

## GUEST SATISFACTION WITH FOOD SERVICES AT RESORTS IN THE CARIBBEAN AND BRAZIL

### A SATISFAÇÃO DOS HÓSPEDES QUANTO AOS SERVIÇOS DE ALIMENTAÇÃO EM RESORTS NO CARIBE E NO BRASIL

### SATISFACCIÓN DE LOS HUÉSPEDES CON LOS SERVICIOS DE ALIMENTOS EN RESORTS EN EL CARIBE Y BRASIL

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**ABSTRACT:** Satisfaction with food services is an important part of online travel reviews (OTRs) given to resort. These services can either attract and retain guests or drive them away. They can also influence guests' satisfaction with the accommodation itself. This study aims to analyze guest satisfaction in resort hotels, regarding the food services offered during their stay. The methodology used in this qualitative and quantitative study consisted of analyzing satisfaction with food services based on 1,600 OTRs posted by guests on the TripAdvisor website, in relation to ten resorts located in Brazil and the Caribbean. The analysis included breakfast, lunch, dinner, and bar services, evaluating overall satisfaction with the catering services provided. The OTRs were analyzed by four categories: physical aspects of the establishment, aspects of food quality, aspects of service quality, and aspects of service provider quality. The analysis showed that in terms of the aspects observed by resort guests, there were no variations between the Caribbean and Brazil. The OTRs show no variations in responses between these two regions. Bar, dinner and lunch services the ones most commented on by guests. Both physical and quality aspects of the food and providers are relevant in the OTRs. Resort managers should be especially attentive to bar services, as the results indicated that much of the perception of food satisfaction is related to this aspect. To increase the chances of a positive OTR, the resort should ensure excellent bar service.

**KEYWORDS:** Satisfaction; Food Services; Resorts; Online Travel Reviews.

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**RESUMO:** A satisfação com os serviços de alimentação compõe parte importante das Online Travel Reviews (OTR) de *resorts*. Estes serviços podem tanto atrair e fidelizar os hóspedes quanto afastá-los, além de influenciarem a percepção de satisfação para com o meio de hospedagem propriamente. O objetivo deste estudo é analisar a satisfação de hóspedes em hotéis *resort*, com relação aos serviços de alimentação oferecidos durante a hospedagem. A metodologia deste estudo quali-quantitativo consistiu na análise da satisfação dos serviços de alimentação, a partir de 1.600 OTR feitas por hóspedes, no *site* TripAdvisor, de 10 *resorts* localizados no Brasil e no Caribe. A análise compreendeu os serviços de café da manhã, almoço, jantar e de bar, em relação à satisfação geral com a alimentação. As OTR foram analisadas por meio de 4 categorias que compreendem a satisfação com a alimentação: os aspectos físicos do estabelecimento, os aspectos de qualidade dos alimentos, os aspectos de qualidade do serviço e os aspectos de qualidade dos prestadores. A análise demonstrou que não existem diferenças nos aspectos observados por hóspedes em *resorts* no Caribe e no Brasil. As OTR não apresentam variação nas respostas destas duas regiões, sendo os serviços de bar, de jantar e de almoço os mais lembrados pelos hóspedes. Tanto aspectos físicos quanto de qualidade da alimentação e dos prestadores são relevantes nas OTR. Os gestores de *resorts* devem estar atentos sobretudo aos serviços de bar, os resultados indicaram que grande parte da percepção de satisfação com a alimentação está relacionada ao bar. Para aumentar as chances de uma OTR positiva, o serviço de bar deve ser de excelência.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** Satisfação; Serviço de Alimentação; Resorts; Online Travel Reviews.

**RESUMEN:** La satisfacción con los servicios de alimentos es una parte importante de los OTR de los resorts. Estos servicios pueden atraer y retener a los huéspedes o ahuyentarlos, así como influir la percepción de satisfacción con el alojamiento. El objetivo de este estudio es analizar la satisfacción de los huéspedes de hoteles resorts, con respecto a los servicios de comida ofrecidos durante su estadía. La metodología de este estudio cualitativo y cuantitativo consistió en analizar la satisfacción con los servicios de alimentos de 1.600 OTR realizados por los huéspedes en el sitio web de TripAdvisor de 10 resorts ubicados en Brasil y el Caribe. El análisis incluyó servicios de desayuno, almuerzo, cena y bar en relación con la satisfacción general con la comida. Los OTR fueron analizados por 4 categorías que comprenden la satisfacción con la comida: los aspectos físicos del establecimiento, los aspectos de la calidad de los alimentos, los aspectos de la calidad del servicio y los aspectos de la calidad de los proveedores. El análisis mostró que no hay diferencias en los aspectos observados por los huéspedes en los centros turísticos en el Caribe y Brasil. Los OTR no varían en las respuestas de estas dos regiones, siendo los servicios de bar, cena y almuerzo los más recordados por los huéspedes. Los aspectos físicos y de calidad de los alimentos y los proveedores son relevantes en OTR. Los gerentes del resort deben estar especialmente atentos a los servicios del bar, los resultados indicaron que gran parte de la percepción de satisfacción con los alimentos está relacionada con el bar. Para aumentar las posibilidades de un OTR positivo, el servicio de bar debe ser de excelencia.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Satisfacción, Servicios de alimentación; Resorts Online Travel Reviews.

## INTRODUCTION

Food services are an important part of guests' satisfaction with the accommodation establishment. These services establish a direct relationship with the consumer, in this case the tourist, during their stay (Kuhn, Benetti, Dos Anjos & Limberger, 2018). Factors related to services can attract and retain guests, or drive

them away. Therefore, it is essential to explore assertive practices in the food and beverages (F&B) sector of the hotel. F&B services also bring a significant portion of the revenue of accommodation establishments, generating employment and promoting the development of the local region (Chand & Kapoor, 2014; Chin & Tsai, 2013).

The aim of this survey is to analyze guest satisfaction with resort hotels in relation to the food services offered during their stay. Specifically, it aims to: 1- investigate guests' satisfaction with the food services (breakfast, lunch, dinner and bar services) posted in online travel reviews, and 2- to determine whether there are any differences in perceptions between guests of national Brazilian resorts and guests of resorts in the Caribbean. To this end, 1,600 OTRs posted by guests in January 2018 on the TripAdvisor website were analyzed. The survey included posts relating to five resorts in Brazil and five resorts in the Caribbean.

In 2014 alone, the Caribbean region received approximately 22.4 million tourists, according to the World Tourism Organization - WTO (UNWTO, 2015). The main destination, according to the Caribbean Tourism Organization - CTO, was the Dominican Republic, with 5,141,377 arrivals, with visitors mainly coming from the Americans and Europe. In this same period, the Northeast region of Brazil registered 16,874,193 passengers on domestic flights. In terms of passengers on international flights, the region received a total of 470,028 passengers in 2014. The largest proportion of visitors to Brazil, according to EMBRATUR (Brazil, 2015), were from South America, with a total of 3,133,630 arrivals in that same year, and the highest spenders were from Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

For the purposes of the present study, it is important to highlight that the Internet has transformed the way products and services are distributed to consumers. We are seeing a phenomenon of disintermediation that is bringing consumers and suppliers together. The popularization of e-commerce has led to an increase in the number of consumers who use these tools to research or purchase products. These new marketing channels enable content generation by consumer users, who can now describe their consumer experiences to others (Law, *et al*, 2015).

In the context of tourism, travelers now have direct access to information about a destination, via the Internet. They can book trips without having to go through a (physical) travel agent (Kaewkitipong, 2010). This has led to a kind of social network linked to the tourism and hotel sector: online travel reviews (OTRs). Online travel reviews are a type of social media in which consumers (tourists, guests) can share their opinions and evaluations of their personal travel and accommodation experiences. Besides enabling the purchase of tickets and hotel reservations, this tool also helps tourists when choosing a destination or hotel (Silva & Mendes Filho, 2016). Thus, if organizations are to remain competitive, they must understand the transformations taking place in this era of e-business (Law *et al*, 2015).



## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SERVICE

Satisfaction is the feeling of pleasure perceived by the consumer when his/her expectations are met or exceeded in the performance of a service or product acquired. Dissatisfaction, on the other hand, is the perception that this performance is below their primary expectations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). In the case of food services, satisfaction is linked to the quality of the food which, in turn, is inherent to the quality of the processes and services that comprise it. Therefore, it is understood that organizations are directly responsible for generating satisfaction or dissatisfaction in their customers, as they guide the actions necessary to provide the service or deliver the product (Untaru, Ispas, & Neacsu, 2012).

Satisfaction with the quality of the food is linked to the physical attributes of restaurants (Chin & Tsai, 2013; Constandache et al, 2011; Po-Hsuan, Ching-Yuan, & Cheng-Kai, 2014; Soriano, 2003), attributes of food quality (Soriano, 2003), attributes of the service team (Chin & Tsai, 2013; Constandache et al, 2011; Po-Hsuan, Ching-Yuan, & Cheng-Kai, 2014; Soriano, 2003), reservation systems and management (SORIANO, 2003), customer satisfaction and behavior (Po-Hsuan, Ching-Yuan & Cheng-Kai, 2014) and innovation (Chin & Tsai, 2013).

Although the nomenclature of dimensions is occasionally different, other studies analyzed have also observed physical attributes of restaurants (Barros, 2013; Ma, Qu & Eliwa, 2014; Madanoglu, 2004), the attitudes of service providers and the service itself (Barros, 2013; Chand & Kappour, 2014; Madanoglu, 2004; Defranco, Wortman, Lam & Countryman, 2005; Ma, Qu & Eliwa, 2014), consumer behavior and satisfaction (Barros, 2013; Defranco, Wortman, Lam & Countryman, 2005; Ma, Qu & Eliwa, 2014) and food quality (Barros, 2013; Chand & Kappour, 2014; Defranco, Wortman, Lam & Countryman, 2005; Ma, Qu & Eliwa, 2014)

Cao & Kim (2015) observed perceptions of food service quality through the physical attributes of the environment, the service, and the attitudes of providers and food quality. In addition to these attributes, Barros (2013) also observed the dimensions of environmental actions and the accessibility of the restaurant for people with special needs, as well as factors related to the services and food quality. The work of Peng, Chen & Hung, (2017) also mentions the reputation of the Chef and interaction with other customers as factors that influence the dimensions of food quality analysis, as well as contributing to customer loyalty.

For a better understanding of the dimensions mentioned above, which involve satisfaction with food services, the descriptions given in those surveys have been grouped into 4 categories: 1- Physical aspects of the establishment, 2- aspects of Food quality, 3- Aspects of service quality and 4- Aspects of service provider quality. According to the study by Nascimento-Filho, Flores & Limberger (2019), when analyzing consumer behavior, segmentation is useful for identifying which attributes are most important for consumer satisfaction.

The physical aspects of the establishment are factors of perception that involve, for example, whether the menu is easy to read; cleanliness of the dining area; fair price; attractiveness of the menu; whether the staff providing the service have a pleasant physical appearance; adequate size of the space; ability to move around easily; furniture in good condition; comfortable chairs; appropriate and well-polished cutlery; and general cleanliness. It also includes aspects such as washrooms; lighting; ambient music; noise levels; temperature; décor, outdoor landscaping; parking; and safety of the environment; (Cao & Kim, 2015; Chin & Tsai, 2013; Constandache *et al*, 2011; Defranco, Wortman, Lam & Countryman, 2005; Kuhn, Benetti, Dos Anjos & Limberger, 2018; Po-Hsuan, Ching-Yuan & Cheng-Kai, 2014; Soriano, 2003).

Aspects of food quality include factors of perception such as whether the food is hot and fresh; taste; good variety on the menu and in stock; sauces, dishes, whether sweets and confectionary are aesthetically presented; reliable and consistent quality; whether auxiliary areas and items in stock adhere to food safety standards; and whether the food arrives precisely as ordered (Cao & Kim, 2015; Chin & Tsai, 2013; Constandache *et al*, 2011; Defranco, Wortman, Lam & Countryman, 2005; Kuhn, Benetti, Dos Anjos & Limberger, 2018; Po-Hsuan, Ching-Yuan & Cheng-Kai, 2014; Soriano, 2003).

As for the aspects of service quality, these include aspects such as whether the order is correct and complete; wait times for service; the serving skills, ability and professional attitudes of the waiting staff, the care taken to calculate the bill correctly; relocating staff to assist where needed; waiting staff correctly inform customers how long the food will be; waiting staff willing and able to provide information about dishes and drinks on the menu; convenient opening times of the restaurant, and an environment that provides convenience for customers (Barros, 2013; Cao & Kim, 2015; Chand & Kappour, 2014; Chin & Tsai, 2013; Constandache *et al*, 2011; Defranco, Wortman, Lam & Countryman, 2005; Kuhn, Benetti, Dos Anjos & Limberger, 2018; Madanoglu, 2004; Peng, Chen & Hung, 2017; Po-Hsuan, Ching-Yuan & Cheng-Kai, 2014; Soriano, 2003).

In terms of aspects of service provider quality, factors of perception include whether the employee is striving to provide customer satisfaction; friendliness of employees; personal attention paid to customers; personal appearance of the service providers; solicitude and willingness to resolve any problems that arise; going the extra mile, patience, greeting the customer when they arrive and saying goodbye when they leave; anticipating their wishes and needs; whether the restaurant staff inspire confidence in relation to personal hygiene; reputation of the Chef; the presence of management in the restaurant and their contact with the customer; and the ability and speed of management to resolve problems (Barros, 2013; Cao & Kim, 2015; Chand & Kappour, 2014; Chin & Tsai, 2013; Constandache *et al*, 2011; Defranco, Wortman, Lam & Countryman, 2005; Kuhn, Benetti, Dos Anjos & Limberger, 2018; Madanoglu, 2004; Peng, Chen & Hung, 2017; Po-Hsuan, Ching-Yuan & Cheng-Kai, 2014; Soriano, 2003). Table 1 gives a summary of the studies mentioned above.



Chart 1: Summary of studies found on Food Satisfaction

Author	Year	Objective	Main dimensions analyzed
(Soriano, 2003)	2003	To determine the level of customer satisfaction level in relation to the catering sector in Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Reservation system</li> <li>*Physical attributes of space</li> <li>*Attributes/quality of food</li> <li>*Service team</li> <li>*Management</li> <li>*Support services</li> </ul>
(Madanoglu, 2004)	2004	To validate two quality dimensions in restaurants: Personal behavior/ attitude and physical quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Physical aspects</li> <li>*Attitudes employed/ services</li> </ul>
(Defranco, Wortman, Lam, & Countryman, 2005)	2005	To compare the atmosphere perceived by guests in relation to the food and beverage services of two hotels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Physical attributes of food</li> <li>*Physical attributes of space</li> <li>*People/service behavior</li> <li>*Consumer behavior</li> </ul>
(Constandache et al, 2011)	2011	To evaluate the quality of services of a restaurant in a business center, based on the customer's expectations and perceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Resources</li> <li>*Confidence</li> <li>*Ready answers,</li> <li>*Safety</li> <li>*Empathy</li> </ul>
(Barros, 2013)	2013	To develop a model to evaluate and classify the quality of service provided by restaurants, from customers' perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Reliability</li> <li>* Receptivity</li> <li>* Security</li> <li>* Empathy</li> <li>* Product quality</li> <li>* Environmental conditions</li> <li>* Cleanliness</li> <li>* Facilities</li> <li>* Layout</li> <li>* Electronic equipment</li> <li>* Comfortable seating</li> <li>* Employees</li> <li>* Tableware</li> <li>* Environmental actions</li> <li>* Accessibility for individuals with special needs</li> </ul>
(Chin & Tsai, 2013)	2013	To develop a service quality assessment model for luxury restaurants in international hotel chains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Tangible aspects</li> <li>*Security</li> <li>*Empathy</li> <li>*Innovation</li> <li>*Confidence</li> <li>*Response capacity</li> </ul>

Author	Year	Objective	Main dimensions analyzed
(Chand & Kapoor, 2014)	2014	To compare the importance given to food and beverage service practices between Hotel Networks and Resorts in India: manager's vision.	*Dinner *Room service *Bar *Banquets/events
(Ma, Qu, & Eliwa, 2014)	2014	To analyze whether the different sexes perceive experiences in restaurants differently, and their relationship with aspects of loyalty	*Quality of food *Person/Service Attitudes *Image of the establishment *Customer satisfaction/behavior
(Po-Hsuan, Ching-Yuan, & Cheng-Kai, 2014)	2014	To identify the factors that contribute to service expectation, perceived service and the quality and customer satisfaction in the food and beverage industry.	*Physical aspects *Customer satisfaction/behavior *Perception of service (Willingness and Empathy) *Confidence
(Cao & Kim, 2015)	2015	To assess perceptions of quality of service of a fast-food restaurant	*Tangible aspects *Confidence *Response *Guarantee *Empathy
(Peng, Chen, & Hung, 2017)	2017	To analyze the influence of the teppanyaki restaurant aspects (quality of service and food; the environment; and reputation of the Chef) on the positive and negative emotions and how these reflected in customer loyalty.	*Quality of food *Quality of service *Environment *Interaction with other clients *Reputation of the Chef *Positive emotions *Negative emotions *Loyalty

Source: Adapted from Kuhn et al., (2018).

## ONLINE TRAVEL REVIEWS AND GUEST SATISFACTION

Advances in technology have led to significant changes in all sectors, and the tourism and hospitality industry is no different. Due to ease and practicality, customers are increasingly choosing to make bookings and purchases over the Internet. This behavior has led to the emergence of a "new social network" linked to the tourist and hotel sector: OTRs (Online Travel Reviews). This is, basically, a social media where people share comments about their personal travel and accommodation experiences. The same tool also enables users to purchase tickets and make hotel reservations, and helps them choose destinations and hotels (Silva & Mendes Filho, 2016).



According to Buhalis and Law (2008), the Internet has enabled consumers to be more directly involved with suppliers, challenging the role of intermediaries, or agents. Besides allowing for more dynamic interaction between the parties, it enables the consumer to tailor their travel package, increasing their satisfaction with the service. In relation to online travel agencies and exchange of experiences by customers, Enggist (2017, p.1) states that “guests will usually read content posted by other guests, based on their experiences”. This is because people have a desire to feel part of the community by sharing this information with others.

A study by Okazaki, Andreu and Campo (2016) suggests that unlike other social networks, TripAdvisor is not a network where people strengthen ties. This fact could affect users' credibility in the reviews written and posted. There may be comments from malicious users, for example, this being one of the main criticisms of the hosting media, since some of these websites do not verify users' real identity. One of the websites that does verify users is booking.com; before posting a review of a particular establishment, the user must first have made a booking and actually been there, giving the system more credibility (Martin-Fuentes, Mateu & Fernandez, 2018).

Tripadvisor.com is one of the largest social media platforms in the world dedicated to travel and tourism. It has more than 300 million members and 500 million appraisals of hotels, restaurants and other travel-related businesses worldwide, facilitating the collection of large online appraisal data. In order to ensure a relatively high quality of review content, the site has implemented several methods to verify the quality of each online review. The platform analyzes the IP and email addresses of OTR users and attempts to detect suspicious patterns and obscene or abusive language before an OTR is published on the site. It also allows users to report suspicious content, and these reports are followed up with an evaluation by a team of quality assurance experts. This ensures the validity of customers' online assessments, making it one of the top choices when it comes to online travel assessment analysis and research (Zhao, Xu & Wang, 2019).

When positive evaluations posted by clients, the company benefits directly, as these evaluations prompt others to make bookings. If the evaluations offer constructive criticism, they can serve as feedback for the company to improve its services (Enggist, 2017). A survey by Law et al (2015) points out that hotel managers considered comments on social media websites to be a “powerful tool”, acting as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) that could directly affect the hotel's image. As a result, hotels with media managers replied more frequently to comments left on TripAdvisor than to comments posted on Facebook.

The credibility of hotels, in the case of OTRs, among customers of online travel agencies, directly reflects the comments posted, both positive and negative. For positive comments, hotels should thank customers for their feedback. For negative comments, it is in the company's best interest to explain to the customer what actions it will implement to correct the problems reported. These actions show the client that the company is focused on customer satisfaction and/or generating good experiences for their guests. Through these actions, new guests are gained (Enggist, 2017). This theme is echoed by Gavilan, Avello and Martinez-Navarro (2018), who discovered, in their study on the



influence of online ratings and evaluations, and how they are taken into account by the tourist when making a reservation, that users put more confidence in higher numbers of ratings than in higher evaluations. They felt they could rely more on hotels with low ratings and a large number of evaluations than on hotels with higher ratings but only a small amount of evaluations. In order to gain more reliability in higher ratings, the study shows that there is a need for more evaluations.

The way users evaluate these channels varies, according to the channel platform. For example, Booking.com and TripAdvisor work in somewhat different ways. On Booking.com, users receive an e-mail requesting an evaluation of their experience, with questions asking about the pros and cons separately. A final score is generated based on predefined attributes. On TripAdvisor, on the other hand, the user can give a general evaluation separately from the attributes, and can also post free reviews. This form of evaluation gives high-quality hotels different grades in the OTRs, since the same hotel can have a poor rating booking.com and a good rating in TripAdvisor (Martín-Fuentes, Mateu & Fernández, 2018).

Xiang, Du and Fan (2016) conducted a study seeking to understand and identify opportunities to provide a better analysis of social media in tourism and hospitality, given that the OTRs of Expedia, TripAdvisor and Yelp all present different contents and results in relation to the reviews. Of the three websites investigated by the authors, the reviews generated by Expedia had less explanatory power, while those on Yelp had greater explanatory power. It is also important to note that because the results of Expedia and TripAdvisor were similar, their user base will probably also be similar. This can be explained by the fact that the two OTRs have a greater global reach than Yelp (Jeacle & Carter, 2016)

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research consists of qualitative and quantitative analyses of the OTRs posted on TripAdvisor, by guests of resorts, in relation to their satisfaction with the food. To meet the study objectives, the research was developed in three main steps: 1- selection of resorts, 2- collection, recording and individual analysis of OTRs (categorization) and 3- statistical analysis of data, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences [SPSS], version 22, for Windows.

Stage 1 - Selection of Resorts: Ten hotels, classified as resorts by the TripAdvisor website, were selected. These were all located in beach destinations, five in the northeast of Brazil and five in the Caribbean. TripAdvisor was chosen because, according to Spalding and Parrett (2019), it is the largest travel website in the world. The choice of locations was based on the similarity of temperature and climate in these two regions, enabling natural and foreign data to be compared.

To make the database more robust, the resorts with the largest number of OTRs and similar catering services were chosen. As shown in Chart 2, the resorts operate on an all-inclusive system, i.e., accommodation, services, food, beverages and leisure, all included in a single package. The full board system, in this case, includes breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as non-alcoholic beverages with these meals, and is similar to the



all-inclusive system. In Brazil, according to Bonfato and Baltieri (2016), the resorts that provide all-inclusive food and drink services are located in the northeast of the country.

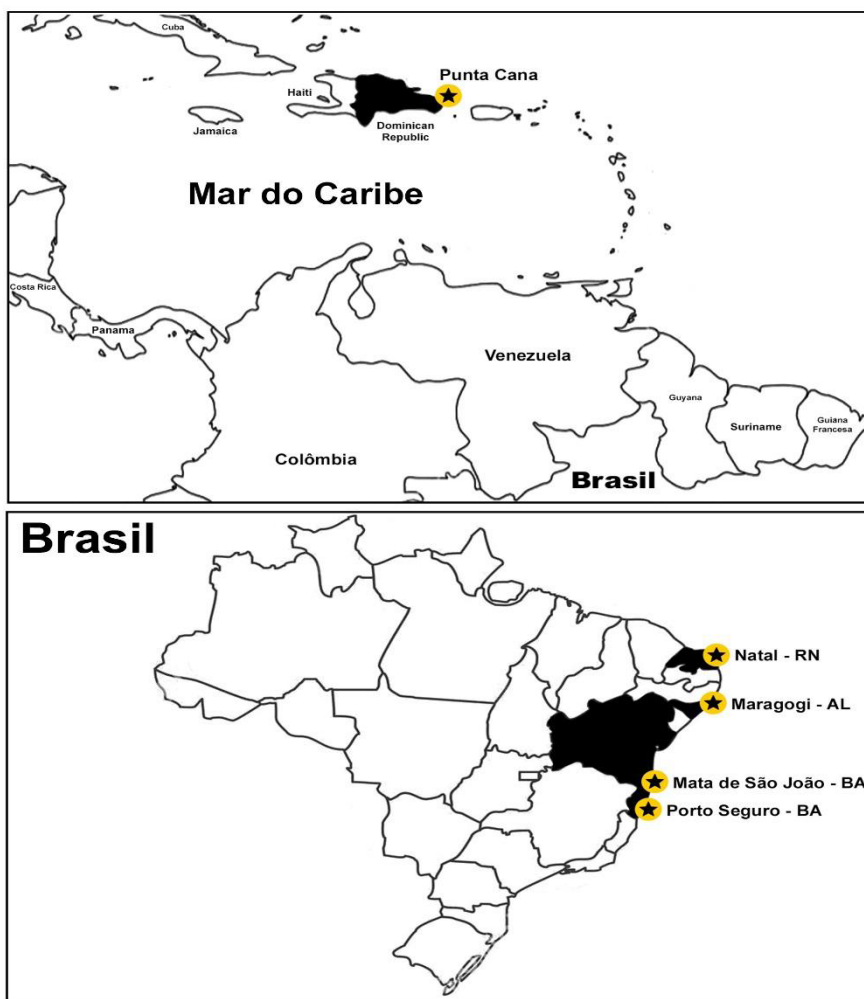
Chart 2 – Resorts included in the analysis

Region	Cities	Resort	Number of evaluations in June/2018	Food
Caribbean	Punta Cana	Hard Rock Hotel and Cassino Punta Cana	27,735	All-Inclusive System
	Punta Cana	Meliá Caribe Tropical	17,628	All-Inclusive System
	Punta Cana	Majestic Elegance Punta Cana	16,808	All-Inclusive System
	Punta Cana	Barceló Bavaro Palace	16,572	All-Inclusive System
	Punta Cana	Paradisus Punta Cana Resort	14,323	All-Inclusive System
Brazil (Northeast)	Maragogi -AL	Salinas Maragogi all inclusive Resort Alagoas	8026	All-Inclusive System
	Natal - RN	SERHS Natal Grand hotel	7430	Half board/full board option
	Mata de São João - BA	Grand Palladium Imbaçaí Resort & Spa	7374	All-Inclusive System
	Porto Seguro - BA	Resort La Torre	5709	All-Inclusive System
	Mata de São João - BA	Iberostar Bahia	5240	All-Inclusive System

Source: TripAdvisor (2018)

The location of these resorts is shown in **figure 1** below. As mentioned above, due to the methodological choices linked to the higher numbers of OTRs, the resorts are located in Punta Cana, in the Dominican Republic and in the northeast of Brazil, in the cities of Maragogi - AL, Natal - RN, Mata de São João - BA and Porto Seguro - BA. **Figure 1** below shows the location of the resorts in Brazil and the Caribbean

Figure 1: Map of resort locations



Source: Prepared by the authors (2019)

Step 2 - collection, recording and individual analysis of OTRs: The cutoff period defined was the month of January 2018. All the OTRs posted on TripAdvisor, for the selected resorts, whether or not they mentioned food, were classified, generating a database of 1,600 OTRs, which were recorded in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

The OTRs were then analyzed qualitatively, measuring satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or neutrality in relation to the food services offered at the resort: breakfast, lunch, dinner, bar services, and overall satisfaction with the food. To support this analysis, four categories of analysis were used, defined from the literature review, namely: 1- Physical aspects of the establishment, 2- Aspects of food quality, 3- Aspects of service quality and 4- Aspects of service provider quality. These categories are arranged in the theoretical framework of this research and reflect aspects of satisfaction and quality of food in bars, restaurants and resorts. The users' sex was deduced from their names and profile pictures in TripAdvisor.



Therefore, profile pictures that showed cartoons, groups, or no images at all, were classified as “not mentioned”. For the profile pictures with photos of individuals, these, together with the user’s names, were used to classify the users as male or female.

For the correlation between overall satisfaction with the food, and satisfaction with the food services (breakfast, lunch, dinner, bar services) (Step 3), it was first necessary to categorize the results of the qualitative analysis.

Thus, if the comment was predominantly positive in relation to the four categories of analysis, it was considered as “satisfied”, and was given a score of 1. Otherwise, as “dissatisfied”, with a score of -1. If the comment was neutral, i.e. neither positive nor negative, or did not mention the specific factors of the categories of analysis, the comment was considered as neutral, giving it a score of 0 (zero). Next, the average scores of the four categories were calculated for each service, generating a single average to represent the satisfaction of each service to be correlated.

Step 3- Statistical analysis of the data: For the correlation of the averages between overall satisfaction of the food and the food services individually (breakfast, lunch, dinner, bar services), Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used, with the aid of the software program IBM SPSS Statistics, version 22. The aim of multiple linear regression analysis, as with all types of regression, is to find the equation (called regression equation, statistical regression variable or regression model) that best predicts the response variable, from a combination of explanatory variables, i.e. to find the values of (b) that best fit the data of the problem (Hair *et al.*, 2009). To verify whether the two groups in the sample (Brazilian and Caribbean resorts) responded differently, i.e., if there was a difference in responses between guests in each region, the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test was conducted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profile of the sample of users observed in this survey consist of sex, and region reviewed in the OTR. The frequency results showed that TripAdvisor users who posted OTRs on an accommodation establishment in one of the resorts were mostly female (551 female vs 466 male). Notably, in 35.9% of the cases it was not possible to identify the user’s sex from the OTRs posted, based on the abovementioned methodological criteria.

To meet the objective of this research, which is to determine whether there any differences in perceptions between guests of domestic and foreign resorts, the OTRs were categorized by region (Brazil/Caribbean). The frequency test showed that 63.9% of the OTRs were related to Caribbean resorts, while 34.7% were related to Brazilian resorts. The results of the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test indicated that there were no differences in perceptions between guests at resorts in Brazil and the Caribbean, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test

	Breakfast Average	Lunch Average	Dinner Average	Bar Average
Mann-Whitney U	290951.500	291191.000	290530.000	285740.500
Wilcoxon W	829154.500	449957.000	449296.000	823943.500
Z	-.221	-.296	-.421	-.877
Sig. Assint. (2 caudas)	.825	.767	.674	.381

a. Clustering Variable: Region

Source: Research Data (2019).

The R indicator in the model summary explains that there is moderate correlation from the value 326<sup>a</sup>. The R<sup>2</sup> indicator shows that the percentage of variation in the dependent variable, explained by the model, is 10.6%. The 1,978 residuals, measured by the Durbin-Watson test are within acceptable limits, i.e., close to 2, according to Field (2009).

The ANOVA test result indicated that at least one of the independent variables (averages for breakfast, lunch, dinner and bar) is influencing the dependent variable (overall food average), since the significance level (p) was below 0.0001. The result of the analysis of variance, performed through the ANOVA test, allowed us to estimate the regression coefficients, presented in Table 2 (Hair Jr. *et al.*, 2009, p. 72).

**Table 2:** Coefficients

	Model B	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Standard error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.102	.005		19.258	.000
	Breakfast Average	-.043	.068	-.016	-.627	.531
	Lunch Average	.250	.116	.057	2.160	.031
	Dinner Average	.266	.085	.078	3.143	.002
	Bar Average	.406	.032	.305	12.853	.000

a. Dependent variable: Overall food average  
Source: Research Data (2019).

As a function of the values obtained from the Pearson's coefficients (r) and the level of significance of the relation (p), there was a significant and positive correlation in three of the four independent variables, in the following order: 1- bar services, 2- dinner services and 3- lunch services. The correlation is considered close when p is less than 0.05. Thus, the results indicate that the overall satisfaction with the food in the resorts is influenced bar services, dinner services, and lunch services, in descending order. Although Trancoso (2008) states that breakfast is one of the most important moments of the day for guests in the hotel business, and it is strategic for the enterprises, the results of this study found no significant and positive correlation for this meal. This may highlight one of the differences between guests at resorts and guests at hotels and guesthouses, as verified in a study by Chand and Kapoor (2014).



The analyses generated in the SPSS software (22) confirmed the initial impressions gained during the data collection, with the manual analysis of the OTRs. To better exploit the results obtained by the tests in the SPSS (22) software, some sections of the OTRs were correlated with the test results. The following sections are presented, in descending order of significance (Pearson's coefficients ( $r$ ) and the level of significance of the correlation ( $p$ )) in the tests: 1- bar services, 2- dinner services and 3- lunch services, reading and evaluation of the OTRs.

Regarding bar services, for example, the main comments posted by users related to the quality of the beverages or the label/brand of alcoholic beverages (quality aspects of food), the dishes (physical aspects) and the service providers. Often, there were comments like "...the drink is too diluted..." (referring to the alcohol content), or "...guests have to pay for the more expensive drinks, otherwise they serve the cheaper ones...". Also in relation to the quality of the drinks, "...not all the bar staff knew how to make any drink besides caipirinha...", or "...the drinks were brand labels and were great...". It should be noted that these extracts from the reviews represent the attributes that the guests observed, regardless of whether they were negative or positive. In other words, the quality of the beverages, when in good proportions and prepared with distillates of good reputation and quality of taste. Resort managers should pay attention to this aspect. Companies with food services that wish to remain competitive in this market, retaining or improving their market positioning, need to have a good knowledge the consumer's eating and drinking habits, tastes and preferences (Nascimento Filho, Flores & Limberger, 2019).

The quality of the service providers, i.e. waiting staff, bartenders and wine stewards, is also highlighted in the reviews, indicating that this aspect influences the overall opinion of the service. Typical comments were "...The food was good, the drinks continue to flow, although the waitress was sometimes slow to come back..." (quality of service). And also aspects of the service, as in the comment "...maids, room service, bartenders, reception, were ALL very kind and smiling, they worked happily...", or, "...The casino looks like Vegas and we enjoyed the bartenders' performances...". (quality of the providers, followed by quality of service). These comments did not reflect the opinions given in other OTRs, which complained when the providers were "...lazy...", "...always tired...". Bar services are so important to guests that some complaints, such as delays at check-in if their room is not yet ready, can even be overlooked as long as drinks are served in the meantime "...Positive, they served drinks while we were waiting!...". This perception of speed of service, skills, and staff training was also evidenced in a study by Constadache et al., (2011), focusing on restaurants.

Besides quality aspects of the food, service and services providers in relation to the bar, the OTRs also referred to the minibar in the room, especially in reference to the physical aspects of the room, "...a coffee machine in the room, with only one cup, or a glass for two people...", or even "...I loved the espressos and Nespresso lattes, but I had to look up the online manual. A card showing the times and services available would be good..." and also "...the minibar was dirty and was not replenished...". Guests evaluated the drinks services (bar) with close attention, giving both positive and negative reviews; there was a comment about the glasses by just one person, in a double room,

and one about how the coffee machine works. This reinforces the understanding of Silva, Medeiros, & Costa (2009) on the importance of continuous improvement, both in tangible aspects and in developing greater awareness and sensitivity to guests' needs among the employees, in the search for excellence.

At dinner time, in addition to the bar service aspects already mentioned, guests mainly commented on: table reservations (quality of service), variety of food (quality of food) and the quality of the service providers. There were frequent comments along the lines of "...the biggest tip I would give is to schedule dinner...", or "...restaurants are practically impossible to book, unless you want to have dinner at 6 p.m....". It appears that the reservation systems for dinner are often unable to accommodate the number of guests, or are below expectations in most of the resorts, resulting in a lot of dissatisfaction. It is clear from the OTRs that guests were surprised by this difficulty, realizing it only the first time they went for dinner and accommodating their schedules only in the subsequent days of their stay, though still dissatisfied. As a suggestion, observing the OTRs, reservations could be made at check-in, or even online, prior to arrival at the resort. According to Chand and Kapoor (2014), the resorts must continually develop new food and beverage service practices if they are to be successful, especially when it comes to wait times for dinner.

In relation to the variety of the dinner food (food quality), the guests mostly cited barbecue-style restaurants and grills as their favorites. However, a considerable number of OTRs showed contrary dietary preferences "...we thought that the menus were mainly geared towards red meat, with limited fresh fish or vegetarian options (there were options of vegetables but they didn't look fresh, they were canned).

The food is more about quantity than quality...". However, Chand and Kapoor's (2014) findings on food in resorts indicate that quality of food is more important than quantity. The OTRs also mentioned things like "... There were no diet desserts for diabetics at lunch and dinner..." or "... However, the only thing that lowers all the restaurants is the lack of fresh vegetables, which is so important for us, or at least some vegetarian options...". In relation to the quality of the services providers at dinner, guests expected personalized treatment, as though it were a special occasion, as shown by comments like "... he was an excellent waiter. He learned our names the first day and always made sure we had what we needed and that we were enjoying our meals...".

The OTRs related to lunch were less detailed, as they nearly always mentioned dinner in the same review. However, some aspects stand out, such as the variety of food (food quality), labels identifying the foods - given that most resorts operate a lunch buffet for this meal (physical aspects), and food safety, such as hand hygiene and temperature of the food (quality of food, providers and physical aspects).

This was well described in an OTR posted by one guest, who states "...All the food was not properly cooked, it was cold or lukewarm. The food was consistently wrongly labeled. It was the worst trip we've ever had...", or another that said "...The buffet is a mess, always cluttered not very pleasant, with dirty tables. During the day (for lunch), the only option is the buffet...".. Guests also commented on the lack of places to wash their hands "... There are ZERO hand sanitizing stations and the two buffets that serve thousands of people have one bathroom between them...", or with regard to food safety



and quality of food, the physical appearance of the food "... Many of the items for lunch appear to be leftovers from the restaurants the night before...". The importance of these aspects is also observed in luxury restaurants, according to the study of Chin & Tsai (2013).

Although OTRs like these were quite frequent, many guests seem to be used to the challenges of resorts, indicating that they frequent guests at this type of accommodation. Instead, they comment on physical aspects of the dining room, such as the décor "... Although the food is always tasty, after seven days at the resort you get fed up with the buffet, but that's all part and parcel of staying at a resort. We liked both restaurants very much, very tasty food, nothing out of this world, but we loved the décor and the ambience in both...". These physical attributes were also considered important for customer satisfaction in the study by Chin & Tsai (2013).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed objectives of this research were achieved. It was found that there are no differences in the aspects observed by guests, comparing international with Brazilian resorts. The OTRs did not present any variation in the reviews posted these two regions, with bar, dinner and lunch being services the most cited. Both physical and quality aspects of food and service providers were important in the reviews posted after the guests' stay at the resort.

The most frequently mentioned factor was the quality of the food (variety, taste, food safety issues and presentation), followed by the quality of the service providers. Resort managers should be especially attentive to bar services, as guests attributed a large part of their perception of satisfaction to this aspect. Therefore, to ensure positive OTRs, the bar service should be excellent. In view of the above, the importance of positive OTR for the resorts is evident. Customers are more likely to make recommendations, or book again, if they are satisfied with the quality (Belli *et al.*, 1995; Wu, Huang & Chou, 2014).

It is important to mention some limitations of this study. Only one month was observed: January 2018, and the study did not measure aspects of seasonality. Given that the OTRs analyzed were all posted in January, many of them related to holidays taken in December 2017, which includes the Christmas period. We should also take into consideration the passage of Hurricane Maria through the Caribbean in December 2017, an event that may have influenced general satisfaction, as it was mentioned several times in the reviews.

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