Boutique Hotels in Alaçatı: Are Customers Satisfied Enough?

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Abstract: *Compatible with the recent developments in technology nearly every human being has become a writer by using web 2.0 applications. Today if customers are not satisfied enough they complain on the web 2.0. E-complaints are the key features of hotels especially if it's small scaled or boutique hotels. Alaçatı is one of the popular tourism resorts in Turkey. Every year many number of tourists both national and international visit and stay in Alaçatı especially in summer. Alaçatı offers cultural and authentic values, natural values like sea, sand, sun and other wide range opportunities. Concerning the seasonality of Alaçatı the number of boutique hotels is fewer in winter and more in summer. Also these boutique hotels are run, closed and/or changed their names, management and staff very often. Although number of tourists visiting Alaçatı has been increasing, boutique hotels in Alaçatı are not stabile. Therefore, this research aims to investigate e-complaints of tourists' staying at boutique hotels in Alaçatı. Method of the study is qualitative analysis. Content analysis is made through web 2.0. (tripadvisor.com). Implications of the findings are discussed. According to analysis some significant findings are service, food, hotel staff. Considering research findings recommendations are made to boutique hotels.*

Keywords: *boutique hotels, e-complaints, tourism, Alaçatı destination*

1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Alaçatı is one of the popular tourism resorts in Turkey. Every year many number of tourists both national and international visit and stay in Alaçatı especially in summer. Alaçatı offers cultural and authentic values, natural values like sea, sand, sun and other wide range opportunities. Alaçatı is a little town in Çeşme which is a county in city of Izmir. Some important characteristics of Alaçatı is stone houses and authentic little streets. Figure 1 and 2 illustrate views from small streets of Alaçatı.
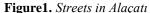

Figure1. *Streets in Alaçatı*

Figure2. *Streets in Alaçatı*

Night in Alaçatı life with many pubs, bistros, dancing clubs are pull factors for both celebrities and others. The resort destination offers wide range of fresh herbs, vegetables and sea food. In the spring people come together from different places of Turkey to attend Alaçatı Herb Festival. Another important point of Alaçatı is a wind surf destination for national and international surfers. Every year in August Wind Surf Races are made in Alaçatı. Marina in Alaçatı hosts many tourists with yachts and boats also local people. Figures 3, 4 and 5 show pictures of Alaçatı Herb Festival, Alaçatı Marina and Wind Surf Race.

Figure3. *Alaçatı Herb Festival*

Figure4. *Alaçatı Marina*

Figure4. *Alaçatı Windsurf Race*

Alaçatı offers characteristic and authentic buildings operated and managed as boutique hotels. In Figure 5 a room view can be seen in a boutique hotel in Alaçatı. Walls of the room are made of stone and the decoration of the room is authentic. Figure 6 is a picture of garden in a boutique hotel in Alaçatı. Decoration with white and blue colours, local flowers and plants and ground designed by little stones are characteristics of Agean region design and may be seen as in all destinations and islands located in Agean region.

Figure5. *A Room in a Boutique Hotel (Alaçatı)*

Figure 6. *A Garden in a Boutique Hotel (Alaçatı)*

As mentioned above Alaçatı offers characteristic and authentic buildings operated and managed as boutique hotels. The number of boutique hotels in November in Alaçatı is 41. This information is gathered from tripadvisor.com in October 2015. The number of boutique hotels is different in winter and summer related to seasonality. Boutique hotels are run, closed and/or changed their names, management and staff very often. Although number of tourists visiting Alaçatı has been increasing, boutique hotels in Alaçatı are not stabile. Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate e-complaints of tourists' staying at boutique hotels in Alaçatı.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Boutique Hotels

Nowadays tourists look for authentic, unique experiences. These motives lead them to stay in boutique hotels during travel. According to the Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry boutique hotels are classified as special facility and needed some characteristics; architectural authenticity, historical value, environmental attribute, artistic value, buildings reflecting local culture, and executive quality decoration and architecture (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015). Boutique hotels need to be authentic within constructional, texture characteristics and decoration, management techniques and services based on high quality and standards, trained and experienced staff. According to Ministry of Culture and Tourism the number of rooms in boutique hotels is between 10 and 60 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015). Lin (2009) emphasis that service quality characteristics, individual design, location and facilities combination may be useful describing a boutique hotel.

2.2. E-Complaints

Today by the popularity of Web 2.0 most tourists leave comments related with holidays. If tourists are not satisfied with tourism experience (accommodation, transport, destination or any other) they complain by using internet especially Web 2.0 web sites. Web 2.0 may be defined as '*the second generation of web-based services that have gained massive popularity by letting people collaborate and share information online in previously unavailable ways*' (cited in Bingley et al., 2010: 281). By Web 2.0 technologies focus transferred from administrations to consumers, individuals to society, publishing to participation and invitation to entrance without permission (Berthon et al., 2012: 262). Trip advisor, Lonely Planet, TripPlanner, Travelistic are some examples of tourism web 2.0 websites. Those websites allow individuals to post their own content, opinions, videos, audio or imagery to the web. All other users including other customers and hotel owners could see and respond their posts (Bingley et al., 2010: 281).

Complaining is defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction*' (Kowalski, 2003: 28). E-complaints may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by email, web sites, blog and in other world wide web. For recent years e-complaints have become popular research topics for marketing and management researchers. In tourism especially in hotel business e-complaints have nearly become drivers of the business. Many studies explore e-complaints in tourism industry and hotel business (Au et al., 2014, Ekiz et al., 2012, Zheng et al., 2009, Au et al., 2009, Lee and Hu, 2004). Lee and Hu (2004) analyzed e-complaints by content analysis and they highlighted online customers were mostly unhappy with fundamental service failure such as declined service quality and rude employees (Lee and Hu, 2004: 167). Au et al. (2009) identified e-complaints gathered from TripAdvisor. They analyzed 453 complaints related to hotel. Customers' e-complaint areas are found service quality, space, cleanliness, facilities, bedding, price, provision of amenities, decoration and miscellaneous (Au et al., 2009).

Chiappo and Dall'aglio (2012) investigated hotel e-rating and e-complaints left on booking.com Comments are related with hotels located in a resort destination in Italy. They found 430 negative comments of the 727 reviews. They investigated how e-rating e-complaining behaviour can be differentiated, according to tourists' gender, cultural background, whom they travel with, time of year of their stay, as well as hotel class and size. One of the significant findings is women intend to complain significantly more than men for rating and promises. On the other hand, men intend to complain more than women about bathroom problems. Chiappo and Dall'aglio (2012) indicate that single travelers complain about staff more than the others. Price/ratio is more important than any other travelers and they complain more about price-quality ratio. Also researchers add that international travelers complain more than Italian travellers about location and surroundings and price-quality ratio.

Ekiz et al. (2012) investigated e-complaints about 32 luxury hotels in Kuala Lumpur. The data was gathered from Trip Advisor. According to findings of their research, tourists complain mostly about rooms in the luxury hotels. Zheng et al. (2009) investigated 504 online comments from hotel customers on TripAdvisor. They distinguish online comments into five categories; rooms, service, value, cleanliness, and dining (Zheng et al., 2009). Au et al. (2014) analyzed 822 complaints on Trip Advisor and Ctrip commented by Chinese and non-Chinese customers about hotels. They identified 11 complaint categories like service, miscellaneous, space, cleanliness, location, noise, food, facilities, price, provision of amenities, décor. Chinese and non-Chinese customers were compared in this research. According to findings, they indicate that Chinese customers mostly complaint the lack of a luxurious feeling in the décor and they do not prefer traditional Chinese decor. For both Chinese and non-Chinese customers the lowest complaining issue is cleanliness. Au et al. (2014) highlighted that complaining about facilities do not differentiate for Chinese and non-Chinese customers. They complain about worn carpets, furniture, air conditioner.

3. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned before the aim of the research is to investigate e-complaints of tourists' staying and/or using facilities at boutique hotels in Alaçatı. Research question of the study is what the e-complaints are regarding boutique hotels in Alaçatı. The method of the study is qualitative related with research question. Data is collected from travel review web site TripAdvisor (web 2.0). Purpose of choosing trip advisor is that trip advisor is one of the largest travel web sites whom participants are real people all around the world. Tourists who stayed and/or used facilities in boutique hotels located in Alaçatı resort destination are the focus of the research. Content analysis is used in this research. E-complaints (negative comments) left on www.tripadvisor.com web page are examined through content analysis

for 20 boutique hotels. The number of boutique hotels in Alaçatı during October and November 2015 is 41 (www.tripadvisor.com). Content analysis method comprises some steps; coding, developing themes, coordination of codes and themes, findings and interpretations (Berg, 2001: 238-243).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are 41 hotels are listed as boutique hotels in trip advisor. 20 boutique hotels were examined. According to content analysis, eight themes are identified regarding complaining issues. These are service, room, food, facility, location, staff/manager/management issues, price/performance ratio, and cleanliness.

Table1. *Number of E-complaints due to Themes*

Service	Room	Food	Facility	Location	Staff/Manager/Management	Price/Performae Ratio	Cleanliness
40	20	10	24	15	30	40	23

Table 1 point out the number of e-complaints due to topics. According to Table 1 the number e-complaints about service is 40. Room theme comprises 20 e-complaints and e-complaints about food are 10. The number of e-complaints about facility theme is 24 and location theme is 15. 30 e-complaints are made by customers for staff, manager and management issues. Also e-complaints about the price/performance ratio theme is 40. Last of all, customers made 23 e-complaints about cleanliness theme.

Table2. *Themes of E-complaints for Boutique Hotels in Alaçatı*

Service	Room	Food	Faciliy	Locatin	Staff/Management/Ower	Price&Performane Ratio	Cleanlines
low quality slow poor inadequate wireless	size old decoration color ergonomics	no alternatives not fresh not enough	broken absent parking lot pool water facility heating facility	distance noise hard to find view	not professional rude untrained so young arrogant careless	prices are too high regarding performance	cleanliness of hotel, rooms, restaurants pool other

Table 2 indicates themes of e-complaints for boutique hotels in Alaçatı. According to content analysis 8 main themes are developed; service, room, food, facility, location, price/performance, staff/manager/management and cleanliness. Service: low quality, slow, poor and inadequate. Room: size, old, decoration, color and ergonomics. Food: no alternatives, not fresh, not enough Facility: broken, absent, parking lot, pool, water facility, heating facility Location: distance, noise, hard to find, view. Staff/manager/management issues: not professional, rude, untrained, so young, arrogant, and careless. Price and performance ratio: prices are too high regarding performance. Cleanliness: cleanliness of hotel, rooms, restaurants, pool and other places.

The most e-complaints for Alaçatı's boutique hotels are about service, price and performance theme. Customers complained that prices in hotels are too high considering service performance. Also service in the hotels does not satisfy customers' expectations and they complain about slow and poor service, wireless problems. Problems with staff, management and management issues follow them. The most given words for staff and managers are rude, arrogant, untrained, careless and unprofessional. Customers complain less about food. The main areas are few alternatives, not enough food and not fresh. The most complaining issue about location theme is distance from the Alaçatı centre. Also due to closeness to night clubs and bars hotel is so noisy. Customers usually go to Alaçatı with cars and they cannot find parking place near hotels because streets are small. So this makes them to complain. Size, decoration and ergonomics of rooms are other important e-complaint issues for customers whom stayed in the hotels. Especially for Surf travelers whom staying long time in hotels decoration, view and size of the rooms are much more important than other guests.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The most complained areas for Alaçatı's boutique hotels are service, staff, manager, management issues, price and performance ratio. Alaçatı have become popular since 5-10 years for celebrities and high society. This factor increases prices in the destination. Also because it is a resort destination seasonality influences prices especially in summer. Enterprises aims to increase their income in only 3 months, so this makes tourists unsatisfied with price and performance ratio. If tourism activities expand to all year, prices may decrease in high season in summer. Another most complained issue is problems with staff, manager and management issues. There is a high turnover rates in tourism industry especially if it's small scaled business like boutique hotels. Regarding seasonality issue hotels employ many numbers of staff in summer and few in winter. So these staff does not work always in hotels and do other jobs. These factors affect negatively employees' performance, skills, knowledge

and ability. Some problems faced with managers that in small scaled boutique hotels sometimes manager and owner may be same person and family. This may cause management problems and unprofessional implications in the hotels. Managers follow personal management techniques that interrupt guests especially foreign guests where culture may be a problem. Service issues in boutique hotels are other important complaining topics. Management needs to take seriously service problems and train personnel to minimize problems. Also this requires professional and educated point of view and unfortunately Turkish small scaled hotel business is lack of it. Because the destination is so popular for summer management approach usually this what we are if you like it. Turkish people consistently go to Alaçatı whether service is poor or good. On the other hand, international tourists need to be satisfied and create revisit intentions regarding high quality service, satisfying needs and professional management approach.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Limitation of the study is the number of hotels. Due to time concern, only 20 hotels were examined in trip advisor web site. So the number of hotels in this study needs to be expanded. Also in this study only e-complaints left by tourists on trip advisor are analyzed. For the further research other web 2.0 technologies (Lonely Planet, TripPlanner, Travelistic etc.) may be investigated. In addition to that interviews may be held with hotel managers about complaint issues regarding the hotels. These studies may be useful for understanding the effectiveness, trust and importance of web 2.0 technologies. Also if good comments are evaluated positive sides of boutique hotels in Alaçatı will be recognized and encourage them to sustain those beneficial implementations.

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