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ONLINE REPUTATION OF HOTELS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE CZECH MARKET

Michal Konečný^{1*}, Michaela Kosíková², František Pollák^{3,4}, Daniel Chamrada^{5,6}

^{1*,2,3} *Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, Faculty of Corporate Strategy, Department of Marketing and Tourism, Okružní 517/10, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic*

⁴ *University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of Business Management, Department of Business Finance, Dolnozemska cesta 1/b, 852 35 Bratislava 5, Slovak Republic*

⁵ *University of Žilina, The Faculty of Operation and Economics of Transport and Communications, Department of Economics, Univerzitná 8215, 010 26 Žilina, Slovak Republic*

⁶ *Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, Faculty of Corporate Strategy, Department of Management, Okružní 517/10, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic*

E-mails:^{1*} michal.konecny@mail.vstecb.cz (Corresponding author); ² 29240@mail.vstecb.cz;
^{3,4} frantisek.pollak@mail.vstecb.cz; ^{5,6} chamrada@mail.vstecb.cz

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Abstract. The online reputation of hotels plays a crucial role in customer decision-making when selecting accommodation. Review portals are currently an invaluable source of information for potential guests. This research evaluates the reputation of six renowned hotels in the Czech Republic and identifies the factors that most significantly influence this reputation. The main objective of the paper is to evaluate the reputation of the selected hotels in the online environment and identify the key factors influencing their reputation. Content, descriptive, and variance analyses were employed to achieve the research objective. Data for the period 2021-2023 were obtained from the online review portal Booking.com. Key factors for each hotel were identified using content analysis. The analysis revealed that the most frequently mentioned factors were the staff, food, amenities, location, wellness, cleanliness, and price. The comparison of the hotels showed differences in their market popularity. The results of the variance analysis indicated the changes in hotel reviews within the period 2021-2023, showing that evaluations varied depending on the pandemic situation and current conditions. The findings are beneficial for strategic planning and the improvement of hotel services, staff development, and management practices, as well as for future customers, as they provide a better understanding of the factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty. A limitation of the research could be false or modified customer reviews. Future research could focus on a broader range of hotels and include other review platforms to provide a more comprehensive view of hotels' online reputations.

Keywords: online environment; reputation; hotel; reviews; key factors

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JEL Classifications: M14, M21, M31

1. Introduction

Online reviews and social media play a significant role in shaping customer perceptions of hotel quality and reputation. They provide crucial information to potential guests, aiding in booking decisions and shaping their opinions of hotels. This underscores the importance of actively managing online reputation (Dorčák, Markovič & Pollák, 2017; Világi, Konečný & Ruschak, 2022; Gabbard, 2023; Straková & Kostiuk, 2023; Konečný et al., 2024). Social media marketing is essential for modern hospitality brands to adapt and innovate. It helps shape and enhance customer perceptions, thereby enabling hotels to gain a competitive advantage in the industry

(Dorčák, Štrach & Pollák, 2015; Malik, 2023; Dušek, 2023). Research indicates that ratings and reviews from renowned individuals connect the quality of online booking sites and customers' booking intentions, highlighting the significance of customer feedback in influencing booking decisions and hotel reputation (Kareem & Venugopal, 2023). Social media also facilitates collaboration with customers, enhances brand awareness, and impacts purchase decisions through online interactions (Kapoor, 2018). Understanding and leveraging online reviews and social media platforms, such as Airbnb and Booking, are crucial for building and improving brand reputation in the hospitality sector (Hamdan, Darós & Guijarro, 2022; Pártlová, Dušek & Sagapova, 2022). This paper aims to assess the reputation of six selected hotels in the Czech Republic in the online environment and identify the key factors influencing their reputation. The selected hotels include BoHo Hotel Prague – Small Luxury Hotels, Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane, Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness, Four Seasons Hotel Prague, Mandarin Oriental, Prague, and Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague. To achieve the objective, the following research questions were formulated: What key factors drive customers to visit the selected hotels? What is the online reputation of the selected hotels in the Czech market? Do the average ratings of the selected hotels differ in 2021, 2022, and 2023, i.e., from the period of the COVID-19 pandemic to the present?

2. Theoretical background

Online reviews are crucial in selecting hotels as they significantly influence customer decision-making and hotel ratings (Guo & Yan, 2023; Liu & Li, 2024; Han & Mikhailova, 2024). However, the sheer volume of online reviews can lead to information overload, affecting consumers' cognitive fluency and decision-making processes (Guo & Yan, 2023). To address the problem of fake reviews, machine learning algorithms such as Multinomial Naive Bayes, Support Vector Machine, and Logistic Regression are employed to detect fraudulent reviews, thereby increasing the credibility of online platforms (Jadhav et al., 2024). Additionally, combining consumer-generated and retailer-induced reviews through the propensity score adjustment technique aims to create a more reliable and representative environment of online reviews that positively influences hotel selection (Han & Mikhailova, 2024). Furthermore, the direct and mediated effects of reviews and ratings from celebrities on the quality of booking websites and online booking intentions underscore the significant influence of online reviews on hotel selection decision-making (Kareem & Venugopal, 2023). Various key factors identified in research studies influence customers' decisions to visit specific hotels. Factors such as ethical brand values and trust are very important in shaping customers' interest in hotels, as a high level of trust can contribute to positive perceptions of service quality, safety, privacy, and overall satisfaction (Karina & Pratomo, 2023). Aspects of service quality, such as tangibility and empathy, are vital for shaping customers' perceptions and decision-making processes when selecting a hotel. To enhance service quality and gain a competitive advantage, hotel operators and managers should focus on improving these factors (Khanna & Sharma, 2023). Service quality, cleanliness, amenities, and staff behaviour are key factors influencing customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector. These aspects should be understood and prioritised to facilitate informed decision-making and improve business performance (Mohanty, Mohapatra & Mohanty, 2023). Trust, word-of-mouth recommendations, and customer satisfaction directly impact guests' decision-making about hotels. This points to the need for regular staff training and a caring approach to customers in order to increase their satisfaction and loyalty (Abdelhamid & Fawzy, 2023). Additionally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, particularly those focused on environmental protection and philanthropy, have a greater impact on customer satisfaction and their willingness to return than service quality or brand attitude. This underscores the importance of implementing CSR strategies to improve customer experience and increase hotel loyalty (Simarmata et al., 2023; Ruschak et al., 2023). The average ratings of the selected hotels varied in the years 2021, 2022, and 2023, being influenced by various factors. The research showed that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted customer satisfaction during their stays at the hotels. Although ratings improved after the most severe pandemic periods, they still did not reach the pre-pandemic levels. This highlights the significance of quality hotel services for overall customer satisfaction (Straková et al., 2021; Kostiuk et al., 2021; Markovič et al., 2022; Pollák et al., 2022; Straková, Talíř & Váchal, 2022; Pollák et al., 2021; Alfaro-Navarro & Andrés-Martínez, 2024). Moreover, increasing online ratings are associated with higher hotel quality. Each increase in rating by one standard deviation leads to a 27% increase in demand, which is particularly important for hotels with a lower number of stars (Santos, 2020). In the future, it is assumed that combining traditional rating systems with customer online reviews will

improve transparency for customers and enable innovative hotels to better position themselves in the market. Conversely, hotels that do not adapt might face lower interest and risk of obsolescence (Hensens, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the hotel sector, resulting in changes in customer satisfaction and average ratings during their stays (Alfaro-Navarro & Andrés-Martínez, 2024). Studies indicate that hotels faced considerable financial problems, leading to partial or complete closures, job losses, and reduced working hours for employees (Shrestha et al., 2023). To adapt to the post-pandemic period, hotels need to become more flexible, improve their cleaning practices, and introduce contactless services to maintain customer loyalty (Wu, 2023). Hotels in areas such as the Opatija Riviera are focusing on improving service quality and customer satisfaction to remain competitive and support their long-term growth and development (Alkier, Milojica & Roblek, 2023). The impact of COVID-19 on stock returns in the hotel sector varied depending on the pre-pandemic characteristics, with stock resilience influenced by factors such as size, leverage, cash flow, and internationalisation (Rathore et al., 2023; Bečica et al., 2024). Overall, the pandemic forced hotels to focus on service improvements, increased flexibility, and crisis management strategies to cope with the challenges and changes caused by COVID-19. The key indicators to measure the hotel industry's recovery in average ratings after the pandemic include the adoption of contactless services through technology, a shift towards domestic tourism and staycations, sustainability practices leading to higher occupancy rates and customer satisfaction, flexibility in booking and cancellation policies to restore traveller confidence, and the implementation of workplace health measures (WHM) to improve performance, service recovery, and financial performance (Ernawati et al., 2022; Chissom, 2024; Vavrová et al., 2024). Maintaining high-quality standards, implementing meticulous cleanliness protocols, informing customers through online platforms, adjusting rates to accommodate weaker purchasing power, implementing flexible booking conditions, and redesigning human resource policies are key operational adjustments that can impact hotel brand resilience and their recovery after the pandemic (Ernawati et al., 2022). In addition, analysing customer expectations of hotels, identifying new service environment attributes during health crises, and designing improvements for responsible service recovery can also contribute to measuring industry recovery (Serrano-Baena et al., 2023).

3. Research objective and methodology

This paper aims to assess the reputation of six selected hotels in the Czech Republic in the online environment and identify the key factors influencing their reputation. The selected hotels include BoHo Hotel Prague – Small Luxury Hotels, Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane, Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness, Four Seasons Hotel Prague, Mandarin Oriental, Prague, and Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague. The selection of hotels for this study was based on the publicly available ranking of the most luxurious hotels in the Czech Republic, as published by Němcová (2022). These hotels were chosen because they represent high-end establishments with a strong brand presence and a high volume of customer reviews on Booking.com. While they are not identical in size or capacity, they share comparable price ranges and target similar customer segments – mainly affluent international travellers and high-income domestic clients. Although slight differences in services and locations exist, all selected hotels belong to the luxury category and operate within the same market expectations for premium service, allowing for relevant comparative analysis. The key factors will be evaluated based on online customer reviews from Booking.com for the period from January 2023 to December 2023. Furthermore, the position and popularity of these hotels in the Czech market will be analysed, and the question of whether customer reviews of the hotels changed between 2021 and 2023, i.e., during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, will be examined. Data used for the analysis of the reputation of the six selected hotels (BoHo Hotel Prague – Small Luxury Hotels, Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane, Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness, Four Seasons Hotel Prague, Mandarin Oriental, Prague, and Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague) were sourced from the review portal Booking.com. This portal includes reviews from both Czech and international customers; for the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to group these data, as the focus is on the overall online reputation of the hotels. The research questions will be addressed using content analysis, descriptive analysis, analysis of variance, and subsequent data comparison. The reviews included in the analysis were published in the period from January 2023 to December 2023 and the results will be compiled into graphs using MS Excel. Content analysis will be employed to answer the first research question, which involves identifying important factors in customer reviews. This analysis enables us to identify and categorise the most frequent factors mentioned in the reviews. The second research question, concerning the position and popularity of the hotels in the Czech market, will be addressed using descriptive

analysis and the star ratings from Booking.com. These ratings will be compared across the individual hotels to determine their overall market position. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be conducted to answer the third research question, which examines changes in hotel ratings during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis will compare star ratings from the pandemic and post-pandemic periods. A p-value will be calculated to test the hypothesis against a 5% significance level. If the p-value is less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis will be accepted, indicating that the ratings have changed. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted, stating that the ratings have not changed.

4. Results

In the first part of the research, a content analysis of reviews published from January 2023 to December 2023 on Bookings.com for the selected hotels was conducted. Using content analysis, the key factors that influenced visitors to choose these hotels were identified. The frequency of these key factors mentioned in the reviews was plotted in graphs using MS Excel. The second part of the research focused on determining the overall popularity of the hotels. This involved comparing the selected hotels and other popular hotels in the Czech Republic available on Booking.com. Moreover, the main key factors identified in the first part of the research were compared across the six selected hotels. The final part of the research analyses whether hotel ratings changed between 2021 and 2023. This question was answered using analysis of variance (ANOVA) in MS Excel. The analysis helped to determine whether and how the ratings changed during the monitored period.

4.1. Content analysis of reviews of selected hotels

A content analysis of the reviews for the six selected hotels (BoHo Hotel Prague – Small Luxury Hotels, Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane, Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness, Four Seasons Hotel Prague, Mandarin Oriental, Prague, and Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague) identified the key factor most frequently mentioned by customers on Booking.com. These key factors were recorded in absolute numbers, as many reviews continued multiple key factors. The analysis enabled the identification of the main key factors with the highest frequency of occurrence. Based on the data from Booking.com, it was possible to categorise these key factors according to different times of the year and determine which factor was preferred by customers in that period for each hotel.

4.1.1 Content analysis of reviews of selected hotels

The first hotel analysed was BoHo Prague, which had 513 reviews on Booking.com during the study period. Of this number, 190 reviews contained verbal ratings, allowing for the analysis of the key factors most frequently mentioned by customers. It shall be noted that the reviews of BoHo Prague were predominantly positive, with very few negative comments. The majority of the hotel's customers were international guests, with reviews from Czech visitors being very rare. The analysis identified a total of seven key factors, namely staff, wellness, food, amenities, location, cleanliness, and price.

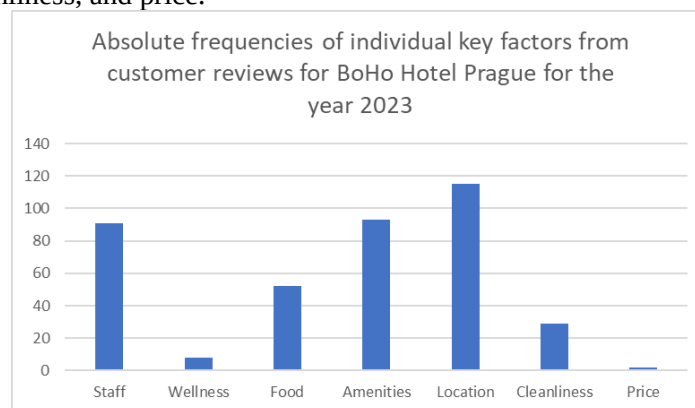


Figure 1. Absolute frequencies of key factors for BoHo Hotel Prague in 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

A graphical representation of the results (see Figure 1) shows the key factors with the highest frequency of occurrence in the reviews. These factors were divided into categories that encompass the services offered by the hotels. The "Staff" category includes all hotel employees (receptionists, chauffeurs, cooks, hostesses, waiters, or cleaners). This factor was mentioned 91 times in customer reviews. "Wellness" includes all spa services offered by the hotel, such as saunas, massages, spa access, or the possibility to use a swimming pool and gym. This factor was mentioned eight times in the reviews. "Food" includes all meals and refreshments offered to customers, breakfast, lunch, dinner, bar services, and room service, mentioned 52 times in the reviews. "Amenities" refers to the room amenities, the comfort of the furniture, and the architecture of the hotel. This factor was mentioned 93 times. The location of the hotel was mentioned 115 times, making it a major key factor for BoHo Prague, located close to Wenceslas Square, tourist attractions, the train station, and the metro station. The "Cleanliness" category, which includes the overall cleanliness of the hotel, rooms, and housekeeping services, was mentioned 29 times. The "Price" category was only mentioned twice.

A detailed analysis of the content identified the changes in the frequencies of these key factors throughout the year. The "Staff" factor consistently showed a very high frequency, being mentioned 20 times in the spring, 28 times in the summer, 16 times in the autumn, and 27 times in the winter. "Wellness" was mentioned less frequently, with two mentions in the spring, one in the summer and autumn, and four in the winter. The "Food" factor was mentioned more frequently, with 12 mentions in the spring, 19 in the summer, 11 in the autumn, and 10 in the winter. The "Amenities" factor appeared 19 times in the spring, 30 times in the summer, 19 times in the autumn, and 25 times in the winter. The "Location" factor showed a higher frequency, being mentioned 31 times in the spring, 33 times in the summer, 24 times in the autumn, and 27 times in the winter. The "Cleanliness" factor was mentioned 6 times in the spring, 8 times in the summer, 6 times in the autumn, and 9 times in the winter, while "Price" was mentioned twice in the reviews, once in the spring and once in the winter (see Figure 2).

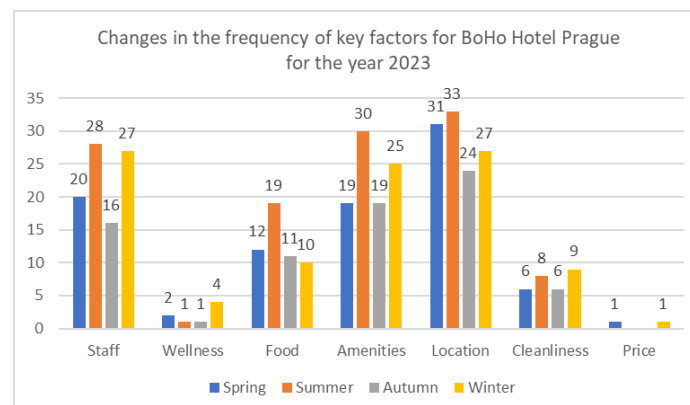


Figure 2. Changes in the frequency of key factors for BoHo Hotel Prague for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

4.1.2. Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane

Another hotel whose reviews were analysed in this study is Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane. During the specified period, the hotel received 149 reviews on Booking.com in the given period was 149, of which 101 included verbal ratings that were used to identify key factors. These factors and their absolute frequencies were graphically recorded. The vast majority of the reviews were from Czech customers, with fewer reviews from international guests, primarily from Austria and Germany. Negative reviews were infrequent and often lacked verbal ratings to pinpoint the reasons for customer dissatisfaction. Unlike BoHo Hotel Prague, Chateau Herálec responded proactively to many customer reviews.

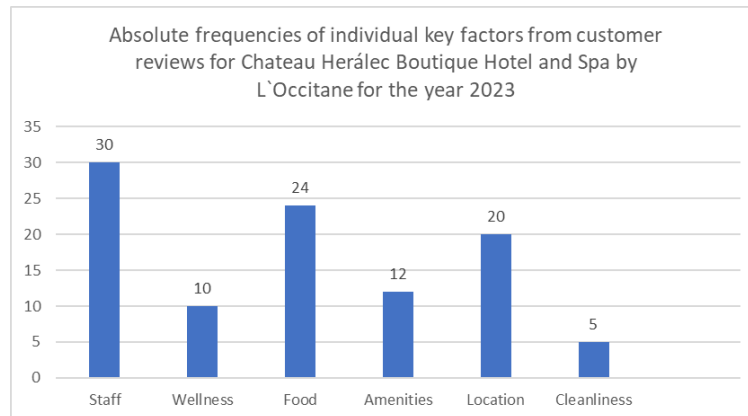


Figure 3. Absolute frequencies of key factors for Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

Based on the graphical representation of the frequencies (see Figure 3), it can be stated that the primary key factor influencing customers' choice of this hotel is the staff. This category includes all hotel staff that may interact with hotel guests. This key factor was mentioned 30 times in the reviews. The "Wellness" factor, encompassing all spa-related services, was mentioned 10 times. The "Food" factor was cited 24 times, "Amenities" 12 times, and "Cleanliness" five times. The content analysis identified the absolute frequencies of individual key factors by season, providing a detailed view of the development of these frequencies. The graph in Figure 4 illustrates the changes in the frequencies of the selected key factors throughout the year 2023. The "Staff" factor varied considerably, being mentioned ten times in the spring, eleven times in the summer, five times in the autumn, and four times in the winter. The "Wellness" factor was less frequently mentioned, with the highest frequency of five mentions in the spring, twice in the summer and autumn, and only once in the winter. The "Food" factor was mentioned eleven times in the spring, eight times in the summer, three times in the autumn, and twice in the winter. "Amenities" was mentioned less frequently, with three mentions in the spring, four in the summer and autumn, and one in the winter. The "Location" factor was mentioned nine times in the spring, eight times in the summer, and three times in the autumn. The factor was not mentioned at all in the winter. The least frequently mentioned factor was "Cleanliness" with two mentions in the summer and autumn and one mention in the winter.

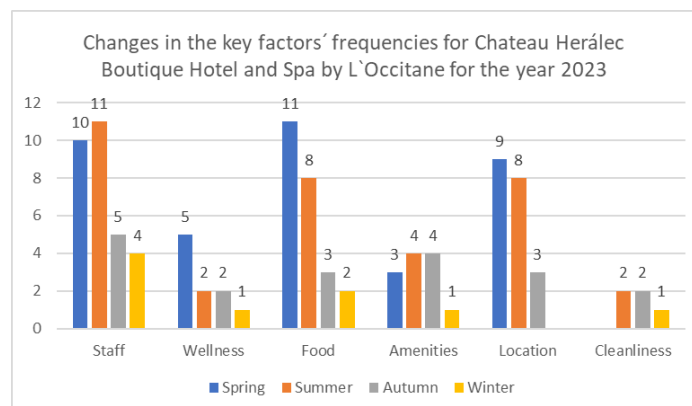


Figure 4. Changes in the key factors' frequencies for Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

4.1.3. Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa a Wellness

Another hotel analysed is Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness, located in Karlovy Vary near Vřídelská kolonáda. The hotel received a total of 440 reviews on Booking.com. Among these, 152 reviews included verbal ratings that enable the identification of key factors through content analysis. The identified key factors

included staff, wellness, food, amenities, location, cleanliness, and price, as those identified for BoHo Hotel Prague.

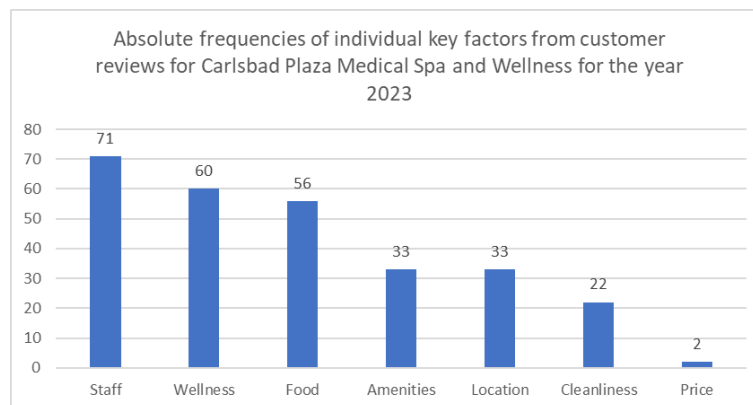


Figure 5. Absolute frequencies of key factors for Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

As illustrated in Figure 5, the primary key factor for this hotel was staff. This factor includes all hotel employees, being mentioned 71 times in the reviews. The “Wellness” factor, which encompasses all spa-related services and the gym, was mentioned 60 times. The “Food” factor, referring to the hotel restaurant and room service, was mentioned 56 times. “Amenities”, which include furniture and hotel architecture, was mentioned 33 times, the same as the “Location” factor. “Price” was mentioned twice in the reviews. The application of content analysis allowed for the identification of changes in the absolute frequency throughout the individual periods of the year. Figure 6 shows that the “Staff” factor was mentioned 9 times in the spring, 6 times in the summer, 14 times in the autumn, and 22 times in the winter. The “Wellness” factor was mentioned 24 times in the spring, four times in the summer, 13 times in the autumn, and 19 times in the winter. The “Food” key factor showed relatively stable frequencies throughout the year, except for the summer, when it was mentioned four times. In the spring, the factor was mentioned 19 times, 16 times in the autumn, and 17 times in the winter. The “Amenities” factor was mentioned 10 times in the spring, 4 times in the summer, 11 times in the autumn, and 8 times in the winter. The “Cleanliness” factor was mentioned 7 times in the spring, once in the summer, 4 times in the autumn, and 10 times in the winter. The “Price” factor was mentioned once in the spring and twice in the winter.

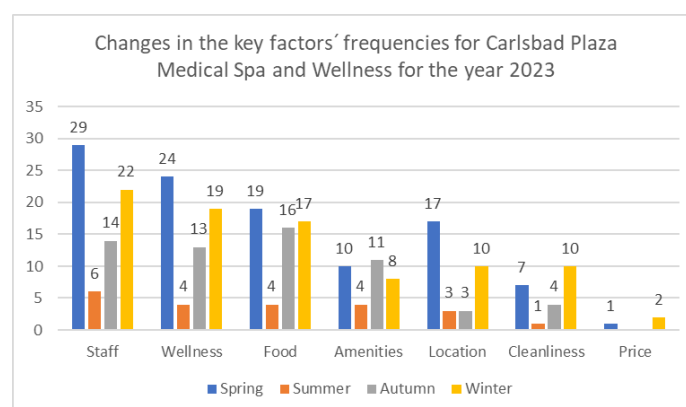


Figure 6. Changes in the key factors' frequencies for Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

4.1.4. Four Seasons Hotel Prague

In 2023, Four Seasons Hotel Prague received a total of 167 reviews on Booking.com. Of this number, 23 reviews were with detailed verbal ratings. The key factors mentioned in the reviews include staff, wellness, food, amenities, location, and cleanliness.

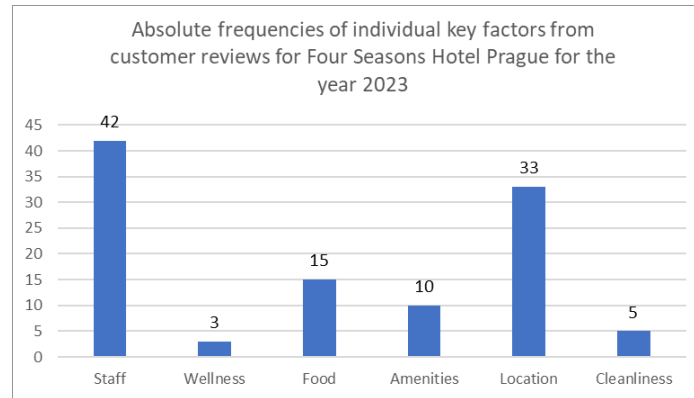


Figure 7. Absolute frequencies of key factors for Four Seasons Hotel Prague for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

Figure 7 illustrates that the most frequently mentioned key factor in the reviews is the staff. This includes all hotel employees, with receptionists being the most commonly referenced, appearing 42 times in the reviews. The "Wellness" factor (including the pool and saunas) was only mentioned three times. "Food", encompassing the evaluation of all served meals and bar offerings, was mentioned 15 times in the reviews, while "Amenities", including furniture and architecture, were mentioned 10 times. Location, an important factor in choosing the hotel, was mentioned 33 times. The hotel is centrally located in Prague, close to major landmarks. Hotel cleanliness was mentioned five times across all seasons as a key factor. Figure 8 shows the development of these factors throughout the year 2023. The "Staff" factor was mentioned 11 times in the spring, 7 times in the summer, 13 times in the autumn, and 11 times in the winter. The "Wellness" factor was not mentioned in the spring, mentioned once in the summer, and twice in the autumn and winter. "Food" was mentioned three times in the spring and summer, six times in the autumn, and three times in the winter. The "Amenities" factor was mentioned three times in the spring and summer, six times in the autumn, and three times in the winter. "Location" was mentioned 11 times in the spring, 5 times in the summer, 7 times in the autumn, and 10 times in the winter. The "Cleanliness" factor was mentioned twice in the spring, once in the autumn, and twice in the winter. This factor was not mentioned in the summer.

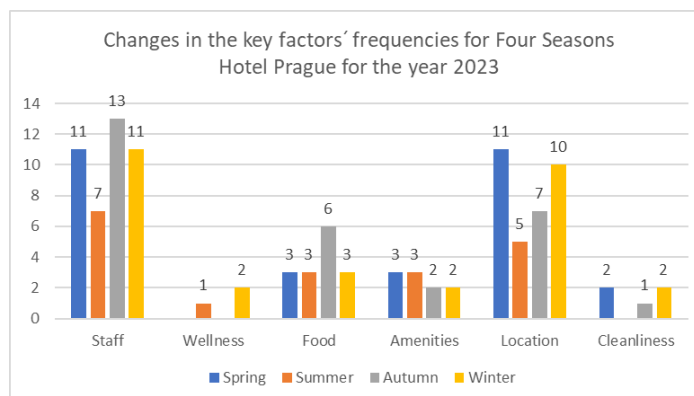


Figure 8. Changes in the key factors' frequencies for Four Seasons Hotel Prague for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

4.1.5. Mandarin Oriental, Prague

Another hotel analysed was Mandarin Oriental, Prague, which received 52 reviews on Booking.com for the year 2023. Of this number, only 14 reviews included verbal ratings based on which the key factors were identified. These factors included staff, amenities, and location.

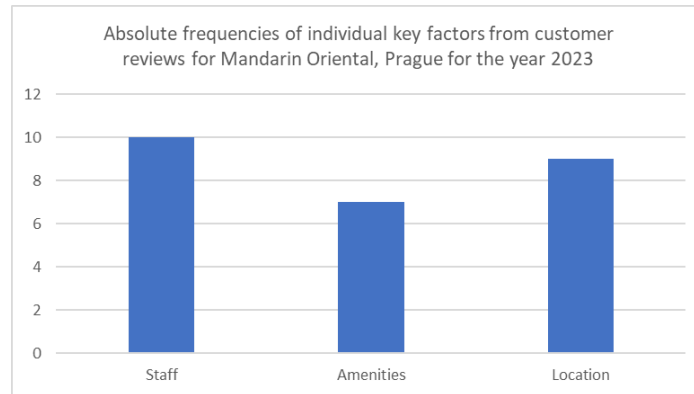


Figure 9. Absolute frequencies of key factors for Mandarin Oriental, Prague for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

The above graph (see Figure 9) illustrates that the primary key factor in choosing the hotel was the staff. This factor included all hotel employees, with receptionists and masseurs being mentioned most often by hotel guests, appearing 10 times in the reviews. The "Amenities" factor (furniture, indoor and outdoor architecture, and spa amenities) was mentioned 7 times. Customers most frequently commented on the overall architecture of the hotel. The "Location" factor was mentioned nine times. The analysed data enabled observing how the frequencies of these key factors changed throughout the monitored period. As seen in Figure 10, the "Staff" factor was most frequently mentioned in the spring months, specifically 5 times. In the summer months, this factor appeared in the reviews three times and once in the autumn and winter months. The "Amenities" key factor was mentioned in the reviews 3 times in the spring, twice in the summer, and twice in the winter. In the autumn months, the factor was not mentioned. The "Location" key factor was mentioned 4 times in the spring, twice in the summer, and once in the autumn. The factor showed a slight increase in the winter months, as mentioned twice in the reviews.

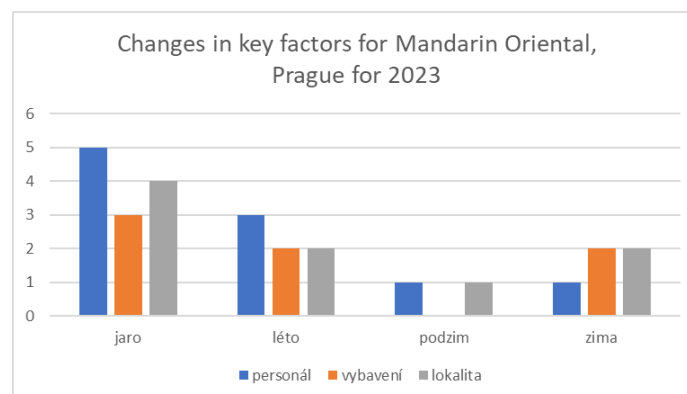


Figure 10. Changes in key factors for Mandarin Oriental, Prague for 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

4.1.6. Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague

In 2023, this hotel received a total of 30 reviews on Booking.com, 11 of which included detailed verbal ratings. This allowed for an analysis of the key factors influencing guests' choice of the hotel. The major factors identified were staff, amenities, food, and location. The hotel is situated in the centre of Prague near many

historical monuments, what was frequently highlighted in the reviews. However, customers noted that one of the most intriguing aspects of the hotel is its amenities, which is due to the renovated historic buildings.

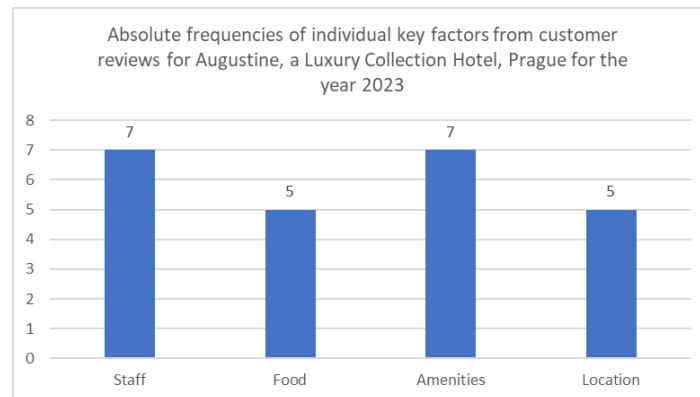


Figure 11. Absolute frequencies of key factors for Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

In this case, the main key factors were two aspects (see Figure 11). The first was the staff, who, according to customer reviews, were noted for their very friendly approach. The second key aspect was the amenities of the hotel, which impressed customers with their modern design. Both of these factors were mentioned a total of seven times in the reviews. The factors of “Food” and “Location” were mentioned five times each. Customers positively evaluated the food, particularly appreciating the hotel restaurant and breakfast. The location of the hotel, which is close to Prague Castle and other historical monuments, was also an important factor for customers. The data analysis revealed that the frequency of these factors varied across different seasons. Unlike other hotels, there were no reviews with detailed verbal ratings available for analysis during the spring months (see Figure 12). The “Staff” key factor was most frequently mentioned in the winter months, appearing five times in the reviews. The “Food” factor was not mentioned during the summer and autumn months but was noted five times in the winter. The “Amenities” factor was mentioned once in the summer and in the autumn, with the frequency increasing to 3 mentions in the winter. The “Location” key factor was mentioned only once in both the summer and autumn, but the frequency increased to 5 in the winter months.

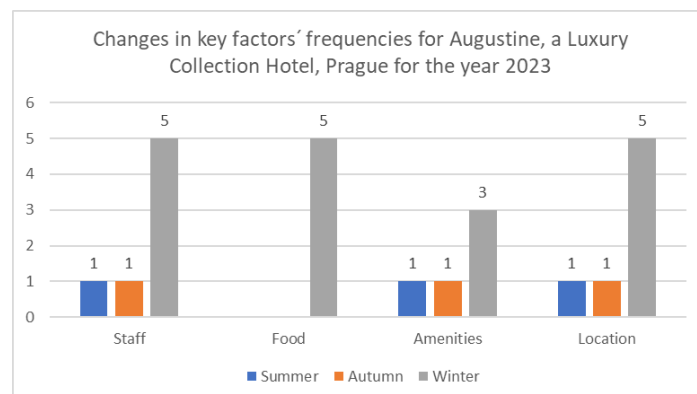


Figure 12. Changes in key factors' frequencies for Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague for the year 2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

4.2. Comparison of selected hotels' ratings

To answer the second research question, it was necessary to compare the rating of the aforementioned luxury five-star hotels with other Czech hotels. Given that these hotels are highly rated on Booking.com, a comparison was made between them and another popular hotel with high ratings. The aim was to determine how popular these selected hotels are with customers and which of them is the best. The comparison considered the overall ratings of the hotels on Booking.com, which represent the average of customer reviews over the entire period

of the hotels' profiles on the portal. In addition, key factors that help explain the position of each hotel on the Czech market, which included its facilities and quality of services, were also considered.

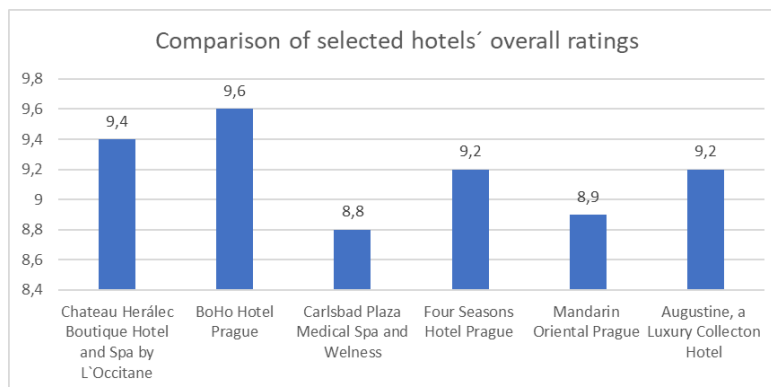


Figure 13. Comparison of selected hotels' overall ratings

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

The graph of the overall ratings of the hotels (see Figure 13) indicates that the highest rating (9.6 out of 10 points) was awarded to Chateau Herálec. This hotel received mostly positive reviews on Booking.com; however, there were also negative reviews, similar to BoHo Prague, where a lack of responses to reviews was noted. The second highest rating of 9.4 points went to BoHo Hotel Prague, which also had the highest number of reviews among the selected hotels for the year 2023, both with and without verbal ratings. Unlike other hotels, there were no responses to negative reviews. Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa & Wellness received the lowest rating of 8.8 out of 10. This hotel was actively engaged in discussions with reviewers, responding to both positive and negative reviews, including criticism related to reconstruction and parking. The Four Seasons Hotel Prague was awarded a rating of 9.2 points and actively responded to customer reviews. However, the presence of negative reviews indicates the difficulty of meeting the high standards typical of the Four Seasons chain. Mandarin Oriental, Prague received a rating of 8.9, with a relatively lower number of reviews on Booking.com. Most of the ratings were responded to by the hotel management, who made efforts to meet customer requirements. Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague received fewer ratings on Booking.com compared to other hotels. Most reviews were positive, although the hotel received a lower number of reviews in 2023 compared to the preceding years. Despite this, the hotel received a rating of 9.2 points. The comparison of luxury hotels in the Czech Republic showed that Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa received the highest review score. An analysis of the key factors for those hotels revealed that for the majority, the main factor was the staff, which encompassed all hotel employees from receptionists to masseurs, cooks, and housekeepers. Thus, the success and high ratings of these hotels were predominantly due to positive customer reviews, which most often highlighted the human factor. BoHo Hotel Prague, the second highest-rated hotel, identified "Location" as a major key factor. The key factors and their relative frequencies are detailed in Table 1, which shows the percentage of main key factors for each hotel in comparison to other factors. Individual key factors showed a relative frequency between 20 % and 60 %.

Table 1. Relative frequencies of the main key factors of selected hotels

Hotel	BoHo Hotel Prague	Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane	Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness	Four Seasons Hotel Prague	Mandarin Oriental Prague	Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel
Key factor	Location	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff and Amenities
Relative frequency of key factor	29,5%	29,7%	25,6%	38,5%	38,5%	60,8%

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

A further comparison with other popular hotels according to Booking.com, a website that ranks highly rated hotels, reveals that the six selected hotels maintained a high position in the Czech market and were popular among customers even compared to other well-rated hotels. The graphical representation in Fig. 14 shows that hotels whose key factors were analysed in this paper achieved higher ratings than most of the other selected hotels.

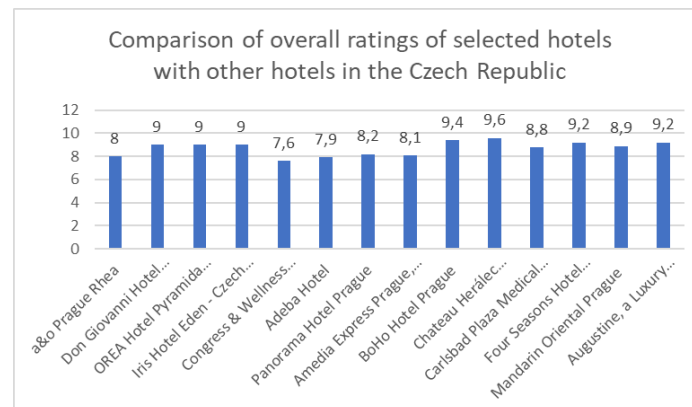


Figure 14. Comparison of overall ratings of selected hotels with other hotels in the CR

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

Even though some hotels, such as OREA Hotel Pyramída and Iris Hotel Eden, received a rating of 9 on Booking.com, they still did not reach the level of the selected and previously analysed hotels, which were rated higher. This is because hotels like OREA Hotel Pyramída and Iris Hotel Eden are only four-star hotels. Other hotels, such as Adeba Hotel or Congress & Wellness Hotel Olsanka, which received an overall rating of less than 8 points, were rated with only three stars.

4.3. Analysis of variance of selected hotels' average ratings in 2021-2023

To answer the third research question, an analysis of variance was performed using the ANOVA function in MS Excel. The aim was to determine whether customer ratings changed in the years 2021-2023, i.e., during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The data were obtained from Booking.com, where the hotel's overall ratings were analysed for the years studied. The portal displayed only the overall average rating from the year when the hotel profile was created, not individual yearly ratings. The analysed data included the number of points awarded by customers over the given period, which were then recorded in MS Excel. A one-factor analysis of variance determined a p-value, which was compared to a predetermined significance level of 5 %. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis that the rating changed is accepted. If the p-value is less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis that refuted the claims that the average rating of hotels changed over the period is accepted. This method allowed for the analysis of average ratings for each year to identify any changes.

4.3.1. BoHo Hotel Prague – Small Luxury Hotels

BoHo Hotel Prague – Small Luxury Hotels received a total of 1,735 reviews on Booking.com in the given period, including a hotel rating score. Using analysis of variance, it was possible to test the null and alternative hypotheses. According to the null hypothesis, the hotel's rating did not change between the COVID-19 pandemic and the present, while the alternative hypothesis suggests that the hotel's rating remained stable during the pandemic and the following years. The results in Table 2 show that the p-value was 0.8202788, which is approximately 82.02 %. This means that the p-value is greater than the determined significance level, indicating that the null hypothesis that the rating changed in the analysed years could be accepted. Based on this test, the alternative hypothesis was rejected.

Table 2. Analysis of variance for BoHo Hotel Prague – Small Luxury Hotels

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0,376	2	0,187895760	0,19813365	0,820278797	3,000916788
Within Groups	1643,453056	1733	0,948328365			
Total	1643,828848	1735				

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

Based on the results of the analysis of variance, it is possible to determine the average ratings of BoHo Hotel Prague for individual years. In 2021, the received rating was 9.39 out of 10.

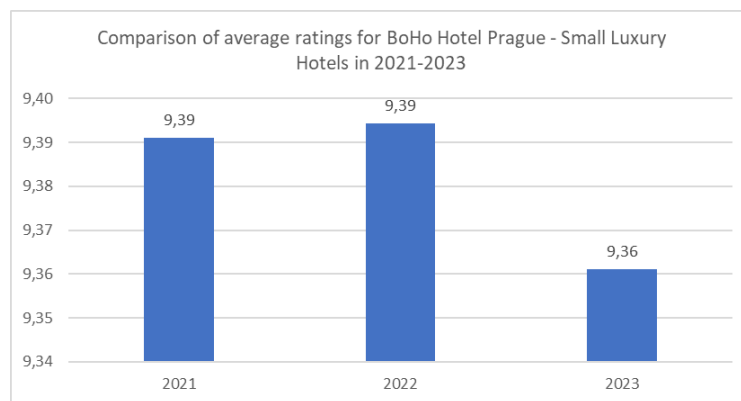


Figure 15. Comparison of overall ratings of selected hotels and other hotels in the CR

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

The same rating was recorded in 2022, while in 2023, the rating decreased slightly to 9.36. This change indicates a slight decrease in the rating (see Figure 15 above).

4.3.2. Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness

Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness had a total of 943 reviews on Booking.com over the given period. According to the null hypothesis, the hotel's rating changed during the pandemic compared to the present situation, while the alternative hypothesis states the opposite. The results of the analysis indicate that the p-value is 0.91878501, which corresponds to 91.87 %. This value is greater than the significance level of 5%, which means that the null hypothesis can be accepted. This indicates that the average rating of the hotel changed in the indicated years. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3. Analysis of variance for Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0,4	2	0,22465518	0,08471075	0,91878501	3,00528965
Within Groups	2495,5573	941	2,65202689			
Total	2496,0066	943				

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

The analysis of variance enabled determining the average ratings of the hotel for the given years.

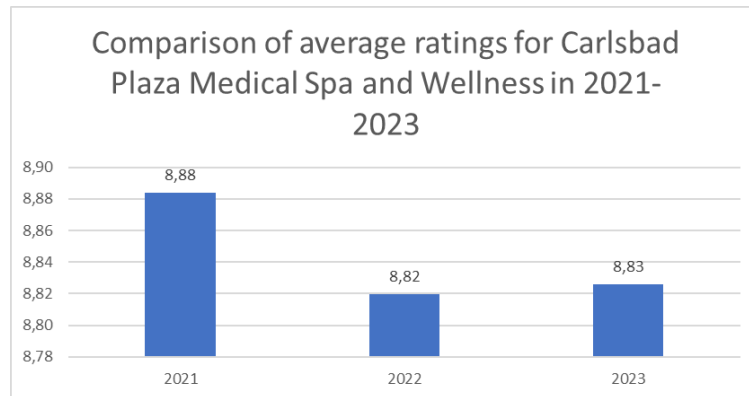


Figure 16. Comparison of average ratings for Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness in 2021-2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

Similar to the previous example of BoHo Hotel Prague, the rating of this hotel during the COVID-19 pandemic and at present showed very slight changes (see Figure 16 above), often by only a hundredths. In 2021, the overall average rating was 8.88 out of 10. In 2022, the rating was 8.82, while in 2023, it increased slightly to 8.83.

4.3.3 Four Seasons Hotel Prague

Four Seasons Hotel Prague had 401 reviews on Booking.com over the given period. According to the null hypothesis, the hotel's rating changed during the pandemic compared to the current situation, while the alternative hypothesis states that the rating did not change. The p-value is 0.14108378 (see Table 4), which corresponds to 14.10 %. Since the p-value is greater than the significance level of 5 %, the null hypothesis that the average hotel rating changed in the years 2021-2023 can be accepted.

Table 4. Analysis of variance for Four Seasons Hotel Prague

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	7,97503	2	3,987513547	1,968045248	0,141083785	3,018337541
Within Groups	808,4254704	399	2,026128999			
Total	816,4004975	401				

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

Based on the analysis of variance, it was possible to determine the average rating of Four Seasons Hotel Prague for each year.

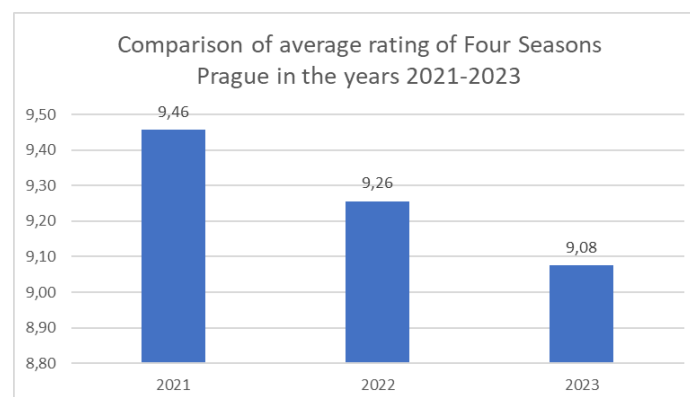


Figure 17. Comparison of average rating of Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness in the years 2021-2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

This rating is shown in the graph (see Figure 17 above), which indicates that in 2021, the hotel's average rating was 9.46 out of 10. In 2022, this rating dropped to 9.26, and in 2023, the rating showed another decrease to 9.08. This means that between 2021 and 2023, the average rating of Four Seasons Hotel Prague dropped by nearly four-tenths.

4.3.4. Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane

In the years 2021-2023, Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane received 252 reviews with overall ratings for the hotel. The null hypothesis states that the rating changed during the pandemic compared to the present situation; according to the alternative hypothesis, the rating did not change. As seen in Table 5, the p-value is 0.6102622, which corresponds to 61.02 %. The p-value supports the null hypothesis, stating that the average rating of the hotel changed over time.

Table 5. Analysis of variance for Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0,9605	2	0,480252356	0,494843453	0,610262217	3,03191842
Within Groups	242,6284281	250	0,970513712			
Total	243,5889328	252				

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

Based on the results of the analysis of variance, it was possible to determine individual mean values of the overall ratings within the given period.

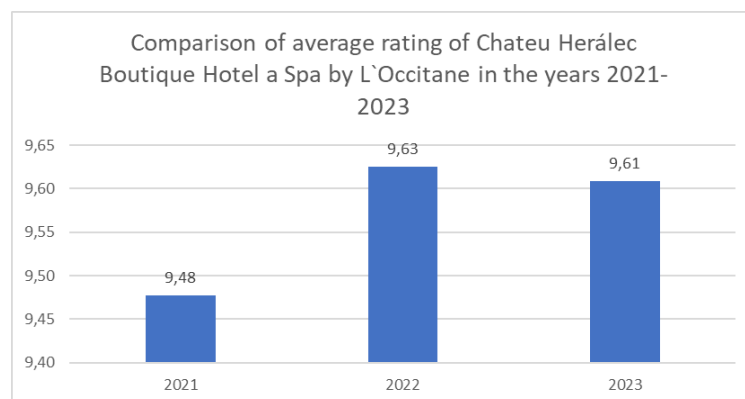


Figure 18. Comparison of average ratings of Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa and Wellness in the years 2021-2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

Figure 18 above shows that in 2021, Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane achieved an average total score of 9.48 out of 10. In the following year, the rating increased to 9.63. The overall average rating in 2023 is similar to the preceding year, reaching the value of 9.61.

4.3.5 Mandarin Oriental, Prague

Another hotel analysed is Mandarin Oriental in Prague. In the years 2021-2023, this hotel received 131 reviews with rating scores on Booking.com. The null hypothesis states that the hotel's rating changed during the pandemic compared to the present situation, while the alternative hypothesis states the opposite. Table 6 indicates that the p-value is 0.80474112, which corresponds to 80.47 %. This value is greater than the significance level of 5 %, which means that the null hypothesis is accepted, as the average hotel's rating changed in the years 2021-2023.

Table 6. Analysis of variance for Mandarin Oriental, Prague

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1,2425	2	0,621263858	0,217600871	0,804741123	3,066391037
Within Groups	368,3029268	129	2,855061448			
Total	369,5454545	131				

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

The analysis of variance enabled determining the hotel's overall rating for individual years. The rating is graphically illustrated below (see Figure 19).

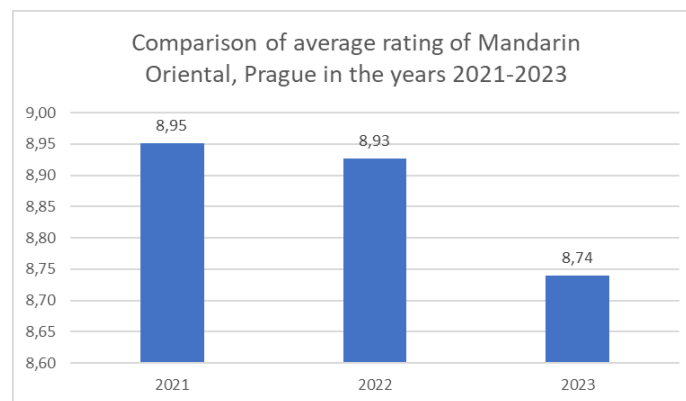


Figure 19. Comparison of average rating of Mandarin Oriental, Prague in the years 2021-2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

In 2021, Mandarin Oriental Hotel achieved a rating of 8.95 out of 10. In 2022, the rating dropped slightly to 8.93, which was followed by another decrease of nearly two-tenths in the next year, reaching 8.74 out of 10.

4.3.6. Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague

This hotel received 138 reviews on Booking.com during the given period, each including a score. The null hypothesis states that the hotel's rating changed during the pandemic period compared to the present. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis states that the hotel's rating did not change between the global pandemic period and the present. As seen in Table 7, the p-value is 0.82073825, corresponding to 82.07 %, which is greater than the significance level of 5 %. The results of the analysis confirm the null hypothesis that the average ratings of the hotel in the given period between the pandemic and the present changed. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Table 7. Analysis of variance for Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0,66473	2	0,33236283	0,197893773	0,820738249	3,075852636
Within Groups	191,4631376	114	1,679501207			
Total	192,1278632	116				

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

The application of analysis of variance enabled the determination of this hotel's average ratings of this hotel over the given period. The rating is graphically illustrated below (see Figure 20)

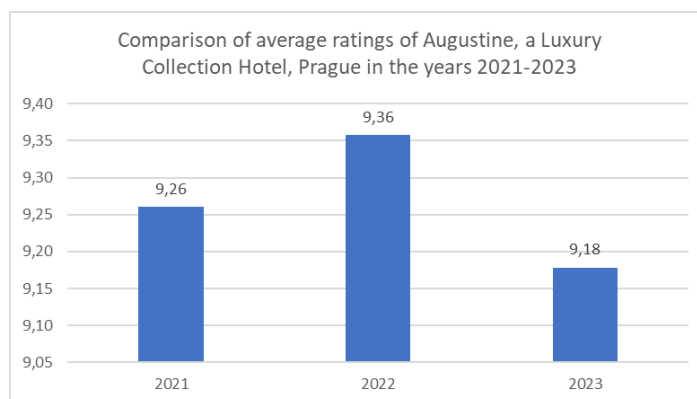


Figure 20. Comparison of average ratings of Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague in the years 2021-2023

Source: Authors based on data from Booking.com.

In 2021, the hotel achieved an overall average rating of 9.26 out of 10. In the next year, the rating increased to 9.36, which was followed by a drop by nearly two tenths in 2023, reaching the value of 9.18.

Discussion of answers to the research questions

Based on the results obtained, it was possible to answer all research questions concerning the selected high-rated Czech hotels, namely BoHo hotel Prague, Mandarin Oriental, Prague, and Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague. All information and reviews were obtained from the online portal Booking.com and included data for the year 2023.

Research question 1: What key factors drive customers to visit the selected hotels? The answer to the question was obtained through analysing reviews from the year 2023, i.e., the first year without the influence of COVID-19. The analysis helped to identify key factors, namely staff, wellness, food, amenities, location, cleanliness, and price. Each hotel had its own specific key factors, with staff being often the most frequently mentioned key factor.

Research question 2: What is the online reputation of the selected hotels in the Czech market? The descriptive analysis and comparison of the selected hotels with other highly rated Prague hotels showed that the selected hotels consistently achieved strong ratings on Booking.com, with average scores ranging from 8.0 to 9.6 out of 10. The highest rating was awarded to Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L' Occitane, which received 9.6 points. Overall, the reputation of all the hotels analysed was very good.

Research question 3: Do the average ratings of the selected hotels differ in 2021, 2022, and 2023, i.e., from the period of the COVID-19 pandemic to the present? The analysis of variance using the ANOVA function in MS Excel demonstrated that the average ratings of the hotels changed between 2021 and 2023. The null hypothesis proposing that the average ratings varied during this period was confirmed. It was found that the average ratings fluctuated year by year, something not directly observable on Booking.com.

A research limitation is the reliance on data from only one review platform. Incorporating multiple sources would likely yield more accurate results. Another limitation is fake or edited reviews, which may skew the results. The findings of the research are valuable for the hotels themselves, particularly for strategic planning and service improvement, as well as for their staff, customers, and professionals in the field of online reputational management. The research provides a deeper understanding of the factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Conclusions

The objective of the paper was the analysis of reputation management and identification of key factors for a selection of hotels, including BoHo Hotel Prague - Small Luxury Hotels, Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa L'Occitane, Carlsbad Plaza Medical Spa & Wellness, Four Seasons Hotel Prague, Mandarin Oriental, Prague, and Augustine, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Prague, on the basis of reviews from Booking.com for the year 2023. The objective was achieved, and all research questions were addressed. The analysis of customer reviews identified the key factors that attract customers, with the most frequently mentioned being staff, wellness, food, amenities, location, cleanliness, and price. For each hotel, the frequency of these factors was determined, and a primary key factor was selected. A subsequent comparison of the average ratings of the selected hotels offered a more detailed perspective on their popularity in the Czech market. The analysis revealed that these hotels are highly sought after and well-rated, with average scores ranging from 8.0 to 9.6 out of 10. The most popular hotel was Chateau Herálec Boutique Hotel and Spa by L'Occitane, with a rating of 9.6 out of 10, making it one of the top-rated hotels in the Czech Republic on Booking.com. The next part of the research focused on an analysis of variance to determine whether the ratings of the selected hotels changed between 2021 and 2023. A null hypothesis was formulated, suggesting that the average ratings of the hotels changed over this period, while the alternative hypothesis posited the opposite. The analysis confirmed the null hypothesis, indicating that average hotel ratings did indeed change during and after the pandemic period. This paper provides new insights into the selected hotels that may be valuable for customers, as well as for hotel owners and staff. These insights can be leveraged to improve and maintain the reputation of these establishments. One of the main limitations of this study is the reliance on a single data source – Booking.com. Although this platform is widely used and highly influential in the hospitality sector, an analysis of reviews from additional platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Expedia) would increase the robustness of the findings. Future research should include data from both domestic and international review platforms to capture a broader and more representative picture of customer feedback. Another important limitation is the potential presence of fake or manipulated reviews, which may distort the results despite platform efforts to moderate content. In addition, the methodological approach focuses solely on numerical review scores without accounting for other influential factors identified in the literature – such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, offline word-of-mouth, branding strategies, or customer loyalty programs. These aspects may significantly influence a hotel's reputation but were not examined in this study due to data accessibility and methodological scope. A more comprehensive model integrating these qualitative factors would be beneficial for future research.

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Michal KONEČNÝ is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, Faculty of Corporate Strategy. As a member of the Department of Tourism and Marketing, he teaches courses related to Marketing, Business Information Systems, CRM systems and Business Activities. In 2023, he successfully defended his dissertation thesis and received his PhD. degree at the University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of Business Management, where he specialised in Economics and Management. He is engaged in various research, project and publication activities. Main research interests: His current research includes corporate reputation in the context of sustainable development.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7926-257X>

Michaela KOSÍKOVÁ is a junior researcher at the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice. In 2024, she completed her bachelor's studies in Business Economics at the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, where she successfully defended her bachelor's thesis and received her Bc. degree. She is currently continuing her master's studies in Business Economics at the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice specialising in Business Economy - Product and Value Management. Main research interests: She focuses on issues related to corporate reputation in the context of sustainable development.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6369-7245>

František POLLÁK is an Associate Professor at the University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of Business Management, and at the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, Faculty of Corporate Strategy. He deals mainly with the issue of corporate reputation in the context of its sustainable development. Within his scientific school, he has supervised two graduates who defended their dissertations. At the same time, he supervises three other doctoral students who are researching the issue of accelerated digitalisation of the economy. He is the Student Personality of the Year Award 2012 nominee and the world semifinalist from the Intel Berkeley Entrepreneurship Challenge 2008. In addition to these achievements, he has also received numerous awards for his work, such as Best Paper Award - GBC 2015, Excellence Award - Megatrends and Media 2016, Best Paper Award - AAR17 New York Conference 2017, and others. Apart from his professional activities, he was an expert evaluator of the Research Agency for the Creative Industry, and he is an expert evaluator of the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic for priority science, research and innovation. From the viewpoint of professional communities, he is a member of the European Alliance for Innovation, and a member of the editorial board of Strategic Management journal. Main research interests: His current research includes corporate reputation in the context of sustainable development.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6346-8629>

Daniel CHAMRADA is an Assistant at the Institute of Technology and Business, Faculty of Corporate Strategy. As a member of the Department of Management, he teaches courses related to Project Management and Crisis Management. He is currently continuing his PhD studies at the University of Žilina, The Faculty of Operation and Economics of Transport and Communications. He is engaged in various research, project and publication activities. Main research interests: His current research includes theory of constraints.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3934-7840>

