



# The guest experience in the hotel industry and the practice of hospitality in the post-pandemic era

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**ABSTRACT:** Hospitality constitutes a fundamental component of tourism, particularly within the hotel industry, as it profoundly influences guest satisfaction with their accommodation experiences. This study seeks to elucidate the factors contributing to either positive or negative guest experiences, correlating these elements with hospitality practices in the hotel industry in the post-pandemic era. The research methodology adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach, leveraging User-Generated Content (UGC) collected from guest reviews of the top ten hotels in São Luís do Maranhão, as rated on the TripAdvisor platform, between August 2022 and January 2023, encompassing a total of 91 reviews. The data underwent meticulous processing and analysis utilizing Content Analysis techniques. The findings underscore the critical importance of various factors and dimensions pertinent to guest experience and hospitality, as highlighted in previous studies. These include cleanliness and hygiene, customer service, physical infrastructure, comfort, culinary offerings, the warmth of reception, personalized interactions, safety protocols, ancillary services and amenities, authenticity, equitable pricing, and effective problem resolution. Notably, the behavior and attitudes of hotel staff emerged as particularly salient in both positive and negative reviews, accentuating the host's pivotal role in mediating hospitality interactions and shaping the overall guest experience.

**Keywords:** Guest Experience;  
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## INTRODUCTION

Hospitality comprises “a set of behaviors originating at the very foundation of society, [...] originally involving mutuality and exchange, through these, feelings of altruism and beneficence” (Lashley, p. 5, 2004). Its practice permeates human relationships in various contexts, whether when receiving family members at home or when receiving a guest at a hotel. On a personal level, hospitality is viewed as a genuine act that arises from being welcoming, receptive, and ensuring the guest feels comfortable in the environment. In the commercial sector, its practice defines a good relationship and loyalty between those who offer or provide some type of service, the difference being that it aims for profit (Chon & Sparrowe, 2003).

Hospitality is essential for tourism (Camargo, 2019), and naturally related to accommodation, being used to name the accommodation and food services sector in the English language (Lashley, 2004). Several attributes of hotel accommodation have been linked to service quality and customer satisfaction (Almeida & Pelissari, 2019). Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) empirically demonstrated that hospitality is a relevant attribute in the hotel industry and can influence guest satisfaction with the accommodation experience.

Despite the evolution of studies on hospitality in the last 20 years, Lugosi (2021) points out a gap in research in Hospitality and Tourism on how hospitality is perceived and executed. In this sense, Tasci and Semrad (2016) state that scientific studies on hospitality have been more conceptual and less empirical, perhaps due to the difficulty in measuring it, as it involves emotions and feelings.

The covid-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020 and was caused by the rapid transmission of the SARS-COV-2 virus, had negative effects on various sectors of the economy, health, and education (Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). One of the fundamental measures to contain the spread of the disease was social distancing/isolation, with an abrupt reduction and/or total shutdown of hospitality and tourism operations (Chinazzi et al., 2020). The pandemic has significantly impacted the hotel sector, requiring the adoption of new practices and protocols to ensure the guests and employees safety (Souza et al., 2021). It also highlighted some dimensions in the post-covid tourism services management, such as those related to processes; facilities and capacity, people management, and management of interactions with customers (Coelho & Mayer, 2020). In this context, the relationship between guest and host, which forms the core of the hospitality experience, was also affected. In this scenario, the problem that motivates this research arises: Which aspects related to hospitality contribute to a positive or negative tourist experience in the hotel industry in the post-pandemic

context?

To answer this question, the objective of the study is to identify the aspects that contribute to a positive or negative guest experience, relating them to hospitality practice in the hotel sector in the post-pandemic context. The choice of São Luís, located in Maranhão, Brazil, as the research locus is justified by its significant tourist and economic importance. The city is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and holds great potential for tourism development in the region. Moreover, the research findings have the potential to enhance the competitiveness of the hotel sector in São Luís, thereby strengthening the local tourism economy. The theoretical framework draws upon authors who address hospitality in a general sense (Chon & Sparrowe, 2003; Lashley, 2004; Camargo, 2004) and more specifically within the hotel industry context (Ariffin, 2013; Wada et al., 2015; Andrade & Polo, 2018). It encompasses the changes implemented in the hotel sector in response to the pandemic (Silva et al., 2021) and includes concepts related to the tourist experience based on user-generated comments (UGC) (Bandeira & Menezes, 2022).

The methodological procedures outline the process for conducting the exploratory study, which involves multiple hotel case studies in São Luís, based on data collected from the internet (Flick, 2009), specifically from the TripAdvisor platform, during the post-covid-19 pandemic period, between August 2022 and January 2023. The data were analyzed using the Content Analysis technique (Bardin, 2011). The discussions are based on the triangulation process, correlating the collected data with the theoretical framework.

As practical implications of the study, it is highlighted that the findings can contribute to improving the competitiveness of the researched enterprises, through the management of aspects related to hospitality, and also contribute to hotel guest experience and hospitality studies.

## HOSPITALITY AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Hospitality is a complex and multifaceted concept, encompassing not only the provision of services but also the building of interpersonal relationships and the welcoming of others, involving social, cultural, and economic aspects. It is an expression of the culture and civility of people, understood as a set of attitudes and practices aimed at receiving, welcoming, and meeting the needs of those who are received. It is therefore related to the ability to receive well and to put oneself in the place of the other (Dias, 2002).

Hospitality is expressed in the human relations as a relational and communicative process, in which the act

of hosting is not restricted to the simple provision of accommodation, food and comfort, but opens the possibility of providing an exchange of experiences and interaction between different cultures (Wada et al., 2015).

It can be perceived in three domains or generic dimensions, each with its own characteristics that complement each other. The private domain comprises the hospitality offered by a host in their home. The social domain involves the more cultural aspects of a society, the city. The commercial domain indicates hospitality in commercial relations, such as in a hotel or a restaurant (Camargo, 2004; Lashley, 2004). Camargo (2004) suggests that hospitality can also occur in the virtual space.

Soares (2013) proposes that virtual hospitality can be observed through three categories on websites: content, content and form, and form. These categories consider indicators such as the objectivity of information and accessibility (language, positioning, browser). When discussing the importance of human presence in virtual hospitality relationships, Conceição and Panosso Netto (2022) conclude that without human interaction, considering only the use of software, virtual hospitality has its meaning emptied, as it gives up the essential element for hospitality, the relationship between people. We emphasize that this study, although it used data available in the virtual environment, did not analyze the relationships between hosts and guests in this context.

Grinover (2006) describes hospitality as the pleasure of welcoming someone who is away from their place of residence, providing them with a sense of home even when they are away, and ensuring all the comfort the guest may need. Chon and Sparrowe (2003) state that hospitality is employed in the hotel industry in various ways to ensure guest satisfaction and to create a positive guest experience.

Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) were pioneers in exploring hospitality in the hotel industry as a construct represented by multiple dimensions and observable variables. The authors propose that hospitality is manifested in the dimensions of personalization, warm welcome, comfort, authenticity, and special relationship. Ariffin (2013) later identified that hospitality in the hotel industry is represented by three key dimensions: personalization, comfort, and warm welcome.

In Brazil, Andrade and Polo (2018) state that hospitality is a strategic resource in the hotel industry and propose a theoretical-conceptual model of hospitality with six dimensions: personalization, warm welcome, special relationship, authenticity, comfort and fair price. In the hotel sector, Crotti and Moretti (2019) further emphasize that hospitality is a fundamental element for guest loyalty, since it can create an emotional bond between the guest and the hotel, contributing to their future trips choice.

Going further, hospitality does not only play a role in the hotel or restaurant industry, but it operates within the entire tourist reception framework of a location, meaning it is present in all sectors that welcome and interact with travelers (Plentz, 2005). Thus, it is essential for providing the personalized and welcoming service that tourists seek, and consequently, for attracting and retaining customers (Vaz, 2016).

Rodrigues (2012) asserts that the act of eating well is part of hospitality, as offering quality and carefully prepared food to hotel guests demonstrates an appreciation of their presence and ensures they feel well cared for and respected.

Thus, in addition to shaping the organizational culture of companies, influencing satisfaction and repurchase intentions, and generating more revenue, hospitality should also be understood as an ethical and moral stance. This encompasses the responsibility to provide quality service and respect the dignity and rights of guests. These combined elements can affect the perception of the experience guests have.

The tourist experience is a complex phenomenon that encompasses emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social aspects. It is influenced by factors such as service quality, interaction with the community, visitor expectations, and destination characteristics. It does not merely consist of the provision of tourism products or services, but involves the entire process of planning, preparation, and execution of the trip.

The experience of guests with high-level satisfaction resulting from service quality and other aspects that add value to their stay can generate a competitive advantage for lodging facilities (Bandeira & Menezes, 2022). Andrade and Ricci-Cagnacci (2023) point out that hospitality is an important attribute for a memorable tourism experience in the offerings provided through the Airbnb platform, corroborating that hospitality, as demonstrated in the practice of welcoming between host and guest, is a crucial factor for tourism.

Bandeira and Menezes (2022) identified that the most frequent factors in guest reviews of the best hotels in João Pessoa - PB are breakfast, location, and comfort. While physical infrastructure was the main aspect in negative hotel reviews. The terms employee and service are, respectively, the 7th and 8th most frequent in guest reviews.

Oliveira and Sohn (2023) conducted a bibliometric study to identify the practices, benefits, and trends in customer experience management in the hotel industry. The authors point out that the main benefit is maintaining competitive advantage and business differentiation, with best practices being associated with human capital, use of technology, and service design. The trends point to an evolution in the concept of experience, with greater attention to employee experience, the search for mutual benefits, and the use of technology to encourage engagement and co-creation.

Nascimento Filho, Flores, and Limberger (2019), when analyzing restaurant positioning through customer reviews, concluded that the most important aspects when choosing a restaurant are customer service, hospitality, offered services, and food. The authors point out that high-end restaurants in São Paulo are positioned by attribute, by users, by product category, and by service class.

Technology, which was extensively utilized to address the pandemic and post-pandemic context, appears in research on hospitality. Crotti and Moretti (2019) indicate that the use of technology can be a strategy to optimize hospitality in the hotel industry. The implementation of online check-in and check-out systems, the availability of high-speed Wi-Fi, and the use of apps that facilitate communication between guests and staff are some options that can improve the customer experience and make it more efficient.

Beyond objective aspects, lodging facilities have been striving to better understand the emotions, sensations, behavior, and purchasing intentions of their customers. They have given greater attention to their human capital, recognizing the growing importance of employee well-being in the organizational environment and how it influences the delivery of memorable experiences (Oliveira & Sohn, 2023). Given that tourist experiences take on a particular meaning for each tourist according to their interaction with the visited place, the moment, and their state of mind (Marujo, 2016).

Even for these aspects, the use of technology has emerged. In a connected society, sharing tourist experiences through digital platforms and media promotes interaction between destinations and potential tourists, in addition to allowing tourists to disseminate their experiences, evaluating products, equipment, and services based on UGC (Bandeira & Menezes, 2022). The UGC correspond to Online Travel Reviews (OTR) available on platforms such as TripAdvisor, which can contribute to travel planning (Souza et al., 2021) and the management of destinations and companies in the sector, as they provide relevant data to identify the consumer/tourist experience. In this case, the tourist's perception of the brand and the reactions triggered, whether social, cognitive, emotional, physical, sensory, and spiritual (Suwelack et al., 2022), from interactions with a given product, service, or tourist destination. The UGC allow managers to evaluate different aspects of the service offered by the hotel establishments they manage. Therefore, it is a relevant source of data that must be analyzed to support their decisions.

The covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted the hotel sector, generating uncertainty and instability. With travel restrictions and fear of contagion, many hotels have had to close their doors or operate at reduced capacity. In this context, hotel managers have had to adopt effective processes to ensure customer satisfaction, even in difficult times for the entire sector. The

covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for change in hotel management.

Hotels that were best prepared to face the challenges of the crisis were able to quickly adapt to market changes and customer demands, which included implementing new hygiene and cleaning protocols, offering digital services, and creating new experiences for guests. Those that did not adapt, on the other hand, struggled to survive and many had to close their doors permanently (Lopes et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2021). Table 1 presents some actions and strategies adopted in the hotel industry during the covid-19 pandemic.

Table1 – Actions and strategies adopted in the hotel industry during the covid-19 pandemic.

References	Actions and Strategies adopted
Revista Hotéis (2020)	Personalized service: being attentive to each guest needs and expectations, offering personalized and adapted services. To implement personalized service, it is important that managers are attentive to customer demands, conducting surveys and collecting feedback to understand their preferences and needs.
Lanz et al. (2020)	Effective communication: essential to convey confidence and peace of mind to guests. Managers must maintain transparent and honest communication, informing guests about the safety measures adopted by the hotel and answering their questions. To implement effective communication, managers must be attentive to guests' needs and concerns regarding the pandemic, as well as the safety measures adopted by the hotel to prevent the spread of the virus.
Lopes et al. (2022)	Focus on cleanliness and hygiene: implementing strict cleaning and disinfection protocols, as well as offering customers quality personal hygiene products. Cleaning and disinfection protocols must follow the recommendations of health authorities and take into account the particularities of the hotel sector.
MTur (2020); Tessera (2023)	Flexibility in cancellation policies: essential to meet customer needs in uncertain times

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Personalized service should not be seen as a differentiator only in times of crisis, but rather as a constant strategy to build customer loyalty and ensure their satisfaction in the long term. Thus, hotels that are able to offer personalized services tailored to the needs of each guest have greater opportunities to stand out in an increasingly competitive market, as hospitality can generate a competitive advantage in the hotel industry



(Nascimento & Erig, 2017).

The importance of hotels investing in training their employees is highlighted, ensuring the quality of service provided to guests and contributing to a hospitable experience (Lima & Silva, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative and exploratory research involved the analysis of reviews and comments from guests published on the digital platform TripAdvisor, aiming to identify patterns and trends regarding tourists' experiences in hotels in the city of São Luís, using hospitality theories as a reference. Data were collected over a six-month period, from July 2022 to January 2023.

TripAdvisor is a collaborative digital platform that allows users to share their travel experiences, including reviews of hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions. The platform provides a wide range of information for travelers, including reviews and ratings of establishments, photos, comments, and travel tips (TripAdvisor, 2023).

A study conducted by Wang and Li (2019) highlighted that TripAdvisor is a reliable source of information for travelers, as user reviews and ratings are based on real travel experiences. This makes the information provided by the platform more trustworthy than other sources of information, such as advertisements or information provided by the tourist establishments themselves.

TripAdvisor is easily accessible and user-friendly for travelers, researchers, and managers alike, making it a viable option for collecting data related to guests' tourism experiences due to its reliability, wide variety of data, and geographical coverage, regardless of users' level of experience with technology.

The city of São Luís is the main tourist destination in the state of Maranhão and offers the largest supply of rooms in accommodation establishments, which vary in typology and category. A total of 188 accommodation establishments in São Luís were identified on TripAdvisor. From this universe, a convenience sample of 10 (ten) hotels in São Luís with the best rankings on the platform was determined.

When accessing TripAdvisor, users can search for locations and filter results based on various criteria, such as category, price, location, and reviews from other users. Each establishment is rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 corresponding to a very poor rating and 5 to an excellent rating. The reviews are aggregated and displayed as an average score, allowing users to quickly see the overall rating of a hotel.

Users who leave reviews can choose whether or not to leave a comment to explain their rating. Some people provide more detailed feedback about their experience by writing reviews, while others only indicate the score.

Additionally, some users may choose to add photos or videos to complement their review, giving other users a better understanding of what to expect from the location.

The data processing and analysis followed the stages of pre-analysis, exploration, and treatment, as recommended by Bardin (2011) using the Content Analysis technique, which requires a categorical analysis with the breakdown of texts into categories grouped by similarity (Bardin, 2011). This involved searching for reviews with available comments on the platform and organizing the data into tables, presenting predefined categories, and new subcategories identified afterward, with examples of excerpts from the guests' reviews. Based on the theoretical framework, the main categories for data analysis were identified, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – Main Categories for the Analysis of the Guest Experience and Hospitality

Reference	Categories	Positive Factors Identified in UGC	Negative Factors Identified in UGC
Chon; Sparrowe (2003)	Food	Variety/selection, tasty/delicious	Lack of food replenishment, limited Variety
	Physical infrastructure	Accommodations, spaces, pool, pleasant environment	Stuffy environment
	Cleanliness and Hygiene	Clean, good smell	Dirt, dust, mold, mildew, need for cleaning
	Problem Resolution	Problem resolution, helpful staff, room changes	Delay in solving the problem, no room change
	Safety	Feeling of safety, location	-
Vaz (2016)	Service	Offered services and materials (Wi-Fi, hairdryer, TV channels, gym)	Lack of services, non-functioning materials, worn, stained
		Friendliness, helpfulness, kindness	Bad mood, unpreparedness
Ariffin (2013); Andrade e Polo (2018)	Authenticity	Unique element of local culture (Northeastern cuisine)	-
	Comfort	Comfortable infrastructures (rooms, beds), spacious	Uncomfortable infrastructures (mattress, beds)
	Warm Reception	Friendly, welcoming reception	Lack of charisma and hospitality, no greeting

Ariffin (2013); Andrade e Polo (2018)	Special Relationships	Special bond with staff; attention, care	-
Ariffin (2013); Andrade e Polo (2018); Chon; Sparrowe (2003); Vaz (2016).	Personalization	Unique and differentiated services	Lack of charisma and receptivity
Andrade e Polo (2018)	Fair Price	Cost-benefit, reimbursement, within the range	Expensive prices

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hotels considered in this study have reviews with ratings ranging from 1 to 5. Ratings of 1 (terrible/horrible) and 2 (poor) correspond to negative reviews, thus reflecting elements of negative experiences. Reviews with a rating of 3 (average) are neutral and highlight factors that may contribute to either a positive or negative experience, depending on the commentary provided. Ratings of 4 (good) and 5 (excellent) contain positive comments and underscore the factors that contribute to a positive experience. Table 3 presents the ranking of each hotel on the TripAdvisor platform and the number of reviews during the analyzed period, totaling 91 reviews with comments.

Table 3 - Reviews of the Best Hotels in São Luís on the TripAdvisor Platform (July 2022 to January 2023)

Ranking	Rating	Hotel	Total Reviews	Reviews with comments	Positive comments	Negative comments
1°	4,5	Hotel Luzeiros	26	26	25	1
2°	4	Stop Way Hotel	10	10	10	0
3°	4,5	Blue Tree Towers São Luís	13	13	11	2
4°	4	PraiaBella Hotel	3	3	3	0
5°	4	Ibis São Luís	10	10	5	5
6°	3,5	Brisamar Hotel & SPA	5	5	3	2
7°	4	Calhau Praia Hotel	12	12	10	2
8°	4	Professionalle Hotel	4	4	2	2
9°	3,5	Premier Hotel	6	6	2	4

10°	4	Hotel Sesc Olho D'Água*	0	0	0	0
11°	4	Litorânea Praia Hotel	2	2	1	1

\*The Sesc Olho D'Água Hotel is ranked among the top 10 on the TripAdvisor platform but has not received any reviews since September 2019; thus, it lacks sufficient data for inclusion in this study. To complete the sample of the 10 highest-rated hotels, the Litorânea Praia Hotel, ranked 11th, was included.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

The ranking of hotels on the platform takes into account both the overall guest rating and the presence of negative comments. As a result, the Stop Way Hotel, with an overall rating of 4, is ranked higher than the Blue Tree Towers Hotel, despite the latter having a higher rating, because the Stop Way Hotel received no negative comments. Similarly, the PraiaBella Hotel (ranked 4th), which received only three reviews during the period, is ranked highly as all of its reviews were positive. It is also observed that six hotels received predominantly positive reviews, while three received an equal proportion of positive and negative comments, and one hotel had more negative than positive reviews during the period. Table 4 below presents some of the reviews (ratings of 4 and 5), highlighting the main categories identified in the analyzed comments for each hotel.

Table 4 - Main Categories Identified in the Positive Hotel Reviews (Ratings of 4 and 5)

Hotel	Categories	UGC Examples
Hotel Luzeiros	Physical infrastructure; Services; Warm welcome (lack).	"Impeccable hotel infrastructure, very modern and cozy. All services... excellent, I just missed a more welcoming attitude from the staff, they are polite, but lack the charisma that makes you want to return" (I.S)
		"The hotel design... deserves criticism, as breakfast is served in an area that feels like a basement, with a wall... blocking a full view of the sea... A place that could be magnificent has become stifling" (C.L)
Stop Way Hotel	Special relationships; Food	"We were pleasantly surprised by the attention and care from the entire staff. The hotel is very clean... the breakfast offers a wide variety to suit all tastes. A very satisfying experience" (F.S)

Stop Way Hotel	Comfort; Food; Services and amenities	"Spacious and comfortable room and bathroom. Good breakfast with a good variety. I'm only giving 4 stars because, although the towels were very clean and fragrant, they were quite worn and some were stained" (F.S)	Calhau Praia Hotel	Comfort; Service; Safety	"Comfortable hotel with a beautiful sea view and very polite and attentive professionals! The location is perfect, and we felt safe and close to the best beach stalls" (L.M) "We were well-received by the reception, which promptly moved us to another room... The service lacked recommendations for tours... the hotel's location is very good, a place that conveys safety" (S.R)
Blue Tree Towers São Luís	Comfort; Cleanliness and hygiene; Service Warm welcome; Cleanliness and hygiene; Poor service	"Comfortable accommodations, large beds, clean rooms, and the friendliness of all the staff" (L.R.) "Warm reception. Some rooms smell musty... frustration with the maître's service. A person who didn't greet the guests" (E.M)	Profissional Hotel	Physical infrastructure; Cleanliness and hygiene; Food Services and amenities; Comfort	"Wonderful family room!!! It consisted of two adjoining suites... but cleanliness was lacking, with mildew in the bathrooms... extensive breakfast selection" (K.C) "Nonexistent Wi-Fi... excellent and comfortable room, located in the new part of the city... free parking" (V.M)
PraiaBella Hotel	Fair price; Cleanliness and hygiene; Comfort; Services and amenities; Personalization; Problem resolution	"Great value for money... excellent location... very clean, with comfortable beds, good Wi-Fi signal, TV with many channels, heated and strong shower, hairdryer. Breakfast... with someone making tapiocas, couscous, and omelets on the spot... We had a water leak in the bathroom, and it was promptly resolved" (G.B)	Premier Hotel	Comfort; Service; Food; Authenticity (local cuisine and souvenir gallery)	"Comfort, excellent service, and a wonderful environment, with a marvelous breakfast offering many varieties of Northeastern cuisine, total quality... Northeastern souvenir gallery" (I.M)
Ibis São Luís	Special relationship Service; Problem resolution	"...waitress Jose, as she likes to be called, stands out for her friendliness, politeness, kindness, and attentiveness..." (J.C) "The hotel is well-maintained, with very friendly receptionists, always willing to solve problems"	Litorânea Praia Hotel	Physical infrastructure; Service; Food	"The hotel is very well-located, with several bars and kiosks nearby... offers good accommodations, and a very helpful staff. Breakfast has a wide variety" (R.)
Brisamar Hotel & SPA	Cleanliness and hygiene; Comfort; Services and amenities; Food; Service	"Excellent location (Ponta da Areia), beachfront, clean and comfortable room, well-functioning air conditioning, good mattress and shower, excellent breakfast - various fruit, cold cuts, and bread options. Large pool, gym space. Helpful staff" (M.A)			

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

It is observed that the ratings assigned, in some cases, contradict the reports made in the UGC, which highlight negative factors experienced by guests. This is exemplified by the 5-star review of the Hotel Luzeiros, where the comment indicates that although the staff is polite, they failed to create an emotional connection (special relationship) (Andrade & Polo, 2018) with the guest, which may have affected the perception of the hotel's hospitality, albeit without diminishing the overall rating.

Another review assigned the maximum rating of 5 also presents a negative factor in the UGC, specifically regarding the Profissional Hotel. The guest reports

cleanliness issues, such as mildew in the bathrooms, dust on the furniture, and the need for cleaning. This demonstrates that, while reviews provide valuable data for managers, tourist experiences are unique to each individual and depend on the circumstances of the moment, the interaction with the location, and the guest's state of mind (Marujo, 2016).

Regarding the analysis categories, the UGC shows a higher mention of the following categories: service, physical infrastructure, cleanliness and hygiene, comfort, and food. The categories with lower frequency include warm reception, personalization, problem resolution, special relationship, fair price, and services and amenities. Safety and authenticity are rarely mentioned; however, safety may be implicitly included in the location factor, as it is noted that the hotel is well-located.

Good service is emphasized in the UGCs of reviews with ratings of 4 and 5. Factors such as staff attentiveness and friendliness are frequently mentioned, serving as a key element of hospitality in the hotel sector (Chon & Sparrowe, 2003). Comments regarding the physical infrastructure of the hotels are identifiable. Structural aspects may relate to the hospitality offered to guests. Overall, the physical infrastructure of the hotels was positively rated based on guest experiences, although in the UGC regarding the Hotel Luzeiros, the guest criticized the location where breakfast is served, rendering the experience unpleasant.

Comfort is mentioned in various reviews, confirming that this aspect is important for hospitality in the hotel industry, as pointed out by Ariffin (2013) and Andrade and Polo (2018). Regarding the food category, positive comments about the breakfasts at Stop Way, Brisamar, Profissionalle, Premier, and Litorânea hotels stand out. The UGCs indicate satisfaction regarding the variety, flavor, and excellence of the food, reinforcing Rodrigues' (2012) studies that assert food is an integral part of hospitality.

Warm reception is a fundamental dimension for guests' perception of hospitality (Andrade & Polo, 2018; Ariffin, 2013). This factor is evident in the 4-star review of the Blue Tree Towers, where a guest expressed dissatisfaction with the behavior of a "grumpy" maître. In this case, it may have resulted in a lower rating for the hotel and demonstrated how a warm reception can impact the guest experience.

In the 5-star review of the PraiaBella Hotel, the guest comments on the personalization of the service, noting "a person making tapiocas, couscous, and omelets on the spot for the guests," which is seen as a distinctive factor of the hotel and a demonstration of hospitality, confirming the propositions of Andrade and Polo (2018) and Ariffin (2013).

Furthermore, the comments highlight attentive staff who promptly assisted in resolving a problem that guests encountered in their rooms. This shows the guests that the staff is skilled and trained to provide a

better experience while swiftly addressing issues that could affect the client's stay. Lima and Silva (2018) emphasize the need for staff training to enhance hospitality.

The positive relationship between the guest and hotel staff demonstrates that hospitality can be built through authentic and positive human interaction, characterized by a special relationship (Andrade & Polo, 2018; Ariffin, 2013). This is exemplified by the Ibis Hotel, which received positive feedback regarding the service from a staff member. When a guest feels well attended to by a friendly and attentive employee, they tend to rate the hotel's hospitality positively as a whole, which may influence their decision to return to the hotel in the future.

The fair price category generally relates to the cost-benefit offered by the hotels. It is expected that budget categories offer services and products within a lower value parameter while maintaining quality (Stop Way, Premier, Ibis), whereas higher-end hotels provide products and services at a more elevated standard (Luzeiros, Blue Tree Towers). However, in all categories, it is essential to calculate potential losses and the value of convenience so that these do not negatively impact the guest's experience, as reported in the review of the Calhau Praia Hotel.

Reviews with a rating of 3 (average) were considered neutral (Table 5). However, the evaluated factors may interfere with the guest experience, rendering it either positive or negative.

Table 5 - Main Categories Identified in Neutral Hotel Reviews (Rating 3)

Hotel	Categories	UGC Examples
PraiaBella Hotel	Fair Price Warm welcome Food Comfort	"The hotel is within its price range... positive points (such as the friendliness of the staff)... areas for improvement include the replenishment of breakfast items, which often run out and take a long time to restock. The room is large... If the daily rate is good, it is worth staying; otherwise, there are other options" (G.R)
Brisamar Hotel & SPA	Warm welcome Food Problem resolution Fair Price	"...well located... warmly welcomed, good breakfast. ...We had a problem in our room at night that prevented us from sleeping, and unfortunately, the solution was very slow. However, after our complaints, the hotel contacted us and compensated us" (S.U)



Calhau Praia Hotel	Service Food Physical infrastructure Problem resolution	"Excellent location but could improve in service... Average breakfast. The bathroom was clogged, but a diligent staff member resolved the issue. The room's lighting is quite poor, and there is a general lack of care." (P.M)	Blue Tree Towers São Luís	Physical Infrastructure; Cleaning and Hygiene; Food	"Old hotel; it would be acceptable if it were well-maintained! The facilities are dirty, the restaurant, and the breakfast area are filthy, the breakfast is terrible, the corridor carpet is disgustingly dirty, the room has a musty smell, old towels, and bed linens and pillows of poor quality, the room's air conditioning is extremely noisy. Overall, it's an experience I never want to have again; photos on the website and travel apps do not accurately represent what the hotel really is." (T.)
Premier Hotel	Service	"Staff... kind and helpful, but the room and bathroom need cleaning. Breakfast had few options but was good" (A.)			
Litorânea Praia Hotel	Service Physical infrastructure Food Services and amenities	"Positive points: polite staff, well-maintained pool with a beautiful view of the sea, very good breakfast with a variety of options. Negative points: musty smell, air conditioning does not cool the entire room, loose electrical outlets that do not keep devices connected, poor cleaning, and unpleasant odors on the bath towels..." (B.)	PraiaBella Hotel	No review available	No review available

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Comments with a rating of 3 include both positive and negative elements regarding the guests' stay. Some categories (safety, authenticity, special relationships, and personalization) were not identified in these comments.

One comment about the Brisamar Hotel, which received a rating of 3, pertains to the guidance provided to guests regarding local tours. This underscores the team's preparedness in informing guests about local tourism offerings, demonstrating the hotel's commitment to providing personalized and quality service, which can enhance the tourist's experience during their stay. Actions that differentiate services contribute to customer loyalty (Crotti & Moretti, 2019). Table 6 presents the main categories identified in the negative hotel reviews, where guests assigned ratings of 1 and 2.

Table 6 - Main Categories Identified in Negative Hotel Reviews (Ratings 1 and 2)

Hotel	Categories	UGC Examples			
Hotel Luzeiros	Service; Physical Infrastructure; Cleaning and Hygiene	"Hotel with poor service, beds with old mattresses, and worst of all, a dirty bathroom... The toilet and lid were dirty and sticky! The last time I stayed at the hotel, I had a bad experience, with several sleepless nights due to the deep mattress" (A.M)	Calhau Praia Hotel	Services and Amenities	"No internet for over 24 hours. Cold showers because the water is only heated when there is sunlight, and since it rained for several days, there was simply no hot water for bathing. Due to the bad weather, the temperature was low, and a hot shower was sorely missed." (R.C)
Stop Way Hotel	No review available	No review available			

Ibis São Luís	Service	"I always stay at Ibis hotels throughout Brazil when traveling with my cat... Upon arriving at the Ibis in São Luís, I was informed that they do not accept CATS, only dogs. However, the company's website states that our pet is welcome... After much discussion, they decided to 'make an exception'... based on what you claim on your website and what I had already pre-paid on your site? Please, Ibis, train your staff!!!!" (G.L)			
Brisamar Hotel & SPA	Physical Infrastructure; Cleaning and Hygiene; Food; Services	"Reception was okay. Old room, shower with stained tiles... the worst experience was in the restaurant. Few staff members, confused, dirty tables, long wait for dishes, and several orders forgotten... The same terrible experience at breakfast, dirty buffet tables. Messy... the microwave was broken..." (B.M)			

Profissional Hotel	Cleaning and Hygiene; Service; Amenities	"Dirty face towel; filthy bathroom glass; air conditioning filter clogged with dust; bathroom sink clogs very easily; receptionist does not know the hotel's own online check-in system... Wi-Fi very slow and unstable." (P.S)
	Services and Amenities; Cleaning and Hygiene	"Wi-Fi did not work, the microwave also did not work, ... they took a long time to resolve the problem! The room was not cleaned... The cable TV did not work..." (M.C)
Premier Hotel	Physical Infrastructure	"Old mattress with holes. Terrible shower... Hotel without maintenance." (D.M)
	Service; Physical Infrastructure	"Poor quality and service, ran out of hot water, they do not change the towel... the air conditioning does not work properly." (J.)
Litorânea Praia Hotel	Cleaning and Hygiene	"The air conditioning did not work... the room smelled really bad and was dirty... they did not change the bed linens during the 3 days I stayed in the room." (T.P)

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Cleanliness and hygiene is a critical category as it relates to the basic needs of individuals and their physical and emotional well-being. This factor is associated with individuals' health and gained greater significance during the covid-19 pandemic due to the necessity of stringent protocols for cleaning and sanitizing environments and equipment (Lopes et al., 2020). This criterion may have been fundamental in determining the only score of 1 for Hotel Luzeiros, which is considered the best hotel in the city on the platform. The accumulation of negative factors, including service quality and physical infrastructures, also contributed to the unfavorable evaluation, detracting from the guest experience.

Similarly, the lack of cleanliness and hygiene contributed to the poor evaluation of Blue Tree Towers, along with the lack of maintenance of the hotel's physical infrastructures, which is one of the oldest hotels in São Luís. The design and physical infrastructure of hotels are crucial in creating a positive hospitality experience (Arifin, 2013). A good infrastructure can provide comfort, security, privacy, and practicality to guests, influencing the perceived hospitality (Andrade & Polo, 2018).

One of the UGC comments regarding Blue Tree Towers highlights complaints about the experience in the restaurant, breakfast (food), and the hotel's infrastructure. As noted earlier, authors such as Rodrigues (2012) define the act of serving a good meal and providing a

hotel environment that makes guests feel comfortable and secure as essential elements of hospitality that can lead to negative evaluations.

Training is a continuous and essential process for companies and hotel professionals who wish to offer differentiated service (Lima & Silva, 2018). When a receptionist is unfamiliar with the hotel's system or is unprepared to handle routine situations, this can lead to frustration and negatively affect the guest's perception of the hotel's hospitality.

One comment refers to the Wi-Fi (services and amenities) not functioning. It is important to note that Wi-Fi in hotels has become a significant element in guest satisfaction, especially during and after the pandemic. By providing a fast, stable, and secure internet connection, the hotel meets the connectivity needs of guests, thereby offering a more comfortable and convenient experience during their stay (Crotti & Moretti, 2019). Most guests depend on the internet for various activities; therefore, the lack of a fast and stable connection can lead to frustration and negatively impact the overall experience.

The difficulty in accommodating pets at the Ibis Hotel was the main factor contributing to the guest's negative evaluation, indicating that, in addition to a failure in the hotel's procedures, there was a lack of hospitality towards pets. In other forms of accommodation, such as Airbnb, hosts are encouraged to welcome pets into their homes (Airbnb, 2023). Lynch et al. (2011) point out the lack of research on the hospitality relationships between humans and animals.

Hospitality is also linked to the ability to efficiently and effectively solve guests' problems. Chon and Sparrowe (2003) assert that hospitality involves the capacity to address guests' issues or complaints to ensure customer satisfaction. When a guest has an unpleasant experience and the staff is unable to resolve the problem adequately, it can lead to dissatisfaction and negatively affect the guest's perception of the hotel's hospitality. Table 7 presents the key terms used by customers on the TripAdvisor platform to indicate whether they had a positive or negative experience at the hotels surveyed.

Table 7 - Main Terms Associated with Positive and Negative Experiences

Ranking	Hotel	Terms Indicating a Positive Experience	Terms Indicating a Negative Experience
1º	Hotel Luzeiros	Cozy, excellent, outstanding service, attentive and helpful service, sensational, great impression, quality staff	Poor service, bad experience

2°	Stop Way Hotel	Very good service, polite and kind staff, helpful, good reception service, attention and care from the team	-
3°	Blue Tree Towers São Luís	Good and differentiated service, top experience, excellent receptiveness and services, excellent, cordiality of staff	Terrible hotel, grumpy staff, terrible breakfast
4°	PraiaBela Hotel	Friendly and helpful staff, excellent hotel, excellent service	-
5°	Ibis São Luís	Good service from staff, very friendly, good hotel	Poor quality, train your staff
6°	Brisamar Hotel & SPA	Helpful team, good treatment	Terrible service, bad experience
7°	Calhau Praia Hotel	Polite and attentive professionals, pleasant, friendly staff	Lack of cordiality, service could improve
8°	Profissionalle Hotel	Wonderful, attentive and kind staff	Needs improvement, I do not recommend
9°	Premier Hotel	Kind and helpful staff, good, great service	I do not recommend, terrible service
11°	Litorânea Praia Hotel	Very helpful team, polite staff	I would choose another hotel

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The most frequently associated terms regarding both positive and negative guest experiences relate to service and staff, highlighting the importance of the host in hospitality relationships, whether their attitude is satisfactory or fails to meet guest expectations. The results indicated a pattern of words in the comments of the evaluated hotels, which describe travelers' experiences concerning hotel hosts. Guests often highlight polite staff, helpful employees, excellent service, and friendly and kind personnel when they evaluate the hotel positively. In negative reviews, poor service and lack of cordiality are emphasized factors.

Furthermore, the results suggest that the personal characteristics of employees, such as friendliness and kindness, are valued by guests. As noted in the comments of the evaluated hotels, the staff can create a hospitable and welcoming environment that extends beyond the services provided by the hotel.

The practical contributions of the study lie in identifying the main factors that positively and negatively influence the lodging experience for each of the observed hotels. Managers of these establishments can

focus their efforts on addressing the negative aspects by reinforcing attention to the key issues identified in the comments, such as service, staff, and cleanliness.

The main recommendations for enhancing hospitality practices in the investigated hotels, aimed at improving the guest experience in the post-pandemic context, include training for hotel staff to develop new skills in customer service, effective communication, problem-solving, and crisis management. Additionally, maintaining cleanliness and hygiene within hotel facilities is crucial for the guest experience.

The primary theoretical contributions reside in the advancement of knowledge in the themes of hospitality and customer experience in tourism and hospitality. The study's results align with other works that have identified the dimensions of hospitality in the hotel industry as well as the factors influencing the lodging experience. These involve both tangible and intangible elements.

One aspect highlighted in the analyzed data is that even when assigning an excellent rating for the lodging experience, guests may indicate negative aspects within that experience, suggesting that certain factors are crucial for the overall evaluation while others may not be.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the aspects that contribute to a positive or negative guest experience, relating them to the practice of hospitality in the hotel industry in the post-pandemic context.

The results obtained from the analysis of guest reviews on the TripAdvisor platform for the top hotels in São Luís support the importance of the factors and dimensions related to the guest experience and hospitality found in previous studies, such as cleanliness and hygiene, service, physical infrastructure, comfort, food, warm reception, special relationship, personalization, safety, services and amenities, authenticity, fair pricing, and problem resolution.

The service and attitudes of hotel staff stood out in both positive and negative reviews, highlighting the importance of the host in hospitality relationships and the guest experience. It was observed that the most frequent words in positive reviews of the guest experience are related to the service provided by the staff, such as "polite team," "helpful staff," "great service," and "friendly and kind staff."

The frequency of terms related to cleanliness and hygiene may indicate that guests began to place greater importance on these aspects due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with the prevention and control guidelines, such as the sanitary measures practiced by hotels in specific protocols.

One limitation of the study is the low number of reviews found on the TripAdvisor platform related to ho-

tels in the city of São Luís, Maranhão, during the period, which may be explained by the decreased flow of tourists due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Another limitation of this work is that, due to its methodological characteristics, the results cannot be generalized to the entire hotel sector but refer only to the experiences in the hotels studied, during a specific period.

It is suggested that future studies deepen the understanding of the practice of hospitality in the hotel sector and its relationship with a positive and/or negative guest experience. These studies could cover the various sectors involved in tourism, contributing to the improvement of the overall travel experience.

It is recommended that future research expands the geographical scope, considering different regions and cultural contexts to capture the nuances and local particularities of hospitality practices. Additionally, exploring various types of accommodations, from luxury establishments to shared lodging platforms, can provide insights into how the key factors of guest experience and hospitality may vary in each context. Another aspect to investigate is the relationship between hosts and guests in the virtual hospitality context.

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