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How can hotels create sustainable competitive advantages? A resource-based view

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry is facing tough competition due to new actors (i.e. online travel agencies, comparison websites, etc.). Furthermore, Covid-19 has made it worse with travel restrictions and health measures. This study aims to identify the needs and expectations of hotel guests in a post-pandemic context, and how hotels can acquire and manage resources in a strategic way. Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was employed to assess the importance of 9 hotel attributes via pairwise comparison. The data were collected from 537 guests who stayed in 3- and 4-star hotels in Paris from April to June 2021. In addition, in-depth interviews of 19 hotel managers were conducted to gain insights into how they are acquiring and managing their resources. Theoretical and practical implications, and future research directions are presented.

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KEYWORDS

Resource-Based View (RBV); sustainable competitive advantages; boutique hotels; marketing resources; AHP

1. Introduction

The hotel industry has highly been impacted by Covid-19 because of international travel ban and restrictions imposed by governments (Hasan et al., 2021; Vo-Thanh et al., 2021a, 2021b; Zaman et al., 2021). Most of international hotel chains have forsaken dividend payments and detained capital expenditure to preclude the industry's collapse and bankruptcy (Nhamo et al., 2020). Krishnan et al. (2020) demonstrated that US hotel revenue per available room (RevPAR) might be down, in the worst-case scenario, 20% by 2023. Ozdemir et al. (2021) also found that Covid-19 has had a significant negative effect on RevPAR, occupancy, revenue, and average daily rate in the US hotel industry. Those studies clearly indicated that many hotels might experience a resources' concern and that they should efficiently allocate their resources to remain alive in the post-Covid-19 era.

Although previous research focused on the impact of unexpected events such as Covid-19 on the hospitality industry (e.g. Bresciani et al., 2021; Ozdemir et al., 2021; Vo-Thanh et al., 2021a, 2021b), according to our knowledge, no study has adopted a holistic approach to understand the resources problem and how the hotel industry can efficiently allocate its resources to sustainably remain competitive in the post-Covid-19 time. To address to this gap, our study focused on France, which is the most visited destination in the world but due to Covid-19, the turnover of hotels has decreased by 43% in 2021 (MKG Consulting, 2022). In this regard, it has become more than ever indispensable for hotel managers to understand and identify the needs and expectations of their guests and manage their resources in a strategic way so that they can create sustainable competitive advantages and deliver a superior value to their guests.

According to Resource-Based View (RBV), sustainable competitive advantages can be gained not only by acquiring new resources but also by developing, combining, and effectively deploying existing ones (physical, human, organizational, technological, etc.) in a way that these resources create value for businesses and are difficult to imitate by competitors (Barney et al., 2001; Barney, 1991; Colbert, 2004). For example, in the hotel industry, the hotel location is highly important and hotels that are situated in a popular tourist attraction, have an inimitable competitive advantage and can make higher revenue (Zaman et al., 2016b). In addition, most of independent hotels are family-run businesses and they are very limited in terms of resources (i.e. financial resources, human resources) (Scholl-Grisseemann et al., 2021). Thus, we argue that hotel managers should identify the most important values for their customers first and then, optimize their resources accordingly to gain sustainable competitive advantages. Moreover, from a marketing standpoint, it will also allow hotel managers to adapt their marketing strategy according to their customers' needs and expectations. Therefore, this research paper aims to explore the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How can hotels capture and classify the most important hotel marketing attributes from a guest point of view?

RQ2: How can hotels adopt a resource-based approach to underpin sustainable competitive advantages in the post-Covid-19 time?

To answer RQ1, Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was applied to evaluate the importance of 9 hotel marketing attributes via pairwise comparison. The data were collected from 537 guests who stayed in 3- and 4-star hotels in Paris from April to June 2021. Based on the results of AHP, we conducted 19 in-depth interviews of hotel managers to address RQ2. QSR NVivo 12 software was used to analyze these interviews.

2. Literature review

2.1. Resource-based view and competitive advantages in the hotel industry

Previous studies suggested that firms should adopt a resource-based perspective (both tangible and intangible resources) to gain sustainable competitive advantages and optimize their performance (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Espino-Rodríguez &

Padrón-Robaina, 2005; Hossain et al., 2022; Pereira-Moliner et al., 2021; Safari & Saleh, 2020; Srivastava et al., 2001). These competitive advantages may be created not only by acquiring new resources but also by developing, combining, and effectively deploying existing ones (physical, human, organizational, technological, etc.) in a way that those resources create value for firms and are difficult to imitate by the rivals (Barney et al., 2001; Barney, 1991; Colbert, 2004). Therefore, RBV helps understand how firms create competitive advantages and superior value for their customers via acquisition and control of strategic resources (Srivastava et al., 2001; Wernerfelt, 1984). Hospitality firms, especially hotels, should first identify what are the priorities for their customers when they select a hotel (Zaman et al., 2016a, 2016b) and manage their resources accordingly (Hossain et al., 2022).

Researchers have highlighted three distinguished views of firms' resources: knowledge-based view, nature-based view, and capabilities-based view (Teece et al., 1997). Among these RBVs, to align with our research aim, we focus on capabilities-based view, which is described as a unique set of skills and knowledge a firm possesses. These capabilities can be operational and/or dynamic (Pereira-Moliner et al., 2021). Operational capabilities often refer to a firm's routine practices (Helfat & Winter, 2011) while dynamic capabilities refer to a firm's adaptability in a competitive market and continuously changing business environment (Helfat & Winter, 2011; Teece et al., 1997). These two types of capabilities allow firms to create value for both firms and customers.

In the hotel industry, Espino-Rodríguez and Padrón-Robaina (2005) conducted a research on outsourcing using the theoretical lens of RBV. They suggested that outsourcing could have a positive effect on hotel performance. They also indicated that, besides traditional factors, other factors, such as substitutability, activity performance, and transferability, which might fix the decision to outsource. Pereira-Moliner et al. (2021) investigated three dynamic capabilities including human resource management, sustainability, and quality management and their impact on hotel performance. They demonstrated that these three dynamic capabilities could engender income, allowing hotels to adapt as quickly as possible to the changing business world. The findings also indicated that sustainability and quality management are significantly and positively associated with hotel competitive advantage, which, in turn, positively influences hotel performance. Therefore, human resource management, sustainability, and quality management can be seen as a source of hotel competitive advantage and profitability.

2.2. Hotel attributes as marketing resources

Hotel attributes play a vital role in the decision-making process of hotel guests (Yavas & Babakus, 2005), as well as in their overall satisfaction (Albayrak & Caber, 2015). However, the influence of these attributes is different, depending on the pre-consumption stage or after-consumption one (Zaman et al., 2016a). The importance of these attributes also varies from customers to customers. For instance, Zaman et al. (2016a) showed that some customers search for value for money while others prefer highly personalized services. Similarly, in the fast-food sector, Singh et al. (2021) showed a positive influence of restaurant service quality dimensions (i.e.

food quality, employee service quality, and physical environment quality) on price fairness and of price fairness on guest retention. Recent research also highlighted the importance of service quality, especially green products and services in creating competitive advantages in the hospitality industry (Pham et al., 2020; Tm et al., 2021). From a marketing standpoint, the challenge for hotels is to identify the attributes that are important for their customers and optimize their resources accordingly. Despite the significant contribution of these studies to the current literature on hotel attributes as marketing resources, to the best of our knowledge, a holistic approach to appreciate the resources problem and how hotels can efficiently allocate their resources in the post-Covid-19 remains unexplored.

2.3. Framework for assessing hotel marketing attributes

To measure hotel customers' satisfaction, several previous studies have focused on criteria and rating systems used by hotel booking platforms, such as Booking.com or TripAdvisor.com (e.g. Nicolau et al., 2020; Zaman et al., 2016a). For illustration, Zaman et al. (2016a) used the TripAdvisor's criteria including location, bed quality, comfort and equipment, service, value for money, and cleanliness to determine the weight of each criterion when examining hotel guests' satisfaction. Taking into consideration the criteria utilized by the largest online hotel booking website Booking.com and following recent research (e.g. Nicolau et al., 2020), for this study, the attribute quality of wifi connection of the hotel was added to the list of hotel marketing attributes employed by Zaman et al. (2016a). Indeed, the development of Information and Communication Technologies has changed customers' behavior and their decision-making process (Vo-Thanh et al., 2021; Zaman et al., 2016a). Today, tourists are more and more connected and use digital tools before, during, and after their trip (Kirova & Vo-Thanh, 2019). For example, before leaving on a trip, they can consult review sites (TripAdvisor, Yelp, etc.), compare prices (Kayak, Trivago, Skyscanner, etc.), consult travel blogs, social networks, etc. During the trip, they can search for a restaurant, post photos on social networks from their smartphones (Kirova & Vo-Thanh, 2019). After the trip, they can share on review sites their experiences that may guide future tourists in making their choice (Kirova & Vo-Thanh, 2019). Therefore, quality of wifi connection has become an essential marketing attribute in the eyes of consumers.

Covid-19 has also changed customers' behavior and their way of travelling. Hasan et al. (2021) highlighted that tourists would prefer virtual assistances such as chatbots to human interactions. According to these authors, tourists' habits of using technologies during the lockdown and their health consciousness lead them to reduce interactions with hotel staffs. In line with Hasan et al. (2021), Hao and Chon (2022) argued that implementing contactless service as an innovative service design in the hospitality sector could generate customers' emotional attachment and cognitive evaluation of the brand. In this regard, through a pilot study with ten hotel managers and nineteen customers, we validated the list of hotel marketing attributes built from the literature and added to this list two new attributes: Covid-19 measures and contactless service. Figure 1 summarizes the framework for assessing hotel marketing attributes.

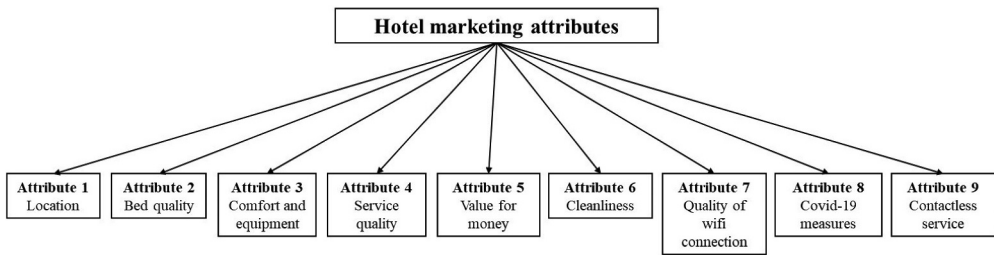


Figure 1. Hotel marketing attributes framework.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

Paris is one of the most visited cities in the world; however, the number of tourists has dramatically fallen due to Covid-19. In 2020, there were 33 million less tourists than the previous year and the turnover of the hotels fell by 60% to 85% depending on the segment (Paris Region Comité Régional du Tourisme, 2021). In addition to this low demand, the Parisian hotel industry is very competitive due to the development of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and other actors, such as Airbnb (Zaman et al., 2016b). For this study, we purposely focused on the boutique hotels because of their proximity management approach. Furthermore, they may more suffer from guests' satisfaction because of employees shortage, mandatory implementation of health measures, etc. during and in the post-Covid-19 pandemic. Figure 2 illustrates our research design.

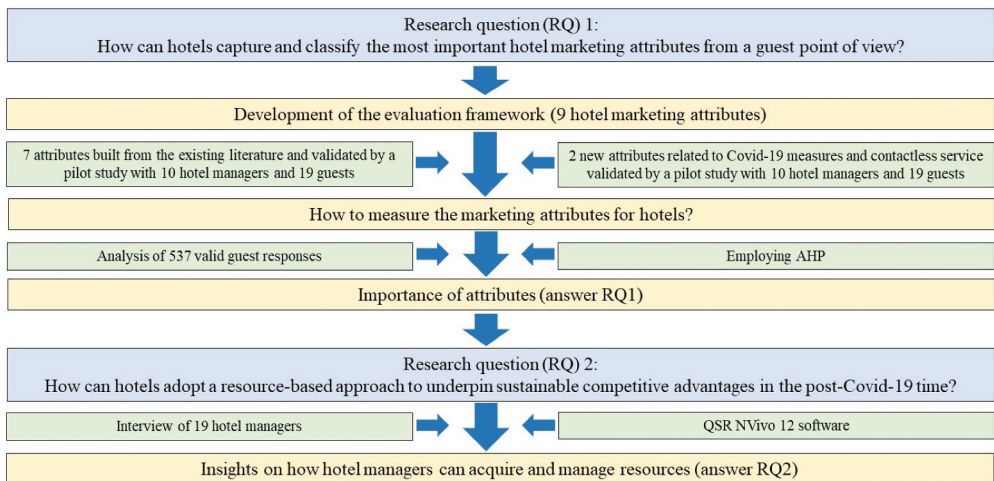


Figure 2. Research design.

3.2. Analytic hierarchy process

To measure the importance of identified hotel marketing attributes, we opted for AHP (Saaty, 1980), which is a multi-criteria method widely used in the hospitality literature. AHP can be applied to any given problematic and it does not require a huge dataset (Saaty, 1980). Lin and Wu (2008) employed this method to select a marketing strategy for private hotels in Taiwan. Crouch (2011) used AHP to determine the relative weight of the tourism destination competitiveness criteria. Later, Zaman et al. (2016a) applied AHP to determine the importance of TripAdvisor criteria.

First, we have developed a questionnaire based on Saaty (1977) scale, which allows us to do the pairwise comparison (this is the logic of the AHP method) between attributes developed earlier. If we compare a set of criteria n , where the criteria are designated as a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n and the weights of these criteria as w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n , the pairwise comparison can be presented in the questionnaire as follows:

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & \cdots & a_{1j} & \cdots & a_{1n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ a_{i1} & \cdots & a_{ij} & \cdots & a_{in} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ a_{n1} & \cdots & a_{nj} & \cdots & a_{nm} \end{bmatrix} \tag{1}$$

where $a_{ij} \cong 1/a_{ji}$ (reciprocal value and always positive) and $a_{ij} = a_{ik}/a_{jk}$. Note that in a real situation, w_i/w_j is unknown. In this respect, the problem for the AHP method is to find a_{ij} , for example $a_{ij} \cong w_i/w_j$.

We present a weight matrix as follows:

$$W = \begin{matrix} & w_1 & \cdots & w_j & \cdots & w_n \\ \begin{matrix} w_1 \\ \vdots \\ w_i \\ \vdots \\ w_n \end{matrix} & \begin{bmatrix} w_1/w_1 & \cdots & w_1/w_j & \cdots & w_1/w_n \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ w_i/w_1 & \cdots & w_i/w_j & \cdots & w_i/w_n \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ w_n/w_1 & \cdots & w_n/w_j & \cdots & w_n/w_n \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix} \tag{2}$$

If we multiply W by w ,

$$W \times w = \begin{matrix} & w_1 & \cdots & w_j & \cdots & w_n \\ \begin{matrix} w_1 \\ \vdots \\ w_i \\ \vdots \\ w_n \end{matrix} & \begin{bmatrix} w_1/w_1 & \cdots & w_1/w_j & \cdots & w_1/w_n \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ w_i/w_1 & \cdots & w_i/w_j & \cdots & w_i/w_n \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ w_n/w_1 & \cdots & w_n/w_j & \cdots & w_n/w_n \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} w_1 \\ \vdots \\ w_j \\ \vdots \\ w_n \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix} = n \begin{bmatrix} w_1 \\ \vdots \\ w_j \\ \vdots \\ w_n \end{bmatrix} \tag{3}$$

We used the following scale to determine the weights of attributes. Thus, respondents (i.e. hotel guests) gave a relative verbal appreciation between two criteria rather than a numerical judgement.

Table 1. Scale of Saaty (1977).

Verbal appreciation	Intensity	Reciprocal value
Equal importance	1	1
Moderate importance	3	1/3
Strong importance	5	1/5
Very strong	7	1/7
Extreme important	9	1/9
Middle value	2, 4, 6, 8	1/2, 1/4, 1/6, 1/8

Table 2. Random indices of Saaty (1977).

Number of elements	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
R.I.	0,52	0,89	1,11	1,25	1,35	1,40	1,45	1,49	1,51	1,54	1,56

$$\text{Otherwise, } (W - nI)w = 0 \tag{4}$$

Table 1 represents Saaty (1977) scale that we used to compare between attributes. This scale ranges from 1 to 9 where 1 is designated for equal importance between two attributes and 9 for extremely important.

Since solving Equation (4) is the eigenvalue problem, we can get the comparative weights by finding the eigenvector w with respective λ_{max} that satisfies $Aw = \lambda_{max}w$, where λ_{max} is the largest eigenvalue of the matrix A , i.e. finding the eigenvector w with λ_{max} for $(A - \lambda_{max}I)w = 0$.

On the other hand, one of the disadvantages of the AHP method is the consistency of judgements. In order to ensure consistency between subjectivity and accuracy of weights, we consider two indexes: Consistency Index (C.I.) and Consistency Ratio (C.R.). Therefore, we employ the following equation:

$$C.I. = (\lambda_{max} - n)/(n - 1) \tag{5}$$

where λ_{max} is the largest eigenvalue, n is the number of criteria. Saaty (1980) pointed out that the C.R. score should not exceed .1 in order to have a relevant result. The C.R. can be calculated by using Equation (6):

$$C.R. = \frac{C.I.}{R.I.} \tag{6}$$

where R.I. refers to the random coherence index that was constructed by Saaty (1977) using a large sample of random reciprocal matrices, with the help of Saaty (1977) scale, i.e. 1/9, 1/8, ..., 1, ..., 8, 9 (Table 2).

The questionnaire was sent to more than 1,200 guests who have made the reservations between April and June 2021. As explained previously, this process was simplified by the voluntary hotel chain 'Les Collectionneurs'. Thanks to this hotel chain, we collected 537 valid responses.

3.3. In-Depth interviews with hotel managers

Based on the results of the quantitative study, we opted for a qualitative study to gain a deep understanding of resources acquisition and optimization by hotel managers. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with boutique hotel managers in

Table 3. Informants profiles and interviews duration.

ID	Position	Hotel category	Duration
M1	Hotel General Manager	4 Stars	47 minutes
M2	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	56 minutes
M3	Hotel General Manager	3 Stars	40 minutes
M4	Hotel Owner & General Manager	3 Stars	43 minutes
M5	Hotel Owner & General Manager	3 Stars	39 minutes
M6	Marketing Manager	4 Stars	57 minutes
M7	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	46 minutes
M8	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	37 minutes
M9	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	45 minutes
M10	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	59 minutes
M11	Marketing Manager	4 Stars	43 minutes
M12	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	54 minutes
M13	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	40 minutes
M14	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	49 minutes
M15	Marketing Manager	4 Stars	53 minutes
M16	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	35 minutes
M17	Hotel Owner & General Manager	4 Stars	49 minutes
M18	Hotel Owner & General Manager	3 Stars	53 minutes
M19	Hotel Owner & General Manager	3 Stars	47 minutes

Paris. As explained, all these hotels are members of the voluntary chain '*Les Collectionneurs*' that has more than 300 properties. To cope with the difficulty of identifying hotel managers, we opted for the snowball sampling technique, which uses interpersonal relations and connections between interviewees. According to Vo-Thanh et al. (2021), the snowball sampling technique is often used when the population under investigation is 'hidden' due to, for example, either the low number of potential participants or the sensitive nature of the subject matters. For our study, the snowball sampling was an effective method to recruit hotel managers. Furthermore, to determine our sample size, we adopted the criterion of semantic saturation. As a result, nineteen hotel managers were interviewed. Each interview lasted between 35 and 59 minutes. All the interviewees are French. As requested, the names of hotels are not revealed to ensure confidentiality. Table 3 presents the interviewees profiles and interviews duration.

After having showed the results of the quantitative phase, we asked the following questions to better understand how hotel managers are acquiring and managing their resources to get sustainable competitive advantages: 1) What do you think about the results? 2) What are the challenges for the hotel industry? 3) We are talking about RBV, how will you associate RBV with independent boutique hotels? 4) How do you acquire and manage your resources for the post-Covid-19 time?

Regarding the data analysis, we developed a coding dictionary to analyze verbatim from the hotel managers interviewed. A content analysis using QSR NVivo 12 software was performed. Following Vo-Thanh and Kirova (2018), two of the authors analyzed the first three interviews together in order to ensure the internal validity. Subsequently, each author analyzed the rest of the corpus separately, using the same dictionary that was developed previously. The two authors then compared their results using QSR NVivo 12 software. To achieve this comparison, the function of coding comparison query provided in QSR NVivo 12 was used, as indicated by Kirova and Vo-Thanh (2019) and Vo-Thanh and Kirova (2018). Divergences were discussed to reach a consensus.

IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING ATTRIBUTES

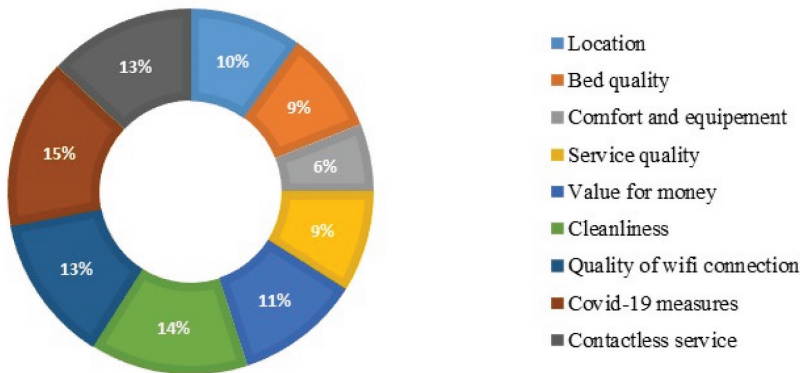


Figure 3. Results of quantitative study.

4. Results and discussion

The results show that Covid-19 measures (15%) is the most important attribute for customers while selecting a hotel (Figure 3). As explained by Hasan et al. (2021), customers are more and more concerned about their health and safety when travelling. Thus, hotels should allocate sufficient resources to satisfy this expectation of their customers. According to our findings, cleanliness is the second most important attribute. This result confirms previous studies (e.g. Ryan & Huimin, 2007; Zaman et al., 2016a) that cleanliness was the most important attribute. Due to Covid-19, this result is rather logical in the same way as Covid-19 measures. Interestingly, quality of wifi connection (13%) and contactless service (13%) are also important to customers, which is in line with Srivastava and Kumar (2021), suggesting that hotel attributes and overall guest satisfaction may change due to the global health crisis of Covid-19. In a recent study, Hao and Chon (2022) also highlighted the importance of contactless service in creating memorable experience in the hospitality industry. According to Statista (2022), more than 80% of the French population is using Internet and they are showing the same habits while travelling. In addition, as highlighted by Hasan et al. (2021), to maintain the social distancing, travelers prefer technologies to human interactions. Therefore, hotels managers should also acquire technological resources to answer these new needs and expectations of customers.

Figure 3 presents the general results of the quantitative study. Other attributes, such as location (10%), bed quality (9%), comfort and equipment (6%), and service quality (9%) remain less significant. These results confirm the previous study by Zaman et al. (2016a). However, our study found that customers are less concerned about value for money (11%), meaning that they are likely to pay a higher price for a hotel, which is safe and clean. Hence, hotel managers should invest in these resources to get a competitive advantage and maximize their revenue.

Our study also showed the results according to different age groups. We can see that customers who have less than 40 years old, prefer good value for money (21%) and contactless service (16%). On the contrary, customers who are 40 years old and over,

prefer cleanliness (17%) and Covid-19 measures (16%). In addition, the results indicated that service quality, comfort and equipment, as well as bed quality are significant for 40 and plus aged customers. Contactless service and wifi quality are less significant for them. They may prefer personalized services and human interactions. Therefore, hotel managers should understand the expectations of each segment and allocate their resources accordingly.

When it comes to the qualitative part, our results underscored how hotel managers can acquire and manage their resources to meet their customers' needs and expectations in a post-Covid-19 context and gain sustainable competitive advantages. Hotel managers confirmed that it is highly important to understand 'why' customers are coming to their hotels and 'what kind of experience' they are looking for. Regarding the results of the qualitative study, we can note some following verbatim:

[. . .] I think these results are very interesting because in our hotel we see these changes in our customers. [. . .] We do not have the exact percentage as your results show but I see these demands in our guests. (M14).

These results are very interesting, especially the way you presented them [. . .]. Most of the time, I read the reviews of our guests on TripAdvisor and that's why I know if they were satisfied or not [. . .] (M4)

[. . .] Like most of hotels in Paris, we give a short 'guest satisfaction survey' to our customers and we ask them to fill it [. . .]. However, we never ask them what the most important services for them are. It could be a great idea [. . .]. (M17)

Regarding the challenges faced by hotels in a post-Covid-19 context, our results found that most of hotels are family-run businesses and they do not have enough resources.

[. . .] I'm the owner of this hotel [. . .] I don't have enough resources and capabilities [. . .]. The Covid-19 has made the financial situation even worse [. . .]. (M9)

I have 2 times less guests [. . .]. I often call other hotel owners to know their performance and everyone has the same issue [. . .] (M13).

[. . .] We were already in difficulties with new technologies and online travel agencies. The Covid-19 situation has made it worse [. . .]. (M11)

In the literature on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), these challenges have already been evoked by prior research (e.g. Eggers, 2020; Shams, 2016). In addition, due to Covid-19, the hotel business was in stand by (until 16 March 2020 in France). In 2020, global revenue from the tourism and travel industry in France dropped from 711.94 billion USD to 568.6 billion USD (Statista, 2021). Many researchers have confirmed the same phenomenon from different countries (e.g. Krishnan et al., 2020; Nhamo et al., 2020).

Regarding RBV and competitive advantages for independent hotels, our study showed mixed responses from the interviewees.

[. . .] Hotels having a strategic location will certainly benefit from it and get competitive advantages [. . .]. They can adapt their prices based on that valuable and unique resource [. . .]. (M3).

I think that for most of hotels (I know a plenty of them), we have more or less the same resources. For me, they are standards that we need to respect [. . .]. (M3).

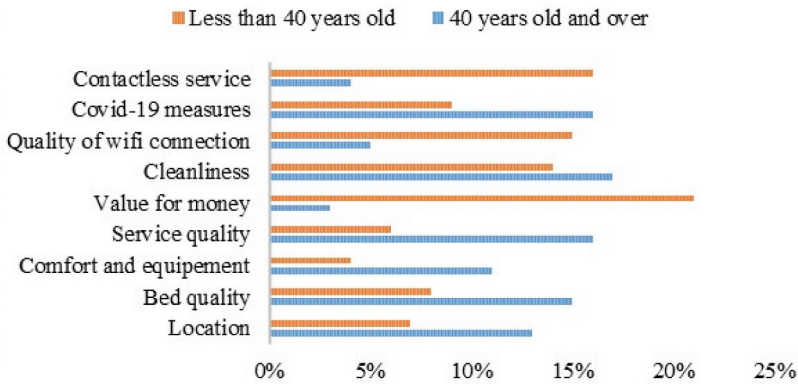


Figure 4. Importance of attributes according to age group.

[...] It's more about the staff and they can give you a real competitive advantage [...]. It depends on how you can make an ordinary employee a unique resource [...]. (M12).

[...] Understand and adopt new technologies could also give some competitive advantages [...]. (M18).

The hospitality industry is a labor-intensive industry and frontline employees play a vital role in customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pham et al., 2020; Vo-Thanh et al., 2021a, 2021b; Zaman et al., 2016b). In this regard, hotels may get some competitive advantages by proposing their proper training and tools to their employees.

Finally, when it comes to acquiring and managing resources, hotel managers are mainly focusing on resources' optimization.

[...] I know that I have limited resources, but I try to optimize them. For example, my guests (as well as my staff) want to be safe [...]. I have additional cleaning ladies who are sanitizing everything [...]. (M14)

[...] We have modified our website and changed our content to deal with these new trends. [...] If you go to our website, you will find information on Covid-19 measures [...]. (M11)

[...] I personally like the concept of resource-based view [...]. We are working with local producers and they are helping us with personalized products for our guests. [...] I believe that is unique and makes sense for our guests. (M7)

Hotel managers know that their resources are limited, and they need to optimize them. By the way, the importance of different attributes (Figures 3 & 4) may be a starting point for hotel managers to classify their marketing resources and underpin sustainable competitive advantages in the post-Covid-19 time.

5. Conclusion

The research investigates how hotels can capture and classify the most important values for their customers and how hotel managers can adopt a resource-based approach to underpin sustainable competitive advantages in the post-Covid-19 time. In addition, our

study allows to classify the hotel marketing attributes according to their importance and present insights on the challenges faced by hotel managers for acquiring and managing resources to gain sustainable competitive advantages.

Theoretically, this paper enriches the literature on RBV by providing evidence from the Parisian hotel industry in a post-Covid-19 context. Therefore, this study enriches the existing RBV literature from a different angle. Concretely, this study implemented a holistic approach to understand the resources problem in the hotel industry and highlighted how this industry can efficiently allocate its resources to remain competitive in the post-Covid-19 time. In addition, this paper expands the existing literature on hotel attributes by adding two new attributes: Covid-19 measures and contactless service. The results show that both of these two attributes are highly important for hotel guests. Moreover, this study opted for a mixed-method approach to better understand the phenomenon. Last but not the least, this research also extends the literature on crisis management in tourism to the post-Covid-19 context by highlighting how hotels can optimize their resources to face any crises such as Covid-19.

From a managerial perspective, first, our research presents the most important attributes for hotel guests during the Covid-19 context. This study allows hotel managers to understand where they should allocate their resources in order to gain sustainable competitive advantages. The findings suggest that Covid-19 measures (15%), quality of wifi connection (13%) and contactless service (13%) are the most important attributes for guests, suggesting a shift of hotel customers' preference due to Covid-19. Thus, hotel managers should focus on these criteria. For example, regarding contactless service, in line with Hasan et al. (2021), hotels can implement chatbots and other virtual assistances. As explained by Hao and Chon (2022), hotels should introduce contactless service to propose memorable personalized experiences to their guests. Moreover, this study indicates that hotel managers not only need to ensure cleanliness, Covid-19 measures, wifi connection, and contactless service, but also effectively adapt their communication directed to their guests to create added value.

The results also reveal that the resources are limited for hotels. As highlighted by Hasan et al. (2021), travelers prefer technologies to human interactions in order to keep social distancing. Therefore, hotels managers should also acquire technological resources to answer these new needs and expectations of their customers. They may digitalize some of their services to overcome the resources shortage (Vo-Thanh et al., 2022). Additionally, hotel managers should provide their employees with adequate training and supports to gain sustainable competitive advantages. Indeed, employee skills and knowledge are rare resources and difficult to imitate, and good employees allow hotels to gain in terms of service quality and value for money (i.e. competitive advantages) (Vo-Thanh et al., 2021a). Last but not least, as the hotel industry is highly competitive, and resources are often limited and similar, hotel managers should work with local resources (i.e. local producers) to propose unique and personalized experiences.

This study only interviewed hotel managers. Future studies should also include customers' interviews in order to have insights from them. Moreover, this research was conducted in a specific context, during Covid-19. The same research can also be conducted in a non-Covid context to enrich the findings of the present research. In addition, it might be interesting to see if the importance given to hotel attributes is the same from one hotel category to another (e.g. budget hotels vs. 3- to 4-star hotels). Finally, it would also be useful to duplicate this study in other sectors.

Disclosure statement

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