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Understanding Tourist Behavior in Heritage Hotels: A Netnographic Analysis Through the Lens of the C-A-C Model

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Abstract

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Keywords

tourist behaviour, heritage hotels, netnography, cognitive-affective-conative model, online reviews

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Tourist behavior in heritage hotels significantly impacts guest experiences and loyalty. This study explores tourist perceptions of Rajasthan's heritage hotels, a prime location due to its numerous converted historical structures. Employing a netnographic approach, the research analyzes online reviews from 2020 to mid-2023 on Google Reviews. Findings reveal a combination of positive and negative comments across cognitive (infrastructure, environment, history, architecture), affective (service experience, ambiance), and conative (revisit intentions, recommendations) factors. While guests expressed strong positive cognitive and affective responses, some management practices received negative feedback. High revisit intentions and recommendations suggest an overall positive experience. The study adds to the understanding of perceptions, feelings, and behaviors of tourists towards Rajasthan's heritage hotels. It gives actionable insights for tourism marketers, service providers, and policymakers to enhance tourism offerings, improve service standards, and optimize tourist loyalty within the heritage tourism sector.

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Introduction

Recently, tourists are increasingly utilizing online travel information for their travel decisions (Guo et al., 2021). They tend to look for other travelers' experiences, recommendations, and opinions about the product/service in reviews on blogs, webpages, mobile applications, forums, and social networking sites before their journey starts (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). Previous research indicates that people's first impression and choice to travel are more and more based on the online feedback from other travelers who have been to and encountered the location (Guo et al., 2021; Lojo et al., 2020; Marine-Roig, 2019).

The CAC (Cognitive-Affective-Conative) model is recognized as a crucial concept in the tourism marketing (Lojo et al., 2020). It helps explain how tourists perceive a destination (cognitive), how they feel about it (affective), and whether they revisit or recommend it (conative) (Gartner, 1994; Michael et al., 2018). Although cognitive and affective components are widely applied (e.g., Tham et al., 2013; Yabanci, 2022), the use of conation as the main component is still rare. In addition, many researchers in the tourism domain have thoroughly. However, these scholars primarily rely on interviews and surveys to examine tourists' perceptions and experiences. Such methods - surveys and interviews - are insufficient for

capturing. Hence, there is a need for researchers to understand travellers' behaviours through online reviews since this area is still underdeveloped.

India's rich heritage bolsters a robust heritage tourism industry, with a growing demand for unique experiences. Heritage hotels, meticulously transformed from historical structures, meet this demand by providing an enchanting combination of history, luxury, and cultural immersion (Indian Heritage Hotel Association, 2018; Zhang et al., 2020a). Although India is home to a network of over 140 heritage hotels through the IHHA (Indian Heritage Hotel Association, 2018), only a few deliver truly memorable experiences (Times of India, 2021). Rajasthan, with its rich Rajput history and abundance of forts and palaces, exemplifies this trend. Here, heritage hotels effortlessly integrate Western and Asian influences to create a distinctive cultural experience for visitors (Zhang et al., 2020a). Despite having more than 108 heritage properties (Rathore et al., 2017), studies on tourist experiences in these hotels are still scarce (Ranwa, 2022; Rathore et al., 2017). Therefore, this study fills the gap by exploring tourists' perceptions, emotions, and behaviors towards Rajasthan's heritage hotels utilizing the CAC model. The findings are expected to support tourism marketers, tourism planners, and service providers in making tourism offerings, managing the destination, and improving service standards.

Heritage Hotels

Heritage hotels play a vital role in preserving history and fostering a deep emotional connection with tourists (Jones et al., 2013; Thirumaran et al., 2023). These hotels are known for their unique interior designs, which often reflect the rich cultural heritage of the region (Xie & Shi, 2020). Additionally, they offer a range of cultural activities that allow guests to immerse themselves in the local traditions and history (Bryce et al., 2015). Through the art of storytelling, these hotels create a strong emotional bond with visitors, drawing them into a world of romanticized or sanitized past (Youssef et al., 2019). This form of communication is especially influential in attracting modern tourists who seek meaningful and authentic experiences (Lu et al., 2015; Youssef et al., 2019). In addition to their historical significance, heritage hotels are also known for providing personalized and excellent service to their guests (Mun Lim & Endean, 2009). This level of hospitality adds to the overall allure of staying in these unique accommodations, making the experience truly unforgettable (Aggett, 2007).

In 2024, the number of foreign tourists visiting India rose by 14.03% and 20.80% compared to 2023 and 2019, respectively (Ministry of Tourism & Government of India, 2024). Especially, Rajasthan experienced remarkable tourism growth, attracting about 108.3 million visitors in 2022, which is almost seven times compared to the number of visitors in 2020 (Economic Times, n.d.). Heritage hotels, vital to the tourism industry, reside in historical buildings and are categorized into basic, classic, and grand types (Ministry of Tourism & Government of India, 2019). These hotels offer a royal experience, preserving history while reflecting India's rich heritage. They attract tourists through unique heritage elements and limited commercial activities, offering historical, emotional, and symbolic value (Marghany et al., 2023). Additionally, they provide stylish bars and fine dining, adding exclusivity and prestige (See & Goh, 2019).

Although there are more than 108 heritage properties (Rathore et al., 2017), studies on tourist experiences within these hotels remains limited (Ranwa, 2022; Rathore et al., 2017). Therefore, this study aims to examine tourist perceptions and satisfaction regarding Rajasthan's heritage hotels. Understanding these factors is crucial for hoteliers and tourism ministries to optimize services and maximize tourist loyalty.

Online Review

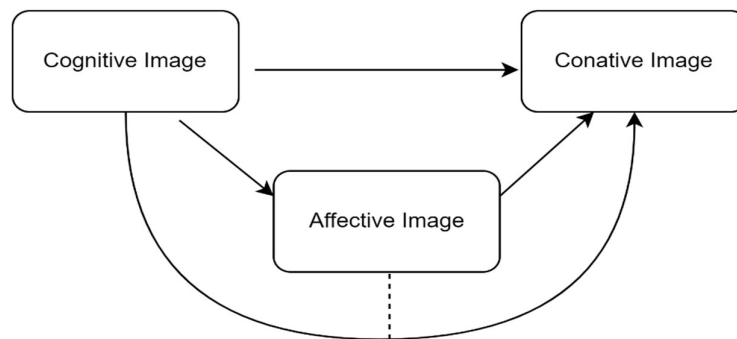
From a tourist's perspective, planning a trip involves considering various elements that influence destination choice, impacting the experience and perceived value for spending (Filieri et al., 2021). Tourists make numerous decisions before their journey begins, ranging from "where to go" and "how to get there" to considering accessibility (Geetha et al., 2017). Studies highlight the influential role of user-generated photos (guest review photos, hotel website photos, social media campaigns) and online reviews (Wen et al., 2021) on tourist booking decisions, particularly in the online segment. Moreover, the rise of online platforms has further enhanced destination images, fostering mass appeal for certain locations (Guo et al., 2021; Nayak et al., 2023). Interestingly, studies show that travelers are more likely to trust casual conversations rather than official messages directly from the company (Filieri et al., 2015; Nieto et al., 2014). Tourists share their knowledge, experience, and recommendations through writing reviews and sharing videos and images on various online platforms, including third-party websites (e.g., Ctrip, TripAdvisor, etc.), web blogs, and social network sites (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). These platforms expose potential tourists to a destination's offerings and cultivate a sense of "visit-worthiness" (Tham et al., 2013).

Cognitive-Affective-Conative (CAC) Model

The CAC model is a theoretical model developed by Gartner (1994) which categorized the attributes of tourists' behaviors into cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions (see Figure 1). These dimensions consider the global image and can be used by travelers' decisions (e.g., choices of hotel in the case of heritage hotel depending on their motivation and interest levels).

Figure 1

CAC (Cognitive-Affective-Conative) Model. Adopted from Gartner (1994)



Extant literature suggests cognitive and affective factors to understand tourists' perceptions and feelings about a destination (Mak, 2017; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Wong & Qi, 2017). The cognitive factor refers to tourists' perceptions, knowledge, recognition, awareness, beliefs, and thoughts about a particular tourism destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004a). Tourists perceive an attractive destination based on elements such as scenic beauty, activities to participate in, and memorable experiences (Kim, 2014). Beerli and Martín (2004b) also classify the cognitive element into eight aspects namely, tourism infrastructure; natural resources; tourism leisure; history, culture, and art; political and economic aspects, natural and social environments; and atmosphere. The attractions offer the incentives and the allure needed to convince a person to travel to a specific location (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996).

The affective component relies on emotion, feelings and sentimental expressions towards the destination which creates tourists value connected to the destination based on their initial motivations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004a). The affective element is more intangible in nature than the cognitive element (Michael et al., 2018). Pleasure, arousal, relaxing, exciting, and favorable are key positive terms which portray tourists' intentions to revisit (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Oliver, 1980). For example, Pan and Li (2011) show that tourists used to express their feelings toward a tourism place by utilizing exclamations such as joyful, thrilling, and busy or quotes such as a rejuvenating place and a place of retreat. However, many authors (e.g., Beerli & Martín, 2004a; Lin et al., 2007; Stern & Krakover, 1993) claim that the cognitive and affective component are interrelated, in which the latter arises from its attributes (the former). Beerli and Martín (2004a) contend that both cognitive and affective images play a significant role in forming tourist behaviors.

Studies also show that after traveling, there may be alterations in the cognitive and affective aspects that result in the conative component, indicative of a tendency to act or behave in a particular manner (Prayag & Ryan, 2011; Qu et al., 2011). The conative component refers to the likelihood of visitors revisiting or recommending a destination based on their positive fulfillment of needs during their original visit (Gartner, 1994; Pike & Ryan, 2004). The study of Agapito et al. (2013) reveals that positive actions of tourists wanting to return to a place could be categorized as actions such as speaking positively about the place to friends and family, as well as expressing an intention to come back or revisit. The cognitive and affective images influence the conative image in a positive manner where affective images also could mediate the relationship between cognitive and conative images (Agapito et al., 2013).

The literature review shows that the history, architecture, and culture of heritage hotels play a vital role in attracting tourists (Gholitabar & Costa, 2018; Parveen & Sharma, 2013; Thirumaran et al., 2023). The culture influences tourists' cognitive images related to the landscape of Rajasthan such as traditional architecture and favorable connect to the destinations (Heide et al., 2007; Ranwa, 2022). Additionally, the history and royalty of Rajasthan made people connect with the state emotionally in its feeling such as a peaceful and relaxed environment in Udaipur eliciting their affective image (Choo et al., 2018; Ranwa, 2022). At the same time the royal feel of the destination influenced behaviors of visit intention, revisit purpose and on-site activities (Ranwa, 2022).

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions, emotions, and behaviors of tourists towards heritage hotels in Rajasthan. While numerous studies have included cognitive and affective aspects (Tham et al., 2013; Yabanci, 2022), the use of a conative image as the main component has not been identified. This paper addresses this gap by using Gartner's (1994) cognitive-affective-conative (CAC) model to understand tourists' experiences toward heritage hotels in Rajasthan. The combination of cognitive, affective, and conative elements will provide a more holistic view and a stronger argument with the incorporation of tourist behavior in destination image formation process (Nayak et al., 2023).

Methodology

This study aimed to explore online reviews of heritage hotels in Rajasthan employing the cognitive, affective, and conative (CAC) components as defined by Gartner (1994). We adopted netnography as our research approach since it is well-suited for analysing how user-generated online content reflects tourists' perceptions, emotions, and behaviours in relation to heritage hotels. Netnography, a research method specializing in studying online communities and cultures, is chosen for its ability to offer a deep, nuanced understanding of complex social phenomena (Gholamhosseinzadeh et al., 2021; Tham et al., 2013) and essential for capturing the subjective experiences of tourists (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the increasingly digital

world, where social interactions and information are predominantly online, netnography is particularly valuable for exploring how destination images formed on the internet can influence actual tourist experiences (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Netnography excels in revealing the cultural and social dynamics within online communities, making it ideal for exploring tourist behaviour in natural settings (Bartl et al., 2016; Tavakoli & Mura, 2018).

Researchers in this study utilized Gartner's (1994) cognitive-affective-conative (CAC) model to code and classify data, and to address the research question on "how do online reviews of heritage hotels in Rajasthan reflect tourists cognitive, affective, and conative responses?" Data were collected using the Instant Data Scraper tool to gather reviews from Google Reviews and TripAdvisor, chosen for their extensive user-generated content that offers rich insights into visitor experiences in heritage hotels in Rajasthan. Reviews were selected based on textual content relevant to the cognitive, affective, and conative (CAC) components of tourist experiences (Beerli & Martín, 2004a; Gartner, 1994). To ensure comprehensive sentiment analysis, both positive and negative terms were used. For instance, terms like "culture" address cognitive aspects, "unforgettable" and "relax" capture affective responses, and "will be back" indicates conative intentions. Phrases with negative connotations such as "disappointed" and "poor service" were included to suggest areas of improvement such as historical accuracy and cleanliness.

We collected data within June 2021 and 2023, in which Rajasthan's tourism reopened after the pandemic lockdowns, to capture the tourist experience post-pandemic (The Tribune, 2020; Hindustan Times, 2020). A total of 2,017 online reviews was collected. However, only 1725 reviews containing textual content were suitable for analysis using content analysis, a method praised for its objectivity and systematic approach (Krippendorff, 2018). Reviews solely consisting of ratings or photographs were excluded. This approach ensures a balanced view of tourist experiences, enhancing the study's credibility and generalizability. To maintain participant confidentiality and emphasize collective insights, composite descriptions were used. This method prevents the identification of individuals and aligns with the study's focus on understanding broader tourist behaviour patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Based on the research of Guo et al. (2021), the analytical procedures included numerous stages, including a manual coding method with various coders to guarantee reliability and validity, alongside a systematic content analysis methodology (Guo et., 2021; Krippendorff, 2018). The first step of the data preparation and familiarisation included a comprehensive examination of the gathered reviews to cultivate a profound awareness of their content and context. Initial coding was then conducted independently by two coders (the first and second authors) using the adapted CAC model (Figure 1: CAC Model - Cognitive-Affective-Conative). This process involved identifying and categorizing key themes associated with tourists' perceptions, emotional responses, and revisit intentions toward heritage hotels. Any differences in coding were resolved through discussions with a third coder (the corresponding author) to consolidate and refine the codes. New attributes emerging during this process were incorporated and categorized within the CAC framework. Finally, a third coder reviewed the codes to ensure reliability. Data collection continued until reaching saturation, the point where no new insights were found from additional reviews. This saturation point was achieved after analysing 725 reviews, resulting in a sufficient sample size for this qualitative study.

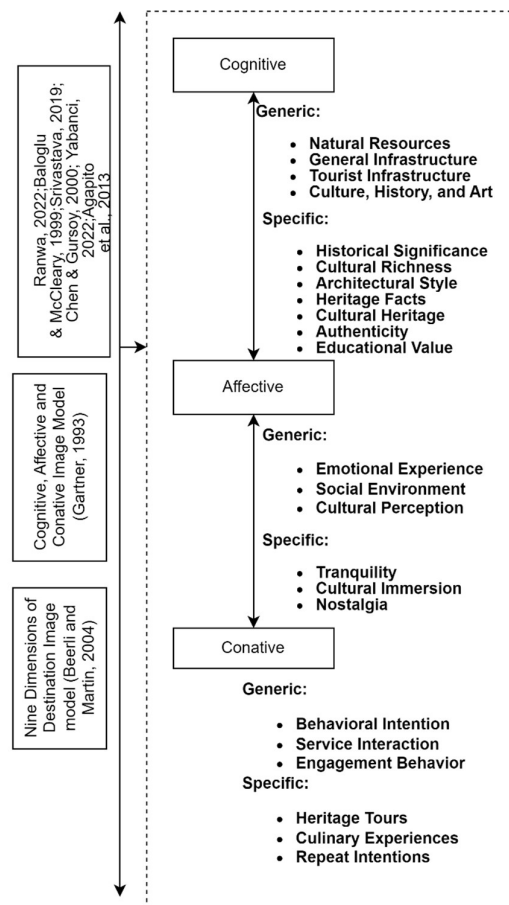
The CAC model effectively categorizes attributes into cognitive (perceptions and knowledge), affective (emotional responses), and conative (behavioural intentions) dimensions, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding tourist experiences (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Ranwa, 2022) as depicted in Figure 2: Attributes for Heritage Hotels – Research Framework. To incorporate attributes specific to heritage hotels, the researchers divided these dimensions into generic and specific attributes. Generic attributes were identified through the CAC model, while specific attributes were derived from existing

literature on heritage tourism (Chen & Gursoy, 2000; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Srivastava, 2019; Yabanci, 2022). Additionally, insights from Agapito et al. (2013) were used to enhance the conative dimensions by including elements such as recommendation and revisit intentions. This approach ensures a balanced analysis of how tourists perceive, feel, and behave towards heritage hotels, integrating the rich historical, cultural, and emotional elements that define these establishments. This multi-dimensional framework thus provides a robust methodological foundation, capturing the complexity and uniqueness of tourist experiences in heritage hotels.

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, strategies such as member checking with industry experts, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail were employed (Guba, 1981; Halpern, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Peer debriefing included regular discussions with colleagues to refine the coding process and analysis, minimizing bias (Guba, 1981). An audit trail documented the data collection and analysis processes thoroughly, enabling replication and verification of the study (Halpern, 1983). The study was approved by the Institutional Review Committee as part of a Master's project. Given the nature of netnographic research analysing anonymized public reviews, traditional participant safety measures were not required, and ethical practices were emphasized to protect privacy (Mkono & Tribe, 2017). My background in tourism and hospitality management has deeply influenced this study, with my personal and professional experiences providing context and depth to the data interpretation, enhancing the study's credibility and reflexivity (Kozinets, 2015; Mkono & Tribe, 2017).

Figure 2

Attributes for Heritage Hotels – Research Framework



Results

The qualitative content analysis findings support the proposed research paradigm by demonstrating that all cognitive, affective, and conative attributes were addressed in the Google reviews. Interestingly, some attributes did not align perfectly with the predefined dimensions of the research framework, and new attributes were identified (Table 1). To provide a comprehensive understanding, the comments were categorized using a particular CAC dimension.

The architecture of a hotel can significantly enhance a guest's experience, especially when the design reflects historical and cultural elements. Many reviews emphasized the architectural splendour and historical significance of the hotels. For instance, one reviewer expressed:

The building itself is an engineering marvel, with its intricate details and the use of white marble. It was designed by the renowned Edwardian architect Henry Lanchester and is a blend of both traditional Rajasthani and modern architecture. A sequence of domes, turrets, and balconies adorns the front. Inside there will be huge chandeliers, marble flooring, and extravagant furniture. (Case Number: 112)

Emphasizing the hotels amazing architecture and historical significance, this quotation highlights its complex elements. Together with exclusive decor, traditional Rajasthani and contemporary design create a vast picture that draws guests seeking a unique and satisfying experience.

Further, ensuring guest happiness depends on the hotels whole infrastructure which includes rooms gymnasiums, lobby space and pools. Reviews frequently mentioned these aspects, underscoring their importance. One reviewer stated:

The rooms itself was gorgeous with contemporary decor and luxurious furnishings. The bed was rather cosy, and the sheets were nice and silky. The bathroom was large and well-appointed with many facilities provided. The gym was huge and well equipped; the pool area was really breathtaking. (Case Number: 546)

Revealing the hotels commitment to provide a high-quality and enjoyable experience, this evaluation stresses the elegant features of the hotel.

Table 1
CAC Attributes for Heritage Hotels

Dimensions	CAC Attributes	Attributes (No. of coding)
Cognitive	Natural resources General infrastructure	scenic beautiful (25), lovely sunrise, sunsets (41), nature (53), positive vibes (62), Amazing view (54), nature's beauty (35) spacious (36), gorgeous (71), amenities (83), amazing (75), clean (15), good property (34) luxury resort (33), royal (38), cultural elements (61), luxurious getaway (35)
	Tourist infrastructure	art deco details (74), art deco (101) history of kings (31), regal architecture (12)
	Culture History and art	past (11) majestic (31), hospitality (45) ambience (145), modern (101), luxurious (36), Oriental (4), Spacious rooms (30), ambience (37), blend of traditional and modern (33)
	Cultural richness Architectural style	Beautiful layout (21), beautiful place (21), luxurious (22), comfortable (15), Awesome architecture (6),
	Heritage facts Cultural heritage	royal heritage haveli (11), Amazing property (2), heritage property (7), historic building (2), Good property (2), stunning location (7), magnificent palace (44), Heritage property (13), fabulous (5), stunning property (3), magical (3), heritage art pieces (4), aesthetically converted (7) Authenticate food (12), traditional rajasthani foods (10)
Affective	Emotional experience Social environment Cultural perception Tranquility Nostalgia	relaxing getaway (42), Wonderful experience (181), happy (81), kind (7) comfortable (21), Nice Place (24) folk and indie music (3) serene and picturesque location (31), paradise (45), breathtaking views (36), tranquil (28), peaceful location (38), relaxing atmosphere (42), serene place (18) peaceful (10), complete peace of mind (22), lifetime experience (14)
	Service interaction Heritage tours Culinary experiences Repeat intentions	Warm hospitality (33), staff's attentiveness (7), courteous (22), friendly (109), good room service (5), Best staff (5), humble (5), excellent service (4), impeccable service (2) courteous (14), humble (4), polite (18), well trained (15), courteous staff (5), great hospitality (4), clean (124), Phenomenal service (3) local attractions (3), vintage car collection (10) exceptional service and food (4), Amazing food (29), Authenticate food (12), Food quality (20), traditional Rajasthani foods (10), Tasty food (5), Food quality (5), best Indian food (5), delicious food (16), exquisite (45), delicious (19), good food (5), tasty food (32), definitely stay here (7), future visit (51), nice place to visit (5), must visit place (45)

Accessibility is an essential consideration for many guests, including the convenience when reaching the hotel and the availability of transportation services. Reviews varied in their assessment of accessibility. As one guest explained:

Location: If you are coming from Queens Road, turn left on Sirsi Road. Take the right turn at the traffic signal which goes towards Jhotwara. The hotel will be on your left just under a km from the traffic signal. A large entrance gate is manned at all times. The moment you enter, you will see an expansive, well-maintained garden accompanied by many ancient trees. Adjacent to the main entrance of the hotel, there exists a bar and cafe on the right side, with both indoor and outdoor garden dining places. (Case Number: 1651)

This detailed direction provides a clear sense of the hotel's location and accessibility, reflecting positive first impressions upon arrival. The well-maintained entrance and garden contribute to an inviting atmosphere.

However, not all reviews were positive about accessibility. As another reviewer noted, "Far from city center. With bad traffic, took us two hrs to go to places of interest. But the staffs are very helpful with information" (Case Number: 560). This review points out the challenges of accessibility, particularly due to traffic and distance from the city centre. Despite these drawbacks, the helpfulness of the staff is noted, which mitigates some of the inconvenience.

Safety is a paramount concern for guests, especially those traveling with family or in groups. Many reviews highlighted the perceived safety of the hotel environment. One reviewer shared, "Quiet and safe environment. Well sanitized and being run very efficiently by young staff. Burgers and desserts were scrumptious. I believe the patisserie is quite a hit" (Case Number: 1500). This review underscores the hotel's quiet and safe environment, efficient management, and high standards of cleanliness. Such attributes are crucial for guests seeking a secure and pleasant stay.

Pricing is a significant factor influencing guests' overall satisfaction. While some reviews mentioned higher prices, they often justified the cost with the exceptional service and experience provided. As expressed by a guest:

I have been to quite a few Luxury Heritage hotels around the world, but none of them blew my mind like this one. The ambiance is breath-taking. The staff's attentive and super friendly. Once in a lifetime experience. Definitely worth the high price tag. (Case Number: 2)

This review highlights that despite the high price, the unique experience and attentive service justify the cost, indicating a strong perceived value for money.

The natural environment, including the hotel's surroundings and cleanliness, greatly impacts guests' experiences. Many reviews praised the tranquil and beautiful settings of the hotels. One guest stated:

Loved our stay at this hotel. It's situated about 40 minutes north of the city in a tranquil peaceful location overlooking the mountains. The sunsets were spectacular—the customer service excellent and the food at the bar and restaurants good. Thanks for a lovely stay! I also loved the resident tortoises!" (Case Number: 630)

This review emphasizes the hotel's peaceful location, beautiful natural surroundings, and excellent customer service. The unique mention of resident tortoises adds a charming touch to the overall experience.

Affective Image Attribute

The affective image attribute of heritage hotels often evokes strong emotions in guests, as seen in their enthusiastic and heartfelt reviews. The majority of comments on heritage hotels used emotive language like amazing, relaxing, wonderful, happy, awesome, peaceful, pleasant, mesmerizing, breath-taking, royalty, mind-blowing, and family oriented.

Guests frequently expressed their satisfaction with customer service, often highlighting how their positive experiences left lasting impressions. As one reviewer enthused:

... is a place to enjoy, relish and have fun in the restaurant, bar and spa. You can enjoy the desert safari also over here. It's a combination of modern art and ancient traditions. The fireplace in every room is handcrafted by the local women. You can taste the vibes of Rajasthani culture by visiting this place.”
(Case Number: 1737)

This comment underscores the blend of modern and traditional elements, enhancing the overall emotive appeal of the hotel.

Another guest shared their delight with the hospitality, saying:

We recently visited this property, must say a must visit!! The hospitality is far above excellence. The buffet spread is far most the best. The property is well maintained, and the staff are very polite and helpful. At the buffet area we were taken good care of by the staff, he was very sweet. We took the thar trail which was arranged by itself, for which taken care of by Miss, she accompanied us and made sure we had an amazing experience. The only drawback is that while booking make sure there are no weddings at that property as that makes the stay little unpleasant. (Case Number: 1339)

This review highlights the exceptional hospitality and attention to detail that made the guest's stay memorable.

Guests also frequently remarked on the luxurious experience and special treatment they received. One review read:

Phenomenal Grandeur & Excellence!! ...but the overall experience makes it once in a lifetime worth visit. The best of luxurious experience is also due to the staff - the way they treat guests with utmost respect & care.... They make you feel special throughout the stay...a grand welcome...complimentary fruits & dry fruits in the room. The housekeeping staff was so good ... never got bored due to multiple activities. Thank you... staff for this splendid experience!!
(Case Number: 210)

This narrative illustrates the high level of service and luxury that guests experienced, which left a profound impact.

In another example, a guest praised the hotel's location and amenities, stating:

Amazing location. A beautiful hotel in the Jodhpur City. I had a wonderful stay. I had my lunch here which was par excellence. I participated in the morning yoga session which my day relaxed and rejuvenated myself 🥰🥰🥰 Sweet memories with 😊. (Case Number: 787)

This review highlights the serene environment and enriching activities offered by the hotel.

Many reviews credited the staff's behaviour and service for enhancing their experience. One guest recalled:

Restaurant staff was extremely courteous & ready to cook everything not in menu. They specially made pizza for my kids. The staff was so nice that we ordered two items in the restaurant & they gave four items complimentary!! Never ever seen such gestures in my life!! There were so many pleasant surprises - like sending desserts every night in the room. They in fact gave gifts to everyone while checking out. Though everyone was extremely courteous & helping, I remember few names worth mentioning - ... & ... at reception, Mr ... & ... in restaurant, Mr ... (& another lady) for housekeeping. (Case Number: 210)

This shows the extraordinary efforts by the staff to make guests feel special.

Another reviewer echoed this sentiment, stating, "I had a wonderful experience at the heritage hotel, Jodhpur. The staff at this property are all great. They all go above and beyond to make your stay comfortable.....Wonderful location as well" (Case Number: 779). This emphasizes the staff's dedication to providing an outstanding experience. A further example of excellent service is reflected in the following review:

The staff was simply outstanding, always going out of their way to ensure a comfortable stay. Their warm hospitality and courteousness made us feel at home. The breakfast served every day was delectable and included a wide range of dishes. Additionally, the restaurant had a commendable selection of lunch and dinner options, with the chef more than happy to accommodate any special requests. His friendliness and willingness to please the guests was certainly admirable. (Case Number: 1708)

This highlights the personalized and attentive service that made the guest's stay delightful.

The sense of royalty experienced by guests at these heritage hotels was a recurring theme in the reviews. One guest passionately described,

I'm in love with the place. As soon as we enter, the grandeur of the palace takes us away from the entire world itself. The staff greets us with hands folded and it immediately takes us back to history. You feel like a king walking on the grass, climbing those untouched stairs and looking at the ... village studded with Aravalli Hills like a true emperor. Every time I visit ..., I feel the joy love and real feel of what true Rajasthan is. (Case Number: 455)

This vivid description showcases the regal experience offered by the hotel.

Another guest recounted their enchanting stay:

I had such a beautiful experience here. We stayed for just 1 day, as it was pre-booked for the weekend. The room that we stayed in was so quaint, charming

and spacious. We were welcomed by a relaxing head and shoulder massage, as our room was getting ready. In the room, we were welcomed by cookies and some sort of plum cake, and the room was so clean, smelled so fresh. And oh god, the whole hotel smelled heavenly as there were so many flowers around. The breakfast buffet had variety and was really delicious and healthy. I would definitely recommend this to everyone and I would definitely want to re-book this place for my future visit in the city. (Case Number: 166)

This review reflects the luxurious and royal treatment that left a lasting impression on the guest.

One more guest shared their experience of feeling like royalty, stating, "The hotel situated near huge forts takes us back into the history of our Maharajas and the hotel ambience makes us feel like one. Awesome sight seeing, delicious food and a royal experience" (Case Number: 815). This highlights how the heritage hotel provided a royal and historically rich experience for the guest.

Conative Image Attribute

The conative image attribute of heritage hotels reveals guests' intentions to revisit or recommend the destination. The reviews that included conative attributes were mostly positive, expressing strong intentions to return or suggest the hotel to others. Although the intention to revisit seemed high, only a few comments reflected actual return visits.

For instance, a reviewer said, "I had an incredible stay at your luxury five-star hotel" to relate their experience as a "Royal feeling." To anyone who is searching for an opulent and leisurely holiday, I would strongly suggest this hotel" (Case number: 11). This evaluation emphasises the great pleasure of the guest and support for the future guests. The term "Royal Feeling" emphasises the extraordinary and opulent experience the visitor will remember.

Additionally, a reviewer stated, "The staff are friendly, helpful and go out of their way to ensure guests have a memorable stay. Don't miss... In Jodhpur, whether you are looking to relax, explore or enjoy the luxurious surroundings. Highly recommended" (Case Number: 124). This comment underscores the dedication of the staff in creating memorable experiences. The phrase "must-visit destination" conveys the reviewer's strong recommendation, reflecting the positive impact of attentive service.

A different guest expressed their enthusiasm for the hotel's unique atmosphere, stating:

The best hotel to stay in Jaisalmer, this property is very well suited to ...The building takes you in time where you can find good time with your family. Undoubtedly highly recommended. If I come back, I will definitely stay here. (Case Number: 1210)

This review shows the guest's intent to revisit due to the hotel's historical ambience and family-friendly environment. The phrase "takes you in time" suggests a captivating historical experience that appeals to families, reinforcing the guest's strong intention to return.

One guest noted their extended stay due to the hotel's captivating atmosphere, saying:

One of the best resorts in the state. You will find a different type of positive vibes all around here. We checked in for two days but ended up staying for seven days. The ambience and atmosphere will just capture your soul and you will not want to leave this place soon. Must visit at least once. (Case Number: 776)

This illustrates how the hotel's atmosphere can lead to extended stays and strong recommendations. The description of the atmosphere as "capturing your soul" highlights the deep emotional connection guests feel, compelling them to prolong their stay.

Some guests expressed their recommendations based on the special bonds they formed with the staff. One reviewer wrote:

It is such a beautiful place!!! all the staff members and chef were very sweet. the chef made tasty food for us and couldn't be more happy with it. Staff was very kind. It was a perfect place for a few days off from work! loved it ❤️❤️ will recommend this for sure. (Case Number: 1203)

This highlights how personal connections with the staff can enhance the guest experience and lead to recommendations. The repeated use of "loved it" and heart emojis underscores the emotional bond and satisfaction, encouraging future visits.

Another guest shared their memorable experience, stating:

What an amazing property, they do treat you like royalty, right from the time you step out of our car. We were in awe of the quality of service provided by a team of miracle workers. Here are the names that I can recall. ... and ... who welcomed us in the lobby..., thanks for arranging chicken cooked in laal Maas way 🙏 ..., thanks for the 'Safa' just loved it and how can I forget ... for the Gulab Pankhuri ice cream for breakfast. Can't wait to come back again in 2024. (Case Number: 27)

This review emphasizes the personalized service and memorable experiences that encourage repeat visits. The detailed mention of staff members and specific services received showcases the high level of personal attention that fosters guest loyalty.

Lastly, the data showed several comments that were repetitive or very similar in nature, indicating consistent positive experiences. For example, one guest wrote:

Loved our stay at this hotel. It's situated about 40 minutes north of the city in a tranquil peaceful location overlooking the mountains. I had the greatest time here. The location is quiet and quaint. The staff is courteous, and they have the best cocktails and music. The sunsets were spectacular- the customer service excellent and the food at the bar and restaurants good. The décor in our room did seem a little dated but the size was large, and it was comfortable. (Case Number: 403)

Another review echoed this sentiment:

Loved our stay at this hotel. It's situated about 40 minutes north of the city in a tranquil peaceful location overlooking the mountains. The sunsets were spectacular- the customer service excellent and the food at the bar and restaurants good. The decor in our room did seem a little dated but the size was large and it was comfortable. Thanks for a lovely stay! I also loved the resident tortoises! (Case Number: 407)

These repetitive reviews highlight the consistency of positive experiences at the hotel. The repeated praise for customer service, location, and amenities emphasizes the hotel's ability to consistently meet guest expectations.

Another guest emphasized their recommendation, saying:

The best hotel to stay in Jaisalmer, located on the outskirts where it will be one of the few places where you can find calm. The building takes you back in time and the common areas are full of details of the time. The staff is charming and willing to help you in everything you need, spacious rooms and very complete breakfast. Undoubtedly highly recommended. If I come back, I will definitely stay here. (Case Number: 1210)

This comment underscores the guest's intent to revisit and recommend the hotel due to its calm location and detailed historical ambiance. The emphasis on the hotel's unique setting and attentive staff reinforces the likelihood of repeat visits.

In conclusion, these qualitative data excerpts from Google reviews demonstrate that cognitive, affective, and conative attributes significantly shape guests' overall perceptions and experiences at heritage hotels. The cognitive attributes, such as architecture, general infrastructure, accessibility, safety, pricing, and the natural environment, highlight the multifaceted nature of hotel evaluations. Affective attributes, including customer satisfaction, exceptional service, and a sense of royalty, play a crucial role in shaping guests' emotional and experiential perceptions. Conative attributes, such as the intention to revisit and recommend the hotel, further emphasize the importance of guest satisfaction in driving repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. The analysis of these attributes supports the proposed research paradigm and underscores the profound impact of these factors on hotel evaluations by guests.

Discussion, Implications and Future Research

The Cognitive-Affective-Conative (CAC) model is essential for understanding tourist behaviour by analysing how their perceptions, emotions, and actions interrelate. The research aims to understand tourists' perceptions of Rajasthan's heritage hotels, identify key attributes sought during their stays, and explore whether their mind-sets change post-visit. This includes assessing their willingness to revisit and recommend these hotels, thus gauging overall customer satisfaction and loyalty. Rajasthan was chosen as a destination as it is one of the prominent heritage states of India with the most number of heritage properties (Rathore et al., 2017). The uniqueness of the CAC dimensions lies in their ability to reflect the real image held by travellers based on their post-consumption experience (Nayak et al., 2023). The findings of this research are anticipated to help heritage hotels gain a deeper understanding of guest experiences, thereby integrating a tourism-focused approach into heritage site management.

This study revealed several cognitive attributes contributing to the appeal of heritage hotels, such as rich architectural heritage and cultural significance. Previous studies by Kaur et al. (2016) and Srivastava (2019) emphasized these aspects but did not extensively explore the impact of cleanliness and personalized service on guest satisfaction. Our research highlights that modern amenities and high service standards are crucial for overall guest satisfaction (Ali et al., 2016). Guests frequently mentioned exceptional service quality in reviews, praising the attentive, personalized, and friendly nature of the staff, which significantly enhanced their experience. Specific instances of proactive service, such as personalized greetings and room upgrades, were often cited (Marghany et al., 2023; See & Goh, 2019), underscoring the pivotal role of service quality in creating memorable stays for guests.

Additionally, this study highlights that heritage stays significantly impact guests' mental well-being, demonstrating how historical ambiance and personalized service foster mental rejuvenation. While there were inadequate affective attributes, one surprising finding in our results was the significant emphasis guests placed on the with terms like "happiness," and "mind relaxation." emphasizing the tranquil experience provided by the heritage site. This

quote underscores the calming atmosphere, helping guests escape their daily routines and immerse themselves in a serene environment, contributing to a sense of peace and relaxation (Sadhale, 2023). While previous studies have highlighted the physical and aesthetic appeal of these properties (Lin & Gao, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020b), the profound impact on mental health was less anticipated. This unexpected discovery underscores the complete value that guests derive from their stays, going beyond traditional hospitality metrics. This finding highlights the importance of maintaining an open and curious mindset in qualitative research, as it allows for the emergence of novel insights that can significantly enrich our understanding of guest experiences (Tracy, 2010). This openness to discovery reinforces the value of qualitative approaches in uncovering complex and multifaceted aspects of human experiences that might be overlooked in more rigid, quantitative frameworks (Patton, 2002).

Previous studies have primarily emphasized cognitive and affective components, often neglecting the conative dimension (Pike & Ryan, 2004). This research integrates conative attributes, addressing a critical gap by highlighting the importance of guests' post-visit intentions and behaviors. Some scholars contend that conative elements are inherently subjective and less quantifiable (Gartner, 1994). However, our qualitative content analysis of Google reviews shows that conative elements, such as the intention to return and positive word-of-mouth, significantly shape the image of heritage hotels. This finding aligns with Chen and Gursoy (2000), who identified that positive word-of-mouth and repeat visitation intentions enhance a destination's image. Despite concerns about the reliability of online reviews (Lee & Back, 2008), the authenticity and volume of user-generated content offer valuable insights when triangulated with other data. This study underscores the significance of guest satisfaction and loyalty in enhancing a destination's appeal. Yoon and Uysal (2005) similarly concluded that satisfaction and loyalty are crucial in destination marketing. Nonetheless, other studies suggest that an overemphasis on loyalty might overlook the benefits of attracting first-time visitors who can offer fresh perspectives and new business opportunities (Kim & Lee, 2011). Therefore, a balanced approach that considers both new and repeat visitors might be more effective. Our findings on conative attributes, such as revisit intentions and recommendations, align with the CAC model and existing literature (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004a), emphasizing the need for heritage hotels to balance traditional appeal with modern service standards to enhance guest loyalty.

The limitations of this study can be categorized as follows. The study relied on online reviews from a specific segment of guests who chose to share their experiences publicly, introducing self-selection bias (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Focusing on qualitative data from online reviews may not capture the full spectrum of guest experiences, particularly those of guests who do not use these platforms (Luo & Zhong, 2015). The study was geographically limited to heritage hotels in Rajasthan, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different cultural or historical contexts (Patton, 2002). The timing of the reviews could influence the results, as experiences might vary based on seasonal factors or hotel events (Bryman, 2016). The reliance on secondary data from online reviews means that we could not probe deeper into guests' motivations or experiences (Morosan & Bowen, 2018). The methodology involved analysing existing reviews, limiting our ability to control for the authenticity of the feedback (Goldkuhl, 2012). To mitigate these limitations, we ensured data saturation by analysing a significant number of reviews from different platforms, employed theoretical sampling to obtain a diverse range of experiences, and concentrated on triangulating findings from various sources to enhance the robustness of our conclusions (Denzin, 2012; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In qualitative research, the generalizability of findings is often debated. While this study provides valuable insights specific to heritage hotels in Rajasthan, it may not be universally applicable to all heritage hotels or other regions without considering contextual factors (Patton,

2002). Rajasthan's unique cultural, historical, and geographical attributes significantly shape guest experiences, which might differ elsewhere. However, underlying principles like the importance of cleanliness, personalized service, and mental well-being benefits offer valuable guidelines for similar settings.

The rich, detailed descriptions and context-specific nature of qualitative data provide depth and understanding rather than broad generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability is more appropriate here. By providing thick descriptions, this study allows other researchers and practitioners to determine the applicability of the findings to their own contexts (Geertz, 1973). Future studies in different settings can compare their results with those of this study to assess similarities or differences, contributing to a broader understanding of heritage tourism experiences (Merriam, 1995). Therefore, while the findings are context-specific, they offer a foundation for other heritage hotel contexts, emphasizing the importance of situational and contextual considerations in qualitative research generalizability (Stake, 1995).

Managerial Implications

This study unveils several significant managerial implications for heritage hotel operators. The positive reception of the hotel's natural beauty and historical architecture by visitors underscores the importance of preserving these elements, and future developments must not compromise the natural ambiance of the location. To attract a clientele with greater financial capacity, there is a clear need to enhance the hotel's infrastructure and ensure its stability. Infrastructure improvements may include restoring deteriorated parts of historical structures using original construction materials and improving accessibility by constructing proper roads leading to the hotel.

Additionally, hotel operators should focus on training staff members who possess a deep understanding of the hotel's history and services. This can be accomplished through role-playing exercises that equip staff with the skills to handle guest queries and resolve issues effectively. Staff should exhibit qualities of warmth, hospitality, and a genuine commitment to guest relationship management, enhancing the overall guest experience and increasing the likelihood of repeat visits. High standards in guest service are crucial, as even a small percentage of negative reviews highlighting rude staff behaviour can significantly impact the hotel's reputation.

Moreover, heritage hotel operators should be acutely aware of guests' sensitivity when paying for a service that may not meet their expectations. Elevating the level of service offerings is crucial, achievable through personalized guest services, such as arranging private dinners for guests celebrating special occasions or providing complimentary decorations for family gatherings. Ongoing monitoring and control over the entire guest experience, including vigilant review monitoring, allow operators to identify and address any shortcomings promptly. This proactive approach ensures consistently positive guest experiences.

Policy Implications

From the above data, it is evident that heritage hotels possess significant potential for growth and recognition, yet achieving greater heights requires support from larger platforms. The HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) scheme, for example, is one of these platforms. Since 2006, the Ministry of Urban Development (MOUD) of India has launched numerous capacity-building projects to improve the development of Indian heritage cities. However, conservation often occurred separately from city planning and the

local economy, leading to neglected heritage areas with inadequate essential services and infrastructure.

To rejuvenate these cities, a strategic approach is required, tapping into the tourism and heritage sector's potential and empowering skilled artisans and traditional economies. The HRIDAY Scheme offers an excellent opportunity for integrated, inclusive, and sustainable development by combining urban planning and economic growth with heritage conservation, focusing on livelihoods, skills, cleanliness, security, accessibility, and service delivery. This scheme can help heritage hotel operators use this opportunity to grow in their sector and enhance service delivery for guests (MOUD, 2015).

Theoretical Implications

The current research on tourist behaviour in heritage hotels, using online reviews, offers several valuable contributions. Firstly, to the best of the writer's knowledge, this study represents the first instance of employing netnography as a method to analyse tourist behaviour in heritage hotels by examining online reviews submitted by visitors. Given the increasing digital engagement of customers, the use of netnography becomes pertinent for evaluating tourist behaviour, rendering the analysis impartial and eliminating the need for surveys or other interventions. This approach ensures the applicability of the findings not only to specific geographic locations but also to international heritage hotel destinations.

Secondly, this research underscores the importance of a tourist behaviour model that encompasses various aspects of the service experience, including physical elements and emotional aspects affecting the customer. The uniqueness of applying this model within the context of heritage hotels expands the potential applications of this research methodology. Consequently, future studies can integrate different models to gain a more comprehensive understanding of tourist behaviour and its practical implications.

Thirdly, the research lays the groundwork for various managerial and policy implications, assisting heritage hotel operators in addressing issues that impact customer experiences and the overall image of the heritage hotel. Lastly, the research also identifies a pattern of duplicate comments in the online reviews, raising questions about the possibility of such reviews being manipulated or inserted by the hotels themselves to bolster positive feedback and attract more guests. Future researchers may delve deeper into investigating the prevalence of fake or manipulated reviews and their influence on consumer decision-making.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has provided a comprehensive exploration of the factors influencing guests' experiences at heritage hotels, utilizing the CAC model as the fundamental framework. The research findings have unequivocally demonstrated the overwhelmingly positive nature of online reviews across all three dimensions of the destination image associated with heritage hotels. Most guest comments have highlighted attributes related to both the cognitive and affective aspects of the heritage hotel experience. It is evident that aspects such as infrastructure, environment, facilities, amenities, and various intangible elements have been positively perceived by guests, contributing to their overall satisfaction.

Importantly, the conative attributes, such as the intention to revisit and recommend the hotel, emphasize the profound impact of guest satisfaction on repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. The findings suggest that heritage hotels can leverage the conative attributes by focusing on exceptional service, creating memorable experiences, and fostering emotional connections with guests. This can be achieved through personalized services, attention to detail, and maintaining high standards of quality and hospitality. The research highlights the need for

destination management authorities to prioritize conative aspects alongside cognitive and affective attributes to create a compelling and attractive image for potential tourists.

Conversely, challenges associated with factors like access to the location, staff training and efficiency, and pricing have emerged as key contributors to negative guest experiences. Notably, the study has underscored the importance of addressing the need for improved location access, including the maintenance of proper roads and the provision of location guides. Given the substantial role of heritage tourism in the context of domestic tourism in India, the research findings have profound managerial and policy implications. The study findings emphasize the potential for managerial actions and the utilization of existing government policies to enhance and deliver superior service quality to guests. The findings reveal a significant relationship between frameworks and management practices in enhancing service quality within the hospitality sector, as previously documented by scholars like Kandampully et al. (2018) and Grönroos (2007). Building upon this understanding, research by Wang and Hsu (2010) further illustrates how managerial policies grounded in government tourism guidelines can directly contribute to increase guest satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Recognizing the unique heritage value of these properties, it is imperative to prioritize the improvement of service quality through comprehensive employee training and the refurbishment of infrastructure. Furthermore, this research has brought to light the prospect of further investigation into consumer behaviour by incorporating one or more models, offering the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the subject. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of scrutinizing the presence of manipulated reviews, which have the potential to mislead guests and thereby exert a substantial influence on their overall experiences.

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