung up on a bell cart so hopefully you don't have to bring home any bugs... total inconvenience! Never again! I have never stayed in a hotel where I had to worry about anything like that!

Text 90

Stay away!!!

Family vacation from hell. Save your money. Spent alot of money for my children to smell weed all week. Called front desk and was told "what do you want me to do about it". Nice. Spoke to the manager and he said all we can do is send security up. Which by the way never happened. The manager told me "he was the wrong person to talk to because he has no sense of smell" really?? Totally unprofessional. Also if you do need to do laundry, that is a joke. Palmetto building. One washer on the 4th floor and one on the 8th. The one on the 8th floor was broke all 8 days. By the paper taped to it that said "broken" with dust on it, it appears to have been broken for some time. My advise, spend a little more and stay at a real hotel.

Text 91

Weekend Stay at Patricia Grand Hotel

Hotel needs to dispose of soiled sheets and DO NOT place them on beds for guests. The sheets in our room had dried stains of some sort. A shower curtain was not placed in our shower. After requesting a shower curtain, the attendant delivered it to our room but did not install it. Once we installed the shower curtain we noticed it was unclean and soiled as well. The stopper in the bathroom sink was broken and the water did not drain. The dishes provided in the kitchenette were dirty. The front counter staff was nice and the hotel did provide a small refund for the inconvenience however we will never stay at this hotel again.

Text 92

GROSS! DON'T WASTE YOUR MONEY!

First of all, we were told that this place is a grp of rooms independently owned , but managed by the staff here. No changing of sheets or rm cleaning daily. We arrived in a carpeted room that you could feel the sand in the carpet. Room resembled a 'seedy' motel room at best, but the price was not motel priced. Elevators are dirty, fitness center had no sanitazion wipes, or Purell. Asked front desk about this...never resolved. Restaurant was open when there was sufficent staff. I would not recommend this dump to my worst enemy. I don't usually rate, but no one else should get duped like we did. Plus you have to pay a 40.00 fee to rent a beach chair, you know the ones that other hotels let you use for free?

Text 93

Nightmare beach trip

Had booked oceanfront room first of May for June 21,2019. Got to check in and it was a zoo. Tons of people in lobby yelling at the desk. Finally got my turn at the desk told it would be after 4 before I could get in my room. Five o'clock came and I checked to see what the hold up was. Again made my way to the desk for my turn

and was told that they didn't know what time I would get my room. At that point the lobby was full still, people yelling demanding to know what the problem was. The lady next to me told me she had booked ten rooms and the desk told them that they could have 7 rooms and double up. I told the desk I just wanted my money back, I had to get ugly and be demanding. They did return my money but again say it would be 7 working days before it shows up on my card. On my way out I met a couple with small children and he said they told him it would be after ten that night before they could get a room. All the staff would say was the employee that cause the problem no longer with them. I was really a little scared as people were getting angry. So thankful to get out of that place. Another comment people were saying that the elevator took over ten minutes to get to the top rooms. Crazy.

Text 94*

Pet Friendly.... not a luxury hotel

We traveled to Myrtle Beach to visit a Safari and decided to take our pup. The Patricia Grand is one of the few spots on the strip that offers pet friendly accommodations. It is true to its word in being pet friendly aside from that the place is not extremely clean our shower had someone else's hair left on the walls from a previous guest and I def would not walk barefoot in the room as it could use a good sweeping and mop. The elevators are not air conditioned and seem to have issues. At one point we chose to use the stairs up to the 17th floor in 90 degree weather rather than get in the elevators which are 1. extremely slow 2. Hot and muggy 3. Stink 4. Great potential for getting stuck in it. Best advice read every review.

Text 95*

Just so you know

This is not a positive review. This property is so poorly managed. There is no daily room service if you are staying less than 5 nights. You won't even get a refill on toiletries like soap and shampoo.

Our room did not have an iron, we asked for one and did not get it.

The work out room is only open from 9am to 11pm. There were no wipes or towels. It is also poorly air conditioned. I got sick only after two uses.

The picture included in this review is from 9pm at night. They remove towels and trash daily and this time it was left outside of our door for the rest of the day.

The beds were worn down and very uncomfortable. For the cost, it is not a good value. If you are looking for a hotel experience, go elsewhere. If you are looking for a long term rental similar to renting an apartment then this is for you. Neither I or my friend will ever stay here again.

Text 96*

Gross Hotel

This is the worst hotel I have every seen. After driving 13 hours with 2 kids and being excited to finally be in Myrtle Beach we checked in to our room. The man at the counter was hard to understand and did not speak English very well. Upon entering our room we could not believe our eyes. The room was so gross that I immediately called the front desk. We had chosen a non-pet room but the carpet had not been swept and there was crumbs and dog hair all over it. The couch had seams that were ripped and do were the couch pillows. The patio door locks were pulling out of the

wall, the tracks of the patio doors had dirt, paint and drywall chips all in them. Then there were the curtains, it looked like they were st some point stuck to the window and pulled. All the banking was stuck to the window and cracked. There were rip in them and on the edges were frayed. There was also a huge stain that looked like dog pee. While trying to figure out what to do we sat by the pool and that was filthy. Thank God I took out the insurance for \$30. We ended up finding a much nicer and cleaner hotel that night and was refunded the entire amount back.

Text 97*

Roaches roaches and filth!

NEVER I repeat NEVER stay here! I wish I had read reviews or been warned before I booked this roach, filth, and bed bug infested hotel! Our softball team booked this hotel for nationals week... almost all of us (who got lucky) checked out. We checked in which took over an hour completely disorganized got our first room that looked like it was never cleaned.... hair in the drawers and all over the room, filthy sheets, dirt stained toilet and tub, broken safe, moldy carpet! They switched our room which also looked like a scene from a horror movie. We went downstairs to find roaches in the pool and all over the indoor pool-trash in the hallways and elevators went back to our room and had roaches scampering around...we checked out! We told the front desk who didn't seem appalled or affected in anyway by this'. As we were running out another family was running downstairs because their whole room was infested. I could go on and on..never stay there if you value cleanliness

Text 98

Really bad...

Our family of 5 (2 adults and 3 kids) stayed in Room 610 from 8/10-8/13

Seems to be a bit of Jekyll and Hyde with this property based on reviews. There seem to be some decent accommodations at this property but the picture and description provided to us was not as outlined.

Let me offer the good first... the beach and pool facility were very nice, the mini-golf and

After that it's all downhill... unhappy and unfriendly front desk staff; unresponsive maid service; doors all scratched and peeling paint; interior walls all marked up and holes; carpet horribly stained, ripped, torn and frayed; puke on deck; shower that didn't work; TV in bedroom that didn't work; stained kitchenette counter; dirt and garbage behind couch and murphy bed; interior and exterior windows uncleaned; curtains torn and thinned from age.

We're not prudes by any means when it comes to hotels... only have an expectation of clean, accommodative and friendly.

Text 99

My Stay from Aug. 18-23/2019

This is the first time ever writing a review - This was the worst place I have ever stayed in my life. Going to try and make this short and simple. Checked in to our room, Flies and bugs were plastered on the window DEAD. from ceiling to floor. Kitchen cabinets were missing so you were looking at the pipes and sink . Tile was cracked throughout the room. Couch was nasty, should be sitting on the side of the road for pickup, stains all over the couch. Sliding glass doors would not shut so HOT air was coming inside. Asked to be moved , they moved us to another room, alot better but it took us from 5 to 9 to get settled into the room. The other room had dirty towels lying on the floor and hanging, Bathroom had not nor towels been cleaned. All the amenities were not in the room. A very bad experience. There were only 3 Hotel staff that were nice and friendly. They need to be recognized and they were Connie at the front desk. Very nice and friendly, and Stacy and Chanel very nice people and made you feel welcome. The rest of the staff was rude and very unsociable. I hope that other people who book at the Patricia Grand have better luck than we did. The View from the room is awesome but that is about the only good thing I can say and the beach access is awesome also. Good luck, I would suggest if you book, I would take a look at the room they put you in before you start unpacking. Very bad experience.

Text 100

It was horrible!! August 23-25, 2019

The resort was filthy!! It is very PET friendly but is unclean. I watched one guest kill a flea to keep it from her dog. There was feces at the entrance so watch your step. The room was large with plenty of space, but the towel bars were missing in the bathroom, but the metal brackets were sticking out of the wall. We could not use the amenities we paid for because the resort was so unclean. To sit on the couch and chair, we used the extra sheets as slipcovers. The chairs were filthy. This was the second room as we requested another one after finding dog hair on the carpet after purchasing a no pet room. So, was it vacuumed? Maybe not.....This is not a cheap resort by any means, but it was not kept clean at all. Wallpaper in the elevator is torn and hanging off. Don't unpack until you look at the room and even then.....go somewhere else. I should have.