

INFLUENCE OF GUEST EXPERIENCE ON WORD OF MOUTH AND REVISIT INTENTIONS IN THE EGYPTIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The research purpose is to examine the influence of four guests' experience dimensions on their word of mouth and revisit intentions. A positivism approach was used to test the research hypotheses. The primary data was collected via a structured questionnaire from 450 guests who had stayed at Hurghada five-star hotels in Egypt which counted 25 hotels according to (Egyptian Hotel Association, 2021). The study employed a convenient sampling technique to collect the data. 450 Questionnaires forms were distributed after the deletion of incomplete responses, 396 questionnaires were valid to use with a response rate of 88%. Statistical analyses were performed by SPSS version 23 software. The results revealed that guests' experience dimensions which include entertainment, education, aesthetic, and escapism significantly affect guests' word of mouth, and their intention to revisit. Insights are provided to develop, improve and ensure marketing strategies, to create, manage, and control guest experiences to sustain positive guest' word of mouth, and their intention to revisit.

KEYWORDS: Guest Experience, Experience Dimensions, Word of Mouth, Revisit Intentions, Hotels.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the Egyptian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the fastest and largest segments under the services sector that contributes to Egyptian economic development and is also one of the main drivers of growth (Steiner, 2006). Ali et al. (2018) agreed with Hwang and Seo (2016) that the prompt growth and development of hotel firms makes them very competitive and impose the service providers to set various marketing strategies for ensuring memorable, great, and charming experiences for their guests. Where, the guests' experience creates a unique value are difficult for competitors to imitate and severely impact their word

of mouth which in turn inculcates guest revisiting intention and that is why the hoteliers are interested to know the distinguishing characteristics of guest experiences (Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2012; Cetin and Dincer, 2014; Huang et al., 2014; Sharma and Rather, 2015; Ali et al., 2016). Furthermore, guests with great experience will stay longer and the customer who stays longer will bring more profit to the company (Ford and Heaton, 2000; Hui et al., 2007; Knutson et al., 2009; Su et al., 2016).

Although guests' experiences have attracted significant interest in recent years, creating and managing experiences remains among the major challenges of the hospitality industry and remain vague and far from maturity (Walls et al., 2011). Also, existing literature on guest experience lacks empirical support where standardised dimensions of guest experience are yet to be agreed (Liu and Jang, 2009). Many studies attempted to know and examine these factors which influence guest experiences and its consequences. However, the works of Pine and Gilmore (1999), and Hosany and Witham (2010) are the most recognised which are also supported by many studies. While discussing guest experience and its dimensions, Pine and Gilmore (1999) identified and determined four measures of guest experiences which include entertainment, education, aesthetic, and escapism. The guest experience construct is whole and involves the guests sensory, cognitive, affective, behavioral, social, and physical responses to service providers. Where, the increased complexity in customers' preferences and demands together with increased competition in the industry has become a challenge to hotel managers and owners and many of them are waking up to the idea that enhancing customer experience is the key to their business' success.

Hence, this study aims to fill this gap and examine the influence of guests' experience dimensions on their word of mouth and revisit intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

GUEST EXPERIENCE

The report of McKinsey (2016) stated that the value and significance of the guest experience are due to guests being considered the main partner in any business process. Drotskie and Viljoen (20011) asserted that guests' expectations toward filling their needs, wants, and desires is one of the most primary factors which affects guest experience which includes the organization's innovative strategies and culture. According to McKinsey (2016), Choo et al. (2018), and Lo (2020) indicated that good guest's experience improve revenues by five to ten percent and minimize costs from fifteen to twenty-five percent in two or three years also hotels and other tourist organizations can achieve guest trust and commitment. Deloitte (2017) mentioned that sixty percent of guests who had a positive

experience would visit the organization regularly (Yuan and Wu, 2008; Brakus et al., 2009; Svabo et al., 2013). In general, there are many definitions to guest's experiences, according to Walls (2009); Cetin and Dincer (2014) defined guest experience as *"the internal and subjective response which involve customers' understanding, perception and any direct or indirect participation and involvement customers emotionally, are shared with others, and are remembered for a while"* (Ali and Omar, 2014). It also defined by Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) as *"events that engage and attract individuals in a personal way"*; whereas Morgan, (2017) agreed with Oh et al. (2007) that guests' experiences are *"enjoyable, engaging, great, and memorable encounters for those consuming these events"*.

Eventually, this research approves the operational definition of guest experiences in the hotel sector as great events and impressions that attract and engage guests in an emotional and personal way during their hotel stay, which influence future to revisit intentions, purchase decisions and sharing positive recommendations with others. Hence, guest experiences are multidimensional outcomes that occur in response to some interactions with service providers (Han et al., 2009; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Khan et al., 2015).

Wu and Gao (2019) cleared that the positive experience for guests has to be created by direct or indirect interactions between guests and service providers through multi-dimensional responses such as cognitive, emotional, physical, sensorial and social factors during their stay in hotel. Therefore, this study highlighted the various perspectives on the multi-dimensions of the guest experience as follows: Hwang and Seo (2016) adapted five dimensions of guest experience represented in sensory experiences that can reach guest's hearts, minds, and wallets, by using all five human senses such as taste, smell, sight, touch and sound (Ali and Ahmed, 2019), affective experiences which triggers guest's emotional moods and feelings; cognitive experiences that are related with thinking and conscious processes; social experiences as an outcome of guest's social context or his relationships with others; and behavioral experiences which concerns the product itself or its consumption during guest stay (Lee and Park, 2019).

Many studies attempted to define and establish factors that influence customer experiences by offering four dimensions of customer experiences: entertainment, educational, aesthetic, and escapism experiences. Lin, (2016), and Breiby and Sla'ten (2018) referred that the first dimension is an aesthetic experience which is related to guest's tendency to appreciate the beauty and harmony of the physical environment around them such as atmosphere in a resort hotel, hotel aesthetics which contain attractive paintings, charming wall décor, high-quality, lighting, relaxing and

comfortable music, convenient and comfortable temperature, easy-to-move layout (Ali and Ahmed, 2014). Many studies recognized that aesthetics play a crucial role in guest behavior, decision making, and service evaluations. In other words, the physical environment attracts guests and directly affects their satisfaction levels leading to positive behavioral intentions such as word-of-mouth and revisit once or more (Han and Ryu, 2009; Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Ali and Omar, 2014; Tussyadiah, 2014; Cetin and Walls, 2016; Sundbo and Jensen, 2020; Ali and Qoura, 2021). Pekovic and Rolland (2020), and Knutson et al. (2009) clarified that the second dimension is entertainment experience which is related to events that make guest delights such as watching a theatrical display, nightly shows, and live music bands (Oh et al., 2007; Hosany and Witham, 2010). Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) mentioned that these entertainment schedules are carefully designed and planned to stir and attract various age groups. Where, entertainment will remain one of the oldest and essential components of the tourist product (Hosany and Witham, 2010; Cetin and Walls, 2016; Sundbo and Jensen, 2020; Ali and Qoura, 2021).

Khan et al. (2015) showed that the third dimension of the guest experience is education experience which is related to various opportunities that hotels offered for the guests to increase their knowledge and skills such as watching documentaries, cooking classes, swimming, and snorkelling lessons, and massage techniques (Sharma and Rather, 2015; Hwang and Seo, 2016; Choo et al. 2018). In general, educational experience actively engages the mind of guests, sparks their curiosity and desire to learn something new then such experiences are very important in reaching satisfaction, and positive behavior and positive word of mouth (Gentile et al., 2007; Knutson et al., 2009; Ali and Omar, 2014; Huang et al., 2014; Lo, 2020).

Oh (2008) identified that the fourth and the last dimension is escapism experience that is related to participation rate which guest is complete engagement in the event such as simulated destinations and adventure lands (Knutson et al., 2009; Sharma and Rather, 2015; Hwang and Seo, 2016). In other words, this experience occurs when guests are affecting the actual behaviors in the real or virtual environment for a change and to try something new and different (Gentile et al., 2007; Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Huang et al., 2014). Guests no longer are just inactive visitors but rather co-partner who actively build their own experiences through the interaction between various environments, hotel, and other visitors.

WORD OF MOUTH

Xu and Li (2016), Liu et al. (2019), and Ko"seoglu et al. (2020) agreed with Litvin et al. (2008) that word of mouth referred to "*all informal visitors communications pointed in which they express their experiences,*

recommendations, and opinions about a product or service quality directly to their relatives and friends or indirectly through their comments on webpages, social network sites, forums, and mobile applications". This word may be negative or positive as we find angry and disappointed guest decides to spread negative speech while a great experience has a significant impact on his behavioral intentions such as trust and repurchase, particularly in the hospitality industry (Ladhari, 2009; Chathoth et al., 2016; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Oliveira et al. (2020) and Pourfakhimi et al. (2020) stated that guests enjoy writing online comments and reviews about their experience and post them online to help other visitors, hoteliers, and service providers to improve the operations, where these reviews and comments are true moments that express their satisfaction and service appreciations or dissatisfaction and service complaints towards a company. In general, De Keyser et al. (2015) mentioned that ninety percent of visitors agreed that these comments help and enable them to explore the site attractions, alternative destinations in addition, to generating new and different thoughts before knowing and visiting the destination (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). More than sixty percent of the visitors believe that online comments and reviews contain recent knowledge and information about tourist products, services and travel locations (Kim et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2019). Ye et al. (2009) asserted that these comments and reviews have an economic influence on firm performance where positive comments can increase sales from 2.8% to 4.4%. Therefore, hoteliers and service providers are always looking to provide great and comprehensive experiences which not only delight and satisfy the guests, but emotionally connect visitors to the hoteliers and service providers (Litvin et al. 2008; Sparks and Browning, 2011; Walls et al., 2011). Thus, delighted and satisfied guests with these experience determinants may show a willingness to spread positive rhetoric, revisit and pay more for services rendered (Ali et al., 2014).

REVISIT INTENTION

Chen and Funk (2010) cleared that the behavior of guests can be classified into three stages represented in pre-stay, during the stay, and post-stay stage. Whereas Som et al. (2012) stated that guests' behavior includes guest choice of visiting destinations, the next evaluation, and future intentions behavior. Um et al. (2006) emphasized that the next evaluation refers to a whole assessment of stay experience and satisfaction received by guests. But the guest's intent of future behavior is attributed to the symmetric visitors assessment to return to the same hotel for the same purpose and their willingness to recommend it to others (Wu and Liang, 2009; Ryu et al., 2012).

According to Su et al. (2016), intentions to revisit may be affected mainly by whole hotel performance due to their first stay, while repeated intentions may be greatly affected by marketing and innovative strategies to recall their positive and memorable experience by spread information on new and different services and products (Som et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2014; Chan, 2018). Therefore, many hoteliers and service providers depended mainly on visit repetition since the cost to keep this group of guests is considered to be low expensive than to attract new guests (Ali and Omar, 2014).

Huang and Hsu (2009) mentioned that four indicators can affect and generate revisit intentions; these items are represented in travel motives, experience, perceived constraint, and attitude. Where, Jang et al. (2011) and Hwang and Seo (2016) confirmed that guest experience has been approved as a prior indicator for the visitors' decision to repurchase. Generally, Chen et al. (2013) defined behavioral intentions as will and preparation to repeat purchase, counsel, or tell positive words to others. Building a great and memorable guest experience is important and worthy because this experience reflects the emotional and motivational relations of visitors with the hotel, in addition, to relating to revisit (Kim et al., 2014; Lee and Park, 2019; Lo, 2020). Based on this backdrop the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1 (a): Aesthetic experience has a significant positive impact on word of mouth.

H1 (b): Entertainment experience has a significant positive impact on word of mouth.

H1 (c): Educational experience has a significant positive impact on word of mouth.

H1 (d): Escapism experience has a significant positive impact on word of mouth.

H2 (a): Aesthetic experience has a significant positive impact on revisit intention.

H2 (b): Entertainment experience has a significant positive impact on revisit intention.

H2 (c): Educational experience has a significant positive impact on revisit intention.

H2 (d): Escapism experience has a significant positive impact on revisit intention.

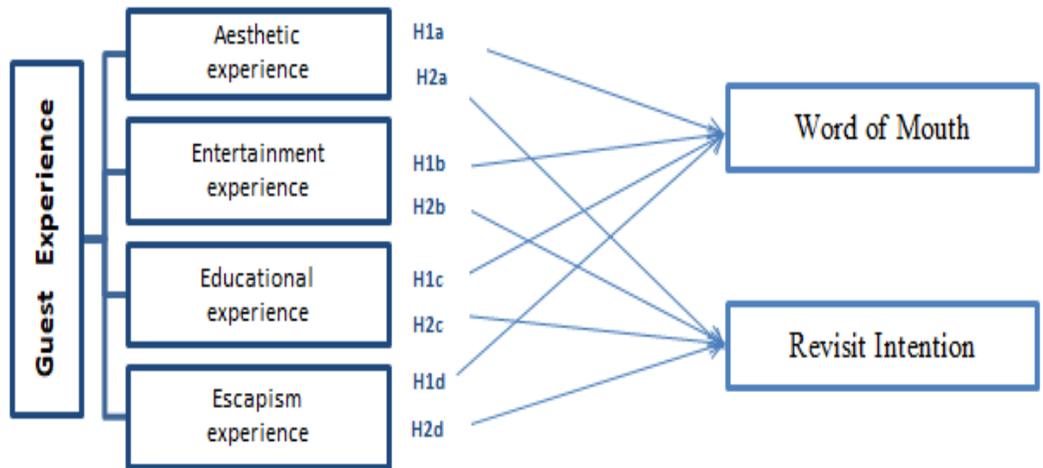


Figure (1) Conceptual Framework of the Research

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was used to test the present research hypotheses. The primary data was collected via a structured questionnaire from 450 guests who had stayed at Hurghada five-star hotels in Egypt which counted 25 hotels according to (EHA, 2021). Statistical analyses were performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS version 23 software. Study results have been considered significant at $p \leq 0.01$. For achieving the aim of this study and testing the conceptual model the researchers designed a questionnaire form with a 5-point Likert-style scale (“1=strongly disagree” to “5=strongly agree”). Items of questionnaire were extracted from earlier studies (Oh et al., 2007; Hosany and Witham, 2010; Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Hwang and Seo 2016; Choo et al. 2018; Lee and Park, 2019; Ali and Qoura, 2021) for guest experience dimensions. Whereas scales for word of mouth are from (Litvin et al., 2008; Bahri-Ammari, 2012; Cetin, and Dincer, 2014; Ko’seoglu et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2020; Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). Lastly, revisit intention scales are from (Wu and Liang, 2009; Ryu et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2014; Su et al., 2016; Chan, 2018; Lee and Park, 2019; Lo, 2020).

In order to measure the three constructs 30 items were used for the model: guest experience scale contains of 20 items related to four dimensions are aesthetics experience (5statements), entertainment experience (5statements), and education experience (5statements), and escapism experience (5 statements). Personal data were also involved in the questionnaire (i.e., gender, Age, education level, and nationality).

The questionnaire was pre-tested with 25 guests in five-star hotels and 5 academic experts in the field, to ensure the initial questionnaire validity, and to explore any potential misunderstanding among research respondents related to questionnaire language and design. Corrected item-total correlations were used, which are between 0.3 and 0.80 (Netemeyer et al., 2003) in corrected item-total correlations, are considered to show that the taken indicators are valid for measuring the one construct in question. In addition, constructs reliability were tested by running Cronbach's alpha coefficient. It was calculated and exceeded 0.70 for all constructs indicating dependable results (Hair et al., 2019). Questionnaires were distributed to guests at different times of the day, over the period of two weeks, during August 2021. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed and after deletion of incomplete responses, 396 questionnaires were valid to use with a response rate of 88% from the original target sample population.

The study employed convenient sampling technique to collect the data at the various public areas in hotels like at the hotel lobby, reception, and guest rooms. Sample size was decided according to the number of items to be used to study guest experience dimensions; guest's word of mouth and guest's revisit intention. Every item requires minimum 5 respondents and maximum 10 respondents (Hair et al., 2010). As the study's construct contained 30 items, so it was decided to take 450 as the sample size.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DESCRIPTIVE

The respondents' data were presented using simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to summarize the data gathered. This indicates there were more males than females (73.2%) (26.8%). The majority of guests were between the ages of 21 and 40, which accounted for 42.1% of respondents and the age less than 20 years at 23.5% of overall respondents. 69.1% had university level of education, 23.2% were med-level study. For nationality, 51.8% are foreigners, and 48.2% are Egyptian. Table 1 displays key demographics.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents (n=396)

Description		Frequency	Percent %
Gender	Male	290	73.2
	Female	106	26.8
Age	Less than 20	93	23.5
	21-40	167	42.1
	41-50	70	17.7
	More than 50	66	16.7

Nationality	Egyptian	191	48.2
	Foreigners	205	51.8
Education Level	Med level	92	23.2
	University education	274	69.1
	Others	30	7.7

Table 2: Reliability of Research Variables

Variables	Question Numbers	No. of Items Selected	Cronbach's Alpha
Aesthetic Experience	1-5	5	0.709
Entertainment Experience	6-10	5	0.767
Educational Experience	11-15	5	0.701
Escapism Experience	16-20	5	0.875
Word of Mouth	21-25	5	0.871
Revisit Intention	26-30	5	0.856

Table 2 displays that educational experience had the smallest value ($\alpha = 0.701$), then the aesthetic experience with a reliability value of ($\alpha = 0.709$), followed by entertainment experience which had the reliability value of ($\alpha = 0.767$), Escapism Experience had a reliability value of ($\alpha = 0.875$), revisit intention with a reliability value of ($\alpha = 0.856$), while word of mouth had the highest reliability value with ($\alpha = 0.871$).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

Factor/ Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Attitude
Aesthetic Experience	3.88	0.859	Agree
Entertainment Experience	3.88	0.668	Agree
Educational Experience	3.56	0.814	Agree
Escapism Experience	3.99	0.951	Agree
Word of Mouth	4.31	0.644	Strongly Agree
Revisit Intention	4.11	0.759	Strongly Agree

The lowest mean of the independent variables was noted in educational experience, which is 3.56, which shows virtually an “Agree”. The top mean of 3.99 was noted by escapism experience, which shows almost an “Agree” level. This point to those respondents’ agreed that four dimensions of guest's experience lead to positive/negative word of mouth and intention to revisit.

CORRELATION MATRIX

Spearman's correlation test was conducted to identify the relationship among research variables and multi regression analysis was conducted to identify the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables.

Table 4: Spearman's Correlation Matrix among Research Variables

Spearman's rho	Research Variables	Correlation Coefficient	
	Aesthetic Experience	Spearman's Correlation	0.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
Entertainment Experience	Spearman's Correlation	0.782**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
Educational Experience	Spearman's Correlation	0.791**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
Escapism Experience	Spearman's Correlation	0.834**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
Word of Mouth	Spearman's Correlation	0.586**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
Revisit Intention	Spearman's Correlation	0.642**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlation measures the relationship between research variables. In this study, the significance level is less than 1% (99% confidence). Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. Reference to Table 4 there is a significant relationship among research variables. Coefficient of correlation of aesthetic experience, entertainment experience, educational experience, escapism experience, word of mouth, and revisit intention have recorded 0.714, 0.782, 0.791, 0.834, 0.586 and 0.642 correspondingly. Researchers could see there is a positive association among each of guest's experience dimensions impacts on guest word of mouth and their intention to revisit. This means the more guest's experience is great and memorable, the more guest word of mouth is positive and their intention to revisit is high.

Table 5: Impact of Guest's Experience Dimensions on Word of Mouth and Revisit Intention

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.	R ²	VIF	Dependent Variable
	β	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	1.139	0.479	0.731	0.440	0.541	Word of Mouth
	Aesthetic Experience	0.204	0.042	4.820	0.000		
	Entertainment Experience	0.163	0.051	3.549	0.001		
	Educational Experience	0.563	0.034	4.837	0.000		
	Escapism Experience	0.225	0.081	3.041	0.001		
2	(Constant)	1.630	0.356	4.170	0.000	0.554	Revisit Intention
	Aesthetic Experience	0.225	0.031	4.025	0.001		
	Entertainment Experience	0.105	0.071	1.980	0.000		
	Educational Experience	0.320	0.055	4.049	0.001		
	Escapism Experience	0.464	0.072	3.490	0.000		

* Significant at 0.05 ** Significant at 0.01 ns Not Significant

From Table 5 it is clear that all β coefficients are not equal to zero which means rejecting the null hypothesis and $P < 0.01$ for all x variables.

As shown in table 5 Model 1 that R square value is 0.541 and that means that the regression model of guest's experience dimensions which includes entertainment, education, aesthetic, and escapism variables explains 54.1% of the variation in the word- of-mouth rate, and 45.9% is the residual or unexplained factors. The study result of the effect of the guest's experience dimensions on word of mouth is agreed with (Litvin et al., 2008; Bahri-Ammari, 2012; Cetin, and Dincer, 2014; Ko'seoglu et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2020; Pourfakhimi et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, in Model 2 the R square value is (0.554) which means that the regression model of guest's experience dimensions which include entertainment, education, aesthetic, and escapism variables explains 55.4% of the variation in revisit intention rate and 44.6 % is the residual or unexplained factors. This result coincide with the study of (Hui et al., 2007; Huang and Hsu, 2009; Chen and Funk, 2010; Som et al., 2012; Ryu et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2013; Ali and Omar, 2014; and Su et al., 2016), which found that the guest's experience dimensions affects revisit intention

In general, the study results revealed that guest's experience dimensions play a crucial role in improving marketing strategies, to creating, manage, and control guest experiences in the hotel industry in addition to create guest' positive word of mouth, and their intention to revisit. Therefore,

guest's experience dimensions have a significant positive effect on guest word of mouth and their intention to revisit five-star hotels in Hurghada. Consequently, the eight hypotheses are accepted and supported statistically.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The growth and survival of hotel firms hang on their ability to create and achieve a great and memorable experience for their guests. Therefore, the study's purpose is to investigate the effect of four guests' experience dimensions on their word of mouth and revisit intentions within Egyptian hotels. The study has tested eight hypotheses of how these dimensions of guest's experience (entertainment, education, aesthetic, and escapism) affect the Dependent variables guest word of mouth and their intention to revisit five-star hotels in Hurghada.

The primary data was collected via a structured questionnaire from 450 guests who had stayed at Hurghada five-star hotels in Egypt which counted 25 hotels according to (EHA, 2021), during August 2021. The study employed convenient sampling technique to collect the data. To achieve the objectives of the research, 450 questionnaires were distributed and after deletion of incomplete responses, 396 questionnaires were valid to use with a response rate of 88%.

Regression analysis revealed that (1) impact of education experience dimension on guest' word of mouth is more than escapism experience dimension which is followed by aesthetic and entertainment experiences dimensions respectively, (2) escapism experience has a significant effect on guest's intention to revisit is more than education experience dimension which is followed by aesthetic and entertainment experiences dimensions respectively.

The findings of this research give hotels' management important insights on how to develop, improve and ensure suitable marketing and innovative strategies, to create, manage, and control guest experiences to sustain positive guest' word of mouth, and their intention to revisit. In addition, it provides a better understanding of the specific items, which define the primary structure of customer experience in Egyptian hotels.

Directions for further research should include conducting qualitative interviews to fully understand how guest experience dimensions affect guest word of mouth and their revisit intentions to Hurghada hotels in Egypt. Future research should also set a similar study on hotels' guests at other hotels categories and different cities in Egypt.

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