Exploratory research on the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of luxury cruise ship passengers

Yifan Ma

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Abstract

Customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction has received a lot of attention from research. Previous studies related to customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction have concentrated on hospitality products, such as hotels, resorts and restaurants. However, an increasing number of customers have been attracted by luxury cruise experiences (Poh & Cheng, 2017). This study concentrates on luxury cruise ships, and uses online comments to analyse the influences on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction encountered on luxury cruise ship experiences. This study explores an explanation of satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors aboard luxury cruise ships. The online comments on TripAdvisor were used as a database in this dissertation.

The interpretivism paradigm was adopted in this study. This dissertation adopted a qualitative methodology. The method of data analysis applied was content analysis. The data for this dissertation covered 29 luxury cruise companies. The 570 comments (including 'excellent' comments and 'terrible' comments) were collected from 1st August to 31st August 2019 from TripAdvisor.

The main factors affecting customers' satisfaction with luxury cruise ships were empathy, high food quality, and well-organised off-board excursions. Unhelpful customer service was the most important influence on customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Poor food quality also played an important role in causing customer dissatisfaction on luxury cruise ships. The findings of this research are useful for luxury cruise managers, providing suggestions for them on how to increase customer satisfaction onboard, and improve cruise management. The findings also contribute to providing an understanding of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction for current research in the tourism and hospitality field.

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Attestation of authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Signed

Yifan Ma

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation explores factors affecting customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. This chapter introduces the background and significance of the research. Then, the main objectives and purpose of this dissertation are explained in this chapter. Finally, this chapter discusses the research methodology and structure of this dissertation.

1.2 Background

With the continuous spread and development of the cruise industry, the global cruise tourism market has been further expanded, and the North American market has become the most important territory in the world cruise tourism market (Poh & Cheng, 2017). Europe, the world's second-largest cruise market after North America, is the fastest-growing region in the world (Sprague-Silgado, 2017). The cruise travel market in the Asia-Pacific region is also growing rapidly (Baker & Fulford, 2016). According to statistics from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA, 2019), the growth rate of cruise tourism has been maintained at an average annual rate of 8.2% since 1980, which is 4.2% points higher than the overall growth rate of international tourism. With the rapid growth of luxury cruise travel in the tourism industry, the number of cruise passengers is expected to continue to grow in the future. According to the CLIA (2019) report, cruise lines continue to grow demand globally and are estimated to reach new heights, with global ocean cruise passenger numbers predicted to grow to 30 million passengers in 2019, a 7% increase over 2018. Furthermore, the development of cruise tourism generates positive economic benefits (Chua, Lee, & Han, 2017). The Cruise Industry Overview (2018) stated that the cruise industry created 1,108,676 jobs and $45.6 billion in wages and salaries which is equivalent to $134 billion of global economic output in total. The cruise ship has become one of the most popular tourism products, and cruise lines have responded to the changing vacation patterns of their customers by offering new cruise themes and itineraries (Brida, Bukstein, & Tealde, 2015). Luxury cruise ships are a great attraction for tourists who are motivated by the brand image of luxury cruise ships to reflect their social status (Radic, 2018). Additionally, tourists are drawn to luxury cruise ships because inaccessible places such as the Galapagos Islands and Antarctica are made accessible (Ahola, Salovuori, & Lehtonen, 2015). Cruise companies focus on increasing

customer satisfaction, and constantly introduce new cruises, open up lines, look for new cruise destinations, and explore new target markets (Baker & Fulford, 2016).

1.3 Significance of research

According to Han and Hyun (2018), there are three stages in the development of luxury cruise ships. Firstly, in the infancy stage, cruise ships had basic navigational functions. Secondly, the development period mainly focussed on transportation, mail, and leisure functions. In the third stage, the mature period, cruise ships began to focus on entertainment and leisure activities, and developed into luxury and large-scale experiences (Han & Hyun, 2018).

Nowadays, luxury cruise ships have enriched, diverse cruise experiences, such as the exploring of new destinations, and extraordinary onboard facilities and services (Baker & Fulford, 2016). The cruise industry has motivated customers who desire to take a vacation, and tourists pay more attention to luxury cruise ships due to the improvement of people's living standards (Onwezen, Bartels, & Antonides, 2014). Due to the popularity of luxury cruise ships, cruise companies focus on creating new cruise lines and themes in order to attract tourists (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). It is important for luxury cruise companies to focus on the importance of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. A high level of satisfaction with luxury cruise ships determines tourists' decision to choose to repeat their trip and recommend cruises to others (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). In addition, luxury cruise companies need to recognise the importance of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction since a high level of customer satisfaction helps to build a good reputation for luxury cruise companies (Han & Hyun, 2018). Customers have high expectations of luxury cruise ships, and they expect to have a memorable cruise experience and high-quality services (Han & Hyun, 2018. Understanding the influences on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction plays a vital role in the management of luxury cruise ship companies, and it also contributes to better meeting passengers' demands for a superlative cruise experience. Because luxury cruise companies can provide impressive cruise products and can further improve cruise experiences, understanding the importance of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction has beneficial implications for the development of luxury cruise companies (Ali, Hussain, & Ryu, 2017).

The importance of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction have been noted in studies of the hospitality industry, especially in the hotel industry. Fernandes and Fernandes (2018) studied the influence of negative reviews on the hotel industry by analysing online

complaints. Poh and Cheng (2017) explored the factors influencing tourists' experiences of hotel quality. Miller and Grazer (2003) studied the impact of tourist complaints on brand loyalty toward cruise lines. Although customer dissatisfaction is considered to be important, some studies related to negative online reviews and customer complaints have concentrated on other tourism products, such as hotels, resorts and restaurants (Au, Law, & Buhalis, 2014; Berezina, Bilghian, Cobanoglu, & Okumus, 2016; Hwang & Han, 2014). Furthermore, Baker and Fulford (2016) researched the factors that affect the intention to recommend luxury cruise ships. However, there are limited studies that explore customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction aboard luxury cruise ships based on online comments analysis. Therefore, this dissertation concentrates on studying the factors affecting customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships by analysing customers' comments on TripAdvisor.

1.4 Aim of the research

The research is an exploration of the satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors for luxury cruise ships. The purpose of this research is to explore the influences on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships by analysing online reviews on TripAdvisor. The research questions are as follows:

1. What factors affect customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships?

2. What factors affect customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships?

To answer the research questions, customers' perspectives on luxury cruise ship experiences were collected from the TripAdvisor website where tourists can share their travel experiences. This study concentrated on the factors that meet customer expectations and those that caused customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. This study also aims to provide suggestions for luxury cruise management, and guidance for future studies.

1.5 Research methodology

This study adopted a qualitative methodology. As the study aimed to identify the influences on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships based on analysis of customer reviews, interpretivism was recognised as the paradigm underpinning this research. Secondary data was collected, instead of primary data, due to a limited timeframe. Online comments were used for secondary data in this dissertation. TripAdvisor is a popular website where tourists share their travelling experiences (Li, Ye,

& Law, 2013). The population was 29 international luxury cruise companies reviewed on the TripAdvisor website. The sample was collected from the 'excellent' and 'terrible' comments sections on TripAdvisor. This dissertation adopted a purposive sampling technique that was used for collecting 570 customer comments found on the TripAdvisor website. The data was collected for a month from 1st August to 31st August 2019. Content analysis was used as a method of analysing data. Manual coding was used to count the frequency of categories. The results are presented in tables. The factors affecting customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction are discussed and compared with literature reviewed.

1.6   Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is separated into five chapters. The present chapter is an introduction to the background and aim of the research, which are significant to this dissertation and the structure of this dissertation. Chapter two reviews literature pertaining to the definition and history of luxury cruise ships, previous studies on luxury cruise ships, the definition and importance of customer satisfaction, the definition and importance of customer dissatisfaction, and the development of social media in tourism studies. Chapter three presents the research methodology and method used in this study. The research paradigm, the population, the sample and the analysing method are discussed in this chapter. Chapter four presents the results and discussion. This chapter analyses the findings and discusses them in the context of the published literature. The main findings showed that service had the strongest influence on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Chapter five concludes and summarises the main findings, and considers the limitations of this study and its implications, and makes suggestions for future research. The next chapter reviews the literature on the history of luxury cruise ships, and the definition of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, literature regarding luxury cruise ships is reviewed. The first part introduces the history and the definition of a luxury cruise ship. The next section reviews previous research which has been conducted on luxury cruise ships. After that, the literature review defines customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction within a luxury cruise ship context. And then, the importance of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction are described. The importance of social media platforms is discussed. Furthermore, the reason why people use certain platforms to express satisfaction and dissatisfaction is explained.

2.2 Luxury cruise ships

2.2.1 The history of luxury cruise ships

In the early days, cruise ships were a means of transportation used by the postal service to transport mail across the ocean, and at the same time the cruise ship carried passengers as well as mail (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). Hwang and Han (2014) considered the beginnings of cruise tourism were in 1858, as this was the first time that cruise tourists consciously purchased cruise products. Sprague-Silgado (2017) argued that the first luxury cruise ship travel began in 1912. Instead of a regular passenger liner, a luxury cruise ship was built with luxurious amenities, such as a swimming pool, a spa service and a dining room (Hyun & Han, 2015). Radic (2018) explored the experience of luxury cruise ships; he pointed out that cruise ships have evolved from passenger-carrying cruise liners into cruise ships with entertainment functions. Additionally, with the emergence of civil aircraft, cruise ships gradually lost the advantage of carrying passengers to the competition (Radic, 2018). By 1958, the modern cruise era was born, and cruise ship lines targeted the destination market (Radic, 2018). Nowadays, luxury cruise ships have been developed into an emerging form of tourism, and luxury cruise products have attracted an increasing number of customers (Chua, Lee, & Han, 2017). The CLIA (2018) reported that global cruise passengers have increased rapidly, reaching 28.5 million passengers. Compared to the number of cruise passengers in 2017, this 2018 figure represented an increase of 7%. According to the CLIA (2018) annual report, the number of cruise travellers in North America increased to 14.2 million in 2018, representing an annual growth rate of 9%. One of the most popular cruise markets is the Caribbean market and a total of 11.3 million passengers visited the Caribbean in 2018 (CLIA, 2018).

2.2.2 Definition of luxury cruise ship

Hyun and Han (2015) defined a luxury cruise ship as a cruise ship that provides high-quality services to customers and satisfies the guests' desire to enhance their social status. Ahola et al. (2015) considered a cruise ship as a form of tourism, including various cruise themes. Luxury cruise ships are designed with a lot of amenities to service cruise passengers (Jung & Han, 2016). The traditional cruise ship was mainly focussed on sightseeing on the cruise, which includes transportation, tourism, shopping and other functions (Hwang & Han, 2014). Nowadays, luxury cruise ships focus on a holiday resort function, instead of the transportation (Sprague-Silgado, 2017). Cruise passengers are able to enjoy a variety of onboard activities, such as a casino, gym, spa, places for children and high-quality entertainment (Jung & Han, 2016). Cruise ships have become a well-known tourism product, and are popular with tourists (Ponton & Asero, 2018). Luxury cruise ships play a vital role in the tourism market. The development of the cruise industry contributes to the tourism destination, promoting the tourism market, and generating economic benefits in the destination region due to popularity of cruise ships (Pinnock, 2014).

2.3 Extant literature on luxury cruise ship

In recent years, the cruise line industry has undoubtedly been recognised as one of the most popular and rapidly growing areas of the tourism industry (Ahn & Back, 2019). There are three main areas or categories of study found in the literature: customer behaviour on luxury cruise ships, influences on customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships, and the sustainable development of cruise ships. Baker and Fulford (2016) analysed the factors influencing customers' satisfaction and intention by their willingness to recommend travel by luxury cruise ship to other people, and the motivation that makes people take a cruise for a holiday. They considered that service quality onboard plays a vital role in repurchase behaviour and a willingness to recommend a cruise to other potential customers. A good cruise image has a positive impact on increasing customer perceived value and satisfaction (Pino & Peluso, 2018). In addition, the quality of the food offered onboard and a choice of relaxing destinations are recognised as significant indicators influencing customers' satisfaction (Chua et al., 2017). Furthermore, entertainment onboard and the cruise experience are key determinants which motivate customers to purchase this kind of trip (Radic, 2018).

Some researchers have dedicated their attention to exploring and analysing the relationship between cruise motivation factors, passenger satisfaction and customer

loyalty (Baker & Fulford, 2016; Han et al., 2018; Han & Hyun, 2018. Ahn and Back (2019) pointed out that the rapid development of cruise tourism has intensified the competition between luxury cruise ships in the tourism market. It is critical to enhance passenger loyalty for cruise line companies due to the competitive market environment and increasing number of passengers (Han et al., 2018). Customers are willing to repurchase the product once there is high customer loyalty which has a positive influence on improving the company profits(Caber & Albayrak, 2016). Passenger satisfaction could promote consumer behaviour, which is a key determinant of tourist loyalty (Baker & Fulford, 2016). High levels of customer satisfaction can contribute to enhanced customer loyalty (Han et al., 2018). Radic (2018) explored the determinant factors that deliver high-quality cruise experiences for passengers. She suggested that service quality and experienced emotions have a positive impact on the cruise ship experience. Furthermore, Radic (2018) suggested employees should serve passengers with respect and cruise organisations should design products that could make passengers generate positive emotions for onboard cruise experiences. Han, Yu, Koo and Kim (2019) researched the sustainable development of cruise ships; their findings indicated that individual social norms and responsibility have a vital impact on the improvement of the cruise environment/ecosystem. Onwezen et al. (2014) considered that personal norms play an important role in forming passengers' environmental decisions and behaviours related to a cruise product.

2.4 Definition of customer satisfaction

Many researchers have studied the explanation of the concept of customer satisfaction (Bodet, Anaba, & Bouchet, 2017; Cong, 2016; Rychalski & Hudson, 2017). The definition of satisfaction refers to the needs of customers based on their own judgment and whether they reach a satisfied state of mind after consumption, and this definition has been widely accepted (Bowen & Chen, 2015). According to Rychalski and Hudson (2017), satisfaction is defined by how customers evaluate the happiness level of fulfilling consumption. A tourist's satisfaction should be based on the combination of the tourist's expectation before the trip, and the feeling during the trip (Baker & Fulford, 2016). According to Chua et al. (2017), customer satisfaction can be understood as the passengers' feelings about and reactions to the cruise experience in the cruise context. When the expectation of passengers is satisfied by the cruise experience, they obtain positive feelings which could increase their satisfaction (Cruz Ruiz, Bermúdez González, & Tous Zamora, 2018).

Baker and Fulford (2016) supported the view that the aspect of satisfaction is the key determinant of the consumer's judgment about purchase experiences and services. Although one of the aspects includes the individual's desire response, the main aspect of satisfaction also involves the emotional response for the evaluation of experiences or services. Ahn and Back (2019) demonstrated that customer satisfaction is rarely understood as an emotional response; satisfaction is described as the feeling an individual generated from comparing expected and actual experiences. According to Bowen and Chen (2015), satisfaction refers to the emotional state of customers after experiencing products. However, Cong (2016) argued that satisfaction should be separate from emotional reactions, which can be understood as feeling responses produced by consumers during the process of product or service consumption. Therefore, customer satisfaction is an emotional reaction and evaluation of a customer to service and purchase experiences.

2.4.1 Importance of customer satisfaction

In the cruise sector, Brida, Bukstein, and Tealde (2015) investigated the motivation of customers with regard to luxury cruise ships. The results showed that satisfied passengers contribute positive comments on cruise experiences, which increases customer loyalty. Han and Hyun (2018) demonstrated that consumers will travel to a cruise destination again because of high level of satisfaction gained on a previous cruise experience. They suggested that the evaluation of satisfaction regarding luxury cruise ships focusses on whether passengers have repurchased and recommended intention or not. The repurchase intention of cruise passengers depends on the level of satisfaction with their cruise experiences (Bodet et al., 2017). Bowen and Chen (2015) argued that the level of customer satisfaction depends on consumers' perceptions of the safety, service quality, and experience of luxury cruise ships. Service quality and valuable experiences are the key determinants that increase the level of customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships (Poh & Cheng, 2017). According to Pinnock (2014), the evaluation standards of customer satisfaction should include employee service quality, entertainment facilities, food and beverages, and accommodation on the luxury cruise ship. Brida and Coletti (2012) believed that ensuring consumer satisfaction has significantly influenced the development of cruise companies, and the tourism industry of the port destination, as cruise companies are able to provide cruise products that can meet guest expectations through understanding the influences on customer satisfaction. Rychalski and Hudson (2017) pointed out that consumer satisfaction enhances customer loyalty and the intention to

recommend a cruise. The higher level of customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty which contributes to increasing companies' performance (Fan & Hsu, 2014). Travellers with a high level of satisfaction are willing to express positive comments which contribute to the word-of-mouth marketing of the cruise ship in the cruise market (Han et al., 2019).

2.5   Definition of customer dissatisfaction

Consumer dissatisfaction is defined as consumers' production of negative feelings or emotions about a product or service which results in disappointment (Han & Hyun, 2018). Customers' negative feelings of luxury cruise ships are generally affected by two factors: first, consumers are unsatisfied with intangible services; second, consumers may be dissatisfied by tangible products. Bahja, Cobanoglu, Berezina and Lusby (2019) identified different reactions of customers who were dissatisfied with luxury cruise ships. They pointed out that customers who do not present their dissatisfaction may switch to a new cruise company; dissatisfied customers may also complain by providing negative word-of-mouth, or fill in forms or provide written advice to an organisation in order to make it better. Consumers' complaint behaviour refers to the expression of consumers' dissatisfaction with the service or products (Sparks & Bradley, 2014). McGraw, Warren, and Kan (2015) identified negative comments as a way of expressing dissatisfaction with others. Au et al. (2014) suggested that most dissatisfied customers who have had a luxury cruise experiences are likely to express negative comments to others, instead of providing complaints to the organisations involved. Consumers' comments can influence a company's reputation by spreading positive or negative opinions, especially in the hospitality industry (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015).

2.5.1   Importance of customer dissatisfaction

Customers express dissatisfaction or negative comments towards luxury cruise ships because their expectation cannot be fulfilled (Fernandes & Fernandes, 2018). Understanding dissatisfaction is importance for cruise providers. Negative customer comments play a vital role in the management of the tourism industry (Au et al., 2014). Adverse comments from customers have a negative impact on the reputation and image of luxury cruise products (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). For example, online, negative comments may affect customers' choice of a luxury cruise product, and an increasing number of customers use social media to search for information about luxury cruise products (Bahja et al., 2019). According to Sparks and Browning (2010), although customer dissatisfaction may have a negative impact on cruise providers, these

complaints are useful to improve service quality. They pointed out that dissatisfaction can be used for service recovery, and they also suggested that negative reviews are useful information which could encourage improvement in the management of cruise companies. If the complaints are able to be correctly addressed, these negative comments may play a vital role in the enhancement of customer loyalty (Berezina et al., 2016). Additionally, dissatisfied passengers can provide negative word-of-mouth about cruise products that have a damaging influence on existing and potential buyers (Au et al., 2014). Sparks and Bradley (2014) proposed that consumers are more likely to be affected by negative comments in their decision-making process, particularly in the hospitality industry. Travellers prefer to consult other tourists' travelling experiences when they make a tourism decision (Han & Hyun, 2018).

2.5.2 Demographics of complaints

Li et al.'s (2013) study relating to the complaint behaviour of customers regarding hotels showed that there are many factors such as age, gender, and education level that influence consumers' reaction to a dissatisfying experience. In the hospitality and tourism industry, the younger aged consumers normally exhibit complaint behaviour when they encounter dissatisfying experiences (Dimache & Wondirad, 2016). Younger people may be faced with more stressful lives than older consumers (Li et al., 2013). Au et al. (2014) argued that word-of-mouth complainers tend to be younger aged because they have children which may lead them to having less patience. In regard to education level, they concluded that consumers who complain about a dissatisfying experience have higher degrees than non-complainers. Consumers who have higher levels of education are aware of consumer rights and understand how to seek redress when they feel dissatisfied (Cong, 2016).

2.6 The development of social media in tourism studies

Traditionally, travel agencies played a leading role in tourists' decision-making processes and information acquisition before the advent of the internet (Amaral & Tiago, 2014). However, the advent of the digital age and social media has had a large impact on customer behaviour in the tourism and hospitality industry (Bahja et al., 2019). Social media is defined as the tools and platforms based on the internet that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives (Li et al., 2013). Material can be presented in various forms, including text, images, music, and video (Hudson & Thal, 2013). In this context, travellers prefer to access travel information online, compared to using traditional resources (Wilson, Murphy, & Fierro, 2012). Tourists can avoid

traditional packaged tourism and choose to travel on a route and to a destination based on personal preference and the suggestions of other people (McGraw et al., 2015).

Li et al. (2013) explored the influence of customer satisfaction on hotels through online review analysis, and the study showed that social media plays a significant role in tourists' decision-making processes in regard to the hospitality industry. They also point out that tourists can share their travel experience through pictures, text, and video on social media. Online customer interaction is a good way to obtain positive or negative opinion about products or services (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Additionally, feedback platforms on the internet, including Booking.com and TripAdvisor, also contribute to the acquisition of travellers' statements (Sparks & Browning, 2010). These online platforms encourage tourists to express their comments about tourism products, such as accommodation, food and beverage, and flights (Berezina et al., 2016). Tourism companies are able to understand customers' perspectives through online reviews from internet platforms, which can enhance customer satisfaction and company reputation (Li et al., 2013).

According to Sparks and Browning (2010), negative reviews play a vital role in the management of a company, since understanding online complaints promotes higher quality services and develops effective strategies in order to deal with complaints. The purpose of a negative ranking is to draw attention to a problem; to vent negative emotions, provide advice to others, or encourage companies to improve their services or products (Verhagen, Nauta, & Feldberg, 2013). The negative and positive rankings obtained from customer reviews affect potential customer decision-making and purchase intentions about products or services. The CLIA (2016) report showed that online reviews influence customers' decision intentions to a considerable extent when they choose a luxury cruise ship for the first time. Customers prefer to choose the top-ranking tourism products on the website (Berezina et al., 2016).

TripAdvisor (www.tripadvisor.com) is one of the most popular tourism websites (Li et al., 2013). According to Hudson and Thal (2013), TripAdvisor has become one of the main platforms for tourists to share information. They also point out that people can share and communicate their experience with other users through the website. There are five traveller rating categories for reviews on TripAdvisor, namely excellent, good, average, poor and terrible. The comments on TripAdvisor provide useful information for other customers which may affect their decisions, especially in regard to negative comments (Poh & Cheng, 2017). Cruise providers also benefit from TripAdvisor's website, since

they can identify the causes of customer dissatisfaction from the customers' perspectives (Bahja et al., 2019). Tourism products are recognised as intangible experience products which are difficult to evaluate as good or bad (Berezina et al., 2016). TripAdvisor provides the opportunity for customers to evaluate other customers' experiences. Au et al. (2014) suggested that TripAdvisor is an important source for collecting information, comments, and complaints in the hospitality industry. TripAdvisor is one of the platforms used for research. Online comments on TripAdvisor provide a powerful database that can be used in the improvement of companies' products and in research (Poh & Cheng, 2017). Providers or managers in the hospitality industry can enhance service quality through understanding customers' perspectives (Dimache & Wondirad, 2016).

2.7 Summary

This chapter reviewed literature relating to customers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. The chapter began by explaining the definition and history of luxury cruise ships. Previous studies on luxury cruise ships were discussed. After that, the definition and importance of customer satisfaction and customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships were presented in the literature review. Studies show that cruise providers and managers should pay attention to enhancing customer satisfaction and avoiding customers' complaints. Understanding the factors affecting customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships produces positive influences on cruise management. In addition, customer dissatisfaction has a negative impact on the reputation of luxury cruise ships. Furthermore, people like to share their experiences on the internet through social media, especially in regard to the tourism and hospitality industry. TripAdvisor is one of the most popular tourism websites and it is a good online source from which to gain customers' perceptions for research purposes. The next chapter introduces the research methodology.

Chapter 3 Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in this dissertation. The paradigm employed in this dissertation is introduced, along with the research philosophy. After that, the researcher explains the qualitative methodology used. Then the content analysis method is introduced. Finally, the process of data analysis is introduced.

3.2 Research paradigm

According to Schlegel (2015), a research paradigm is an established model accepted by the majority of a group in the field of scientific research. The design and implementation of research is based on conceptual models or reference frameworks that researchers use for reasoning and observation. These conceptual models or frameworks are called paradigms (Bryman, 2012). Understanding research paradigms contributes to the identification of the methodology and methods applied in research (Gray, 2014).

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) argued that different paradigms should be used for a comprehensive understanding of a problem due to the complexity of social phenomena. Gray (2014) claimed that a research paradigm can be one of four main categories, positivism, post-positivism, constructivism and interpretivism. Positivism holds that the objective facts verified by scientific methods, rather than the conclusions based on previous experience and individual experience, are true and effective standards for measuring things and theories (Scotland, 2012). Post-positivism holds that the combination of practical observation and logical reasoning leads to rational inference (Gray, 2014). Schlegel (2015) considered that post-positivism advocates that science is about uncertainties and contingencies, and tries to understand social phenomena by exploring these contingencies. Constructivism assumes that knowledge is based on personal experience, and learning is not a simple accumulation, but an active construction process (Saunders, Thornhill, & Lewis, 2019). Interpretivism refers to the understanding of human behaviour, which is the subjective meaning of social action (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

A paradigm is based on two philosophical assumptions, ontology and epistemology. Ontology refers to knowledge of being; it can be understood as the nature of what things are, and consists of two categories namely realism and relativism (Gray, 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) assumed that the realist ontology is based on the social world which

is composed of objective truth. The relativist ontology advocates that the real world is the outputs of human interpretation of different behaviours and situations; that is, the truth of the real world is constructed subjectively by human thought rather than being objective and unique (Saunders et al., 2019).

Epistemology is defined as ways of understanding the world; it emphasises how human beings view the world, and different types of epistemology include objectivism, subjectivism, and constructivism (Hofmann, 2010). Objectivism in research emphasises the discovery of objective facts which are not influenced by researchers' positions (Hofmann, 2010). The constructivist epistemology represents how researchers get involved in research process, such that findings are constructed by researchers, not discovered (Gray, 2014; Scotland, 2012). The subjectivist epistemology advocates that the study of research questions is based on the experience and perspectives of human beings, and researchers should understand and interpret these meanings through a scientific approach and scientific words (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The next section explains the paradigm which is applied in this research.

3.2.1 Interpretivism

The various ontological and epistemological positions affect the perspectives of research paradigms (Scotland, 2012). According to the ontological and epistemological stance of this study, this research follows interpretivism as a research paradigm. Saunders et al. (2019) stated that interpretivism emphasises the difference between human beings and objects, as humans can construct meanings. Interpretivism holds that there is no absolute objectivity, and that the world is constructed through the interaction of individuals (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Scotland, 2012). Interpretivist research aims to construct different interpretations and understandings about the social world from the different viewpoints of human groups (Saunders et al., 2019). The interpretive paradigm is mainly used in qualitative methodology research which involves interpretive descriptive research, narrative inquiry and case study (Gray, 2014).

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the interpretive paradigm has dominated in leisure and tourism research studies. The researcher should understand that different concepts, ideas and languages may affect their cognition of the social phenomena studied. Since humans and human groups are variable, they have different cultural backgrounds, and there is no objective fact that remains unchanged (Ilgar, 2019). In this study, the purpose of this dissertation is to identify the factors influencing customer satisfaction and

dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships through online review analysis. The research question asks: What factors affect customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction of luxury cruise ships? Passengers with different cultural backgrounds may have different views on the cruise experience they expect. This study needs to explore different customers' perceptions of cruise experiences and understand the factors affecting customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. The interpretive paradigm is highly appropriate for this dissertation research, as this paradigm could help the researcher understand and interpret different customers' perceptions of luxury cruise ships experiences.

3.3   Quantitative and qualitative methodology

Research methodology includes quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). According to Bryman (2012), an appropriate research methodology contributes to better-answered research questions. Quantitative research usually involves collecting data and converting it into digital data for calculation and drawing conclusions (Bryman, 2012). It is often used to verify a theoretical hypothesis or explore social phenomena through observation, experiment, investigation, statistics and other methods (Bengtsson, 2016).

Qualitative research is a broad field of research that uses unstructured data collection methods such as observation, interview, survey and documentation to find meanings in people's understanding of the world (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). According to Schlegel (2015), qualitative research is a process of mutual interaction and understanding. A researcher's understanding of a research problem depends on the interaction with the research phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2019). In addition, qualitative research emphasises understanding the meaning of human behaviour and viewpoints on things from the perspective of participants (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Compared with quantitative research, which is mainly based on numerical data, patterns and graphics, most qualitative research explores the phenomenon through text description, and findings are rarely reported by complex statistical methods (Gray, 2014). Furthermore, Finn, Elliott-White and Walton (2000), who studied research methods in the tourism field, assumed that qualitative research involves multiple methods, such as observation and interview, to obtain detailed narratives which contribute to the exploring and understanding of the research phenomenon. They also claim that qualitative research can break through the bottleneck which arises in quantitative research on topics when some dimensions are difficult to quantify. Through the interpretation of data collected, researchers can

understand "what" and answer "why" to obtain an understanding of a question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This study adopted a qualitative method. In this dissertation, the purpose is to discuss satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships based on the analysis of online review. The data analysis of this study aims to explore individual experiences using word analysis rather than numerical data. Qualitative methodology is appropriate for understanding and explaining the luxury cruise experiences of customers through interpreting online texts. The choices of quantitative and qualitative are rooted in the paradigms applied to the research and the purpose of research (Ilgar, 2019). The paradigm of this dissertation is interpretivism, and this dissertation aims to explore customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships by analysing customers' perspectives. Considering this research paradigm and purpose, this research adopted a qualitative research methodology which is related to the interpretive paradigm. The next section explains the sampling and data collection process.

3.4   Secondary data

The definition of secondary data is data that is collected from other researchers or sources such as governments and research institutions (Mason & McBride, 2014). Although the secondary data may not be suitable for all types of research questions and projects, there are several advantages of using secondary data. Using secondary data is an economical method which could save time and money (Saunders et al., 2019). In addition, secondary data has permanence, which means it can be used easily by other researchers (Denscombe, 2007). According to Saunders et al. (2019), secondary data is normally employed in interpretational and descriptive research. They generate three main classifications for secondary data, namely documentary, survey, and multiple source. Documentary secondary data includes text data and non-text data. For example, text materials include organisations' databases, communications, web comments, newspapers and diaries. The non-text data includes media accounts, voice or video recordings, and images (Saunders et al., 2019). The research question and objectives could determine the types of secondary data required (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004).

TripAdvisor is a popular tourism website worldwide; upon this website tourists can reserve hotels, restaurants, attractions, or use to plan their trip, and share travelling experiences (Poh & Cheng, 2017). Li et al. (2013) suggested that the TripAdvisor website is a good source to use for studies. The comments on the website provide databases of

customer judgments of their experiences (Poh, & Cheng, 2017). The website contributes to identifying customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as the online comments reflect common reasons why customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with their experiences. Hence, online comments can be used as research sample. The data for this research was collected from customers' comments regarding luxury cruise ships on TripAdvisor. In this dissertation, TripAdvisor was used for data collection, which is considered to be secondary data. This dissertation focusses on customers' responses in relation to luxury cruise experiences; web comments in documentary secondary data can be used so that researchers can find the secondary data.

3.5   Population and sampling

A population is defined as a set containing all the individuals studied (Gray, 2014). There are thousands of results when searching for "luxury cruise ship" on TripAdvisor. Searching for luxury cruise ships on TripAdvisor indicates there are 29 international cruise companies in total. The population of research is 29 representative luxury cruise companies (see Table 1). According to the purpose of this research, the criterion defining a luxury cruise ship is "*International cruise lines*". The definition of a luxury cruise ship is a floating five-star resort, providing high-quality services and plenty of entertainment facilities, and high expenses (Hwang & Han, 2014; Hyun & Han, 2015; Poh & Cheng, 2017). Comparing the definition of luxury cruise ships and other forms of cruise products on TripAdvisor, such as day cruise, dinner cruise and sailing cruise, it can be seen that those types of cruise ships have distance restrictions, and generally cruise offshore, or on inland rivers, while international cruise ships have a wider range, undertake more international travel, and offer diversified entertainment facilities. Therefore, the criterion of *"international cruise lines"* is more appropriate for answering the research questions in this dissertation.

Table 1. Luxury cruise lines

	Cruise line	No. of ships	No. of comments (1/8/19 to 31/8/19)		Cruise line	No. of ships	No. of comments (1/8/19 to 31/8/19)
1	Norwegian (NCL) Cruise Line	17	953	16	MSC Cruises	18	419
2	Princess Cruises	19	512	17	Oceania Cruises	6	111

3	Royal Caribbean International	26	1248	18	Paul Gauguin Cruises	1	10
4	Ama-Waterways	7	0	19	Ponant	3	19
5	Avalon Waterways	12	64	20	Regent Seven Seas Cruises	5	78
6	Azamara Club Cruise	3	54	21	Scenic	12	10
7	Carnival Cruise Line	27	808	22	Seabourn Cruise Line	5	30
8	Celebrity Cruises	14	508	23	Silversea Cruise	10	71
9	Celestyal Cruises	1	13	24	Viking Ocean Cruises	6	134
10	Costa Cruises	14	45	25	Windstar Cruises	6	54
11	Crystal Cruises	5	38	26	U River Cruise	1	0
12	Cunard Lines	3	131	27	Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection	10	76
13	Disney Cruise Line	4	172	28	Viking Cruise Line	56	175
14	Holland America Line	15	366	29	SeaDream Yacht Club Cruises	2	0
15	Hurtigruten	10	7				

A sample is defined as a part of the population observed or investigated in the study (Gray, 2014). According to Grant and Giddings (2002), collecting data from the entire population is difficult for researchers because of limited budget and time. Selecting a sample is important step for research study. The sample which can represent the entire population not only enables the researcher to answer the research question, but also could save time and cost (Saunders et al., 2019). Saunders et al. (2019) stated that sampling techniques could be separated into two types: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is mainly used in qualitative research (Bengtsson, 2016).

Non-probability sampling can be divided into four types: quota, purposive, volunteer and haphazard (Gray, 2014). Purposive sampling is based on the subjective judgment of researchers (Scotland, 2012). Researchers using purposive sampling technique can choose useful information provided by data collected to answer the research question or objectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A suitable sampling technique depends on the purpose of the research and research objectives (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). This research aims to find out the factors influencing satisfied and dissatisfied comments, using qualitative data. Purposive sampling technique can help researchers find the data that is most useful for this research. Hence, purposive sampling technique was used in sample collection of this research.

3.6   Data collection

According to TripAdvisor, there are five different traveller ratings, namely excellent, very good, average, poor and terrible. This research aims to explore the factors influencing satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships, so a criterion for the sample is that the researcher collects 'excellent' and 'terrible' comments from passengers' reviews on TripAdvisor. The 'excellent' ranking means that customers are satisfied, while the 'terrible' ranking means they are dissatisfied. The comments were collected from TripAdvisor from 1st August 2019 to 31st August 2019. As this study adopted purposive sampling, the data collection was conducted in a timely and cost-effective manner (Scotland, 2012). Some comments were not collected as they did not describe their cruise experiences. After looking at comments, 570 effective comments were selected from 29 international cruise companies, including positive reviews and negative reviews. The next section introduces the method of data analysis.

3.7   Data analysis method

According to Hofmann (2010), content analysis is an approach that converts the written and non-quantitative information of communication value in communication media into quantitative data, and then establishes meaningful categories to interpret the content, and analyse the meaning of the information based on it. The main points of content analysis are that it aims to interpret the essential facts of the research phenomenon, and expose the hidden information content contained in data collected (Shannon, 2005).

Content analysis includes quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Quantitative analysis focusses on the frequency of words or categories that reflect specific text content, and draws a conclusion based on the frequency or relative

frequency (Bengtsson, 2016; Saunders et al., 2019). Even if a particular word appears only once or not at all, qualitative content analysis can draw certain conclusions. In qualitative content analysis, researchers should further study the relationship between the concepts, study words or categories that often appear before and after key words (Bengtsson, 2016).

The advantages of content analysis are based on the premise of qualitative research, in order to find out the qualitative characteristics that can reflect the particular essence of a text, and convert it into quantitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In addition, the content analysis method can achieve a deeper, more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the "quality" reflected in the text, and obtain information that is difficult to find through a coding process (Scotland, 2012). In the research reported in this dissertation, content analysis has been employed as the research method. Manual coding has been used to count how many times certain words or comments were written about the cruise ship experience.

3.7.1 Data analysis

According to Bengtsson (2016), the data analysis process of content analysis mainly involves coding and categories. There are four steps: open coding, categorisation, replicated coding, and summarising.

Step 1: Open coding

Researchers break up the text into small units, such as key words, phrases, sentences or themes, and encode the text manually or with the help of software (Shannon, 2005). In the present research, the comments collected from TripAdvisor were coded manually, each containing one or more descriptive codes. These codes were related to the research objective, satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Step 2: Categorisation

After identifying coding, some categories were created from online comments, including onboard activities, and entertainment. For example, according to the comments collected, descriptive codes, like *excellent performances* and *adequate comedians,* were considered to be in the entertainment category. Other categories were based on the existing categories in TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor provides the opportunity for passengers to rank their cruise experiences according to different factors: cabin, dining, service, pool and sundecks. Hence, the categories were identified: as cabin, dining, service, pool and sundecks,

onboard activities, and entertainment. Each category can have many similar codes which were combined together.

Table 2. The factors influencing customers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships

	Factors	**Count**
1	Cabin	162
2	Service	379
3	Pool and sundecks	8
4	Onboard activities	118
5	Dining	294
6	Entertainment	111

Step 3: Replicated coding

Researchers might make mistakes in the data analysis process (Bengtsson, 2016). Researchers' physical and mental states, personal preferences or other reasons can lead to mistakes. In order to ensure research accuracy, step one and step two should be repeated (Bengtsson, 2016). Researchers should check all codes that have been covered by categories. One category should contain all similar codes. Compared with the primary result, there were no more new codes arising from step 3.

Step 4: Summarising

After establishing the categories, a quantitative approach was used to count coding frequency. The result was displayed by a table that summarised the frequency and percentage of each category. The findings of this content analysis built a frame based on the categories established and summarised the main points of the data. However, there is a danger that researchers may present their own views and ignore the data themselves in the process of summarising it (Scotland, 2012). Therefore, the researcher used direct quotations from the qualitative data to explain the findings.

3.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the research philosophy, methodology and method. This research adopted the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology. The TripAdvisor website was used as secondary data source. Purposive sampling was a suitable sampling technique for this research. 570 comments were collected from reviews of 29 international cruise companies on TripAdvisor. Content analysis was applied as the data analysis approach in this research. The categories were presented as results. Chapter four describes and discusses the findings arising from the analysis of the 570 comments.

Chapter 4 Findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to summarise the findings arising from the analysis of the data and discusses the results. The first section identifies important factors affecting satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. The frequency and percentage of the main influences and other influences are presented in tables. The subsequent sections illustrate the main factors determining customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships based on the categories that have been identified.

4.2 TripAdvisor categories

This section shows the TripAdvisor categories based on 'excellent' and 'terrible' comments, including cabin, service, dining, activities, entertainment, and pool and sundecks. The comments were collected from TripAdvisor from 1st August 2019 to 31st August 2019.

Table 3. TripAdvisor categories of luxury cruise ships

	'Excellent'		'Terrible'	
Categories	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Cabin	141	15.6%	21	12.4%
Service	301	33.4%	78	45.9%
Dining	240	26.6%	54	31.8%
Activities	112	12.5%	6	3.5%
Entertainment	104	11.5%	7	4.1%
Pool and sundecks	4	0.4%	4	2.3%

In Table 3, the findings show the frequency and percentage of comments on TripAdvisor appearing in the various categories. Cabin, service and dining were the top three categories influencing customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Service was the most important factor affecting satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Only few passengers mentioned the pool and sundecks category, in

either 'excellent' or 'terrible' reviews. The next section discusses the major factors affecting satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

4.3 Customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships

This section discusses the factors affecting customer satisfaction of luxury cruise ships. Based on Table 3, the factors of customer satisfaction are identified in each category. These categories were cabin, service, dining, activities, entertainment, and pool and sundecks.

Table 4. The categories of customer satisfaction

	'Excellent' comments		
Categories	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Ranking**
Service	301	33.4%	1
Dining	240	26.6%	2
Cabin	141	15.6%	3
Activities	112	12.5%	4
Entertainment	104	11.5%	5
Pool and sundecks	4	0.4%	6

Table 4 shows that most passengers mentioned service and dining categories in their comments, accounting for 33.4% and 26.6% of 'excellent' comments respectively. 15.6% of passengers mentioned the cabin category in 'excellent' comments. The percentage of activities category 'excellent' comments were similar to that for the entertainment category, at 12.5% and 11.5% respectively. The factors related to pool and sundecks were rarely mentioned in the 'excellent' comments, at 0.4%. This research will not concentrate on pool and sundecks categories due to the low response rate.

4.3.1 Service

According to Table 4, a high percentage of passengers mentioned the service category in 'excellent' comments. After analysing the 'excellent' comments, the factors affecting

customer satisfaction in relation to service of luxury cruise ships were recognised as empathy and responsiveness.

Table 5. Factors influencing customer satisfaction with service on luxury cruise ships

Category	Service	
Factors	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Empathy	216	71.8%
Responsiveness	85	28.2%

Table 5 shows that passengers paid great attention to empathy (71.8%). The factor of responsiveness accounted for 28.2% of the service category.

4.3.1.1 Empathy

Table 5 shows that many customers were satisfied with staff performance. A number of 'excellent' reviews emphasised the staff's behaviour and attitude towards customers. The words they mentioned most in their comments included 'positive attitude', 'friendly', and 'professional'. Following are three examples from customer comments on TripAdvisor:

> *"The staff was absolutely wonderful. They were very friendly and personable. Both my husband and myself had several acupuncture treatments in the spa performed by an employee. She was amazing. Our cruise was so relaxing and we would not have changed anything. The staff was truly the best!" (Alaska, couple)*

> *"The crew on the ship were wonderful. Our staff were kind and gracious. They always remembered our names and were anxious to serve us in whatever way they could." (Central America, friends)*

> *"The staff are wonderful, friendly and very professional in every aspect. The bartenders and staff are amazing at remembering all of our names. Made it very personal." (Caribbean, solo)*

Previous studies have shown that the attitudes of staff toward customers directly affects customer satisfaction (Ahola et al., 2015; Pino & Peluso, 2018; Fernandes & Fernandes, 2018). Employees play a significant role in improving customer satisfaction, since the interaction between customers and employees is an essential process in service industries (Cheng et al., 2019). Table 5 shows that the satisfaction of customers with their cruise

experiences is determined by the factors related to staff, such as responsiveness, confidence, and empathy. Employees with positive attitudes can make customers feel respected, which enhances customers' expectations. In addition, Souri (2017) revealed that the level of customer satisfaction depends on customers' perceptions of employees. Customers feel welcome when they are serviced by friendly employees, which contributes to the expression of positive comments (Souri, 2017).

In this study, the findings showed that passengers were satisfied with the attitude and behaviour of employees. These characteristics of employees, such as positive attitude, friendly and personalization, can increase the level of satisfaction of luxury cruise passengers. Furthermore, personalisation is recognised as one of the important factors that influence how employees service customers. According to Li et al. (2013), personalisation in service industries means that the behaviour of employees in the service process satisfies guests' emotional requirements through caring and emotional care. The comments of satisfied passengers also indicated that professional employees are able to remember customers' names and other personal information, which promotes high levels of satisfaction for customers. The behaviour of these employees makes customers feel important.

4.3.1.2 Responsiveness

Table 5 shows that 28.2% of 'excellent' comments were concerned with responsiveness and this had an influence on passenger satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. The research showed the key words related to responsiveness that were frequently mentioned in customer reviews were identified as 'reception service', 'service efficient', and 'quality'. Following are three examples from the 'excellent' comments section on TripAdvisor:

> *"The adventure was defined from by arrival at the car park. Very efficient and professionally run. Parking was a breeze, check in and security were painless, airports take note, and boarding the ship was well controlled and flowed in a calm manner. No rush, no crush!"*
> *(South America, couple)*

> *"We will definitely be travelling from here again, everything was seamless and superb first class service. Quick check in and embarkation. We were on the ship by 11.30am and departed at 3.30pm. So no travelling all day to get to the cruise port.......fantastic. The service on board ship in every department was 5 star as always."*
> *(Missouri, couple)*

"Arrived in parking was so easy, right opposite the cruise terminal, was secure with fencing all around and security on site. Booked the parking and found them very efficient. There is also vans going around collecting your bags for you so you do not have to haul them on board yourself. Your bags are waiting for you outside your cabin. Really excellent service. The checking in was equally efficient and we sailed through with no problem and were on board within 25 mins." (United States, family)

The findings of this research indicated that effective check in/out service had a positive impact on customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Poh and Cheng (2017) noted that reception services are considered to be an important factor in meeting customers' expectations. From the findings of this research, the factor of responsiveness was an influence on customer satisfaction. Passengers were satisfied with high-quality service, with the phrases that described their services being 'top class', '5 star', and 'superb first class'. It is important to note that customer satisfaction would be generated by high-quality and efficient customer service (Rychalski & Hudson, 2017). According to the comments, customers were satisfied with the service because of the quick check in/out process, the collection of luggage, and other details of the services, and they were satisfied overall with the effective service quality.

Based on the above discussion, the main findings from Table 5 show that staff performance was given more attention in regard to customer satisfaction than the factor of customer service. However, Onwezen et al. (2014) argued that high-quality customer service is a key factor influencing customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Compared with the factor of staff performance, customer service had a less important role but was satisfactory to customers. Therefore, passengers were satisfied with the factors of staff performance and high-quality customer service.

4.3.2 Dining

Dining had an influence on passenger satisfaction of luxury cruise ships (see Table 4). According to the comments from TripAdvisor, words including 'food choice', 'food quality', 'food service', and 'restaurant environment', were identified as the factors affecting customer satisfaction of dining experiences.

Table 6. Factors influencing customer satisfaction with dining on luxury cruise ships

Category	Dining

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Food quality	155	64.5%
Food choice	50	20.8%
Food service	25	10.4%
Environment	10	4.3%

Table 6 shows that 64.5% of 'excellent' comments emphasised the importance of food quality. Next, food choice was the second most important influence on guest satisfaction, at 20.8%. 10.4% of passengers were satisfied with food service. The factors of restaurant environment accounted for 4.3% of 'excellent' comments.

4.3.2.1 Food quality

As shown in Table 6, food quality had the most influence on customer satisfaction with a luxury cruise ship in the dining category. The positive comments show that high-quality food satisfied customers' expectation of dining on a luxury cruise ship. Following are three examples of comments selected from TripAdvisor that can explain the food quality factors:

> *"The dining is superb with a highly professional and caring team at every level. We stuck to the main fare but there is a wide variety of high quality restaurants on board that will test the food critic. The food is always well presented and the dining room staff very professional."* (Mediterranean, family)

> *"The food was excellent - the Cafe offers an amazing array of foods. We chose to eat most of our breakfast and evening meals in the restaurant - booking for dinner is recommended."* (Caribbean, friends)

> *"All the meals were wonderful. We dined at most of the specialty restaurants, an animated set of characters projected from above onto your plate and place, which was an amusing gimmick to accompany a decent meal."* (Canada, couple)

In this research, food quality had the strongest impact on customer satisfaction with dining experiences. From the comments, satisfied customers used the words 'excellent', 'well presented', and 'delicious', to describe food quality. Li et al. (2013) found that high-

quality food can enhance customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Food quality is the key aspect of satisfaction when customers evaluate experiences after purchase (Pinnock, 2014). High-quality food is recognised as the most important factor affecting customer satisfaction (Han et al., 2019). The results of the study showed that food quality was the main factor in regard to dining experiences influencing customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

4.3.2.2   Food choice

Table 6 shows that cruise customers also had an expectation about the factor of food choice onboard. The comments reflected that customers were satisfied with the options for food and restaurants. Following are three examples of comments selected from TripAdvisor that can explain factors influencing food choice:

> *"Food seems to be an update of sushi and noodle bar, featuring ethnic fusion menu on tablet. First we went for lunch, and then went back for dinner, so we must have enjoyed what we ordered. We had potstickers, tempura shrimp roll of sort, "Yakisoba" (not what one would expect at all), bakalava* [sic] *with passion fruit sauce, and lemon tea." (Mexico, couple)*

> *"Pluses include the specialty restaurants, which are all superb, and the Oceanview Cafe Buffet, which has an incredible selection of delicious food for every meal." (Bahamas, family)*

> *"There was a variety of food choices. You could eat in the dining room, the lido deck (cafeteria) or the Dive In, by the pool. There are also three restaurants that require reservations and are not included in your cruise cost but are worth it for the food." (Mexico, friends)*

The multiple food choices contribute to meeting the requirements of different customers (Bahja et al., 2019). Customers have different dietary habits, and wider food choices can increase the expectation of customers (Cong, 2016). These findings support the view that food choice had a positive impact on customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Han and Hyun (2018) studied cruise satisfaction, and they mentioned that the food delivery process with good service is identified as a significant factor affecting customer satisfaction. However, Table 6 shows the factor of food service in the dining process had little impact on customer satisfaction of luxury cruise ships (10.4% of 'excellent' comments in the dining category). As previous studies have noted, an excellent dining environment also has a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Onwezen et al., 2014; Poh & Cheng, 2017; Souri, 2017). However, the impacts of the dining environment and

food service on customer satisfaction with dining experiences were not important in this study.

4.3.3 Activities

From Table 4, it can be seen that 12.5% of 'excellent' comments stated that the level of customer satisfaction of luxury cruise ships was affected by activities, including onboard activities and off-board/shore excursions. Factors related to the activity category that affected customer satisfaction were considered to be a variety of onboard activities and well-organised off-board excursions.

Table 7. Factors influencing customer satisfaction with activities on luxury cruise ships

Category	Activities	
Factors	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Well-organised off-board excursions	75	67.0%
A variety of onboard activities	37	33.0%

According to Table 7, 67.0% of passengers' 'excellent' comments in the activities category showed satisfaction with off-board excursions. 33.0% of 'excellent' comments mentioned in the activities category were satisfied with a variety of onboard activities. Table 7 shows that well-organised off-board excursions were the main factor affecting customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. A variety of onboard activities also had an influence on customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

4.3.3.1 Onboard activities

Although satisfied customers mentioned onboard activities in their comments (see Table 7), the factor of onboard activities had less influence than excursions on customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Following are three examples of comments selected from TripAdvisor that can explain the onboard activities factors:

> *"We went to dance class, and were very pleased we did. Both performances were excellent, well produced and executed, and both troops were amazingly talented and skilled. Probably they were the best shows we've seen onboard. I don't know how they can stage such*

impressive productions at sea. Highly recommended." (Arizona, friends)

"Our family including two teenagers participated in many activities offered poolside. I used the gym regularly which was spacious and clean with plenty of equipment to use. The evening shows are entertaining and high quality. Don't miss them." (Hawaii, family)

"Excursions were amazing we booked them through the ship and the excursion team were happy to advise us on the best excursions for us and even advise us on things to see in the ports when we opted not to go on an excursion, tour guides were very knowledgeable and answered any questions the group had." (Caribbean, couple)

Some passengers enjoyed a variety of onboard activities, as the onboard activities met the different needs of customer groups. From the 'excellent' comments, the passengers mentioned there were many activities tailored for teenagers such as a skydiving simulator, mini golf, video gaming, roller skating, and basketball. Satisfied passengers got lots of fun from the large amount of activities, especially family groups, since some onboard activities were suitable for children. Guests can be attracted by a variety of onboard activities, such as arts classes, barber shop, bowling, and dance classes (Han et al., 2019). However, Table 7 shows that the impact of onboard activities on customer satisfaction was not significant.

4.3.3.2 Well-organised off-board excursions

From Table 7, it can be seen that most passengers emphasised an itinerary of different port destinations in the activities category, accounting for 67.0%. Following are three examples from the 'excellent' comments section on TripAdvisor:

"The itinerary was great. We booked excursions through ship so everything was very smoothly operating, including disembarking - since they gathered excursion groups onboard and disembarked by group. Short walk to the tour bus." (United States, friends)

"The ports of call and excursions offered were excellent. Cruise offers an included shore excursion at each port of call and we went on some of those as well as some optional excursions. We also walked around on our own before or after some of the excursions we took. The train ride and excursion we took was excellent - we got a lot in on a one day trip!" (Pennsylvania, family)

"We highly recommend the excursion and train ride as both were just phenomenal. We did the dogsled excursion and it was the highlight of our trip. The dogs were absolutely wonderful and it is evident how well

they are cared for. Our kids were able to hold puppies that were only a few weeks old!" (Canada, family)

Well-managed shore excursions contributed to satisfy passengers who had expectations of experiencing different port destinations. The comments indicated that passengers were satisfied with well-managed shore excursions. According to previous studies, Pino and Peluso (2018) suggested luxury cruise ships have a function to provide shore excursions for passengers. Sparks and Browning (2010) stated that the itinerary is the determinant factor that motivates customers to choose the cruise. Well-organised excursions can meet passengers' expectations which lead to a high level of customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. The findings support the statement that the factor of well-organised excursions is considered to be an important influence on enhancing cruise vacationers' satisfaction levels (Radic, 2018).

4.3.4 Entertainment

Table 4 shows that 11.5% of passengers were satisfied with entertainment on luxury cruise ships. The results of this study show that satisfied passengers were impressed by excellent programmes. Three examples mentioning entertainment were collected from the 'excellent' comments section on TripAdvisor:

> *"Entertainment was good for this cruise. Comedians were adequate and I was pleasantly surprised with the pianos show (was actually more fun than the comedies). The karaoke was great on this ship with all ages participating and singing along." (California, family)*

> *"Entertainment team were great, there was always something to do at any time during the day. Particularly enjoyed the trivia and the rock orchestra, the show is a highlight not to be missed too." (United Kingdom, couple)*

> *"The entertainment was also excellent. We rated the comedian a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5; he was funny, but not roaring laughter funny. The other acts we rated 5. Excellent singing, dancing, and acrobatics." (Alaska, friends)*

The findings of this study revealed that entertaining and high-quality programmes had a positive impact on customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships (see Table 4). The findings are also supported by other studies (Brida et al., 2013; Chua et al., 2015), and these studies support passengers having entertainment programmes onboard which have the ability to influence customer expectations of luxury cruise travelling. Radic (2018) pointed out that the quality of entertainment programmes is identified as a factor affecting

the level of customer satisfaction. Passengers would feel disappointed if they experienced poor entertainment programmes (Cheng et al., 2019). Although some customers mentioned interesting entertainment in their comments, it had less impact on customer satisfaction than other categories.

4.3.5 Cabin

From Table 3, it can be seen that 15.6% of passengers gave attention to the cabin category. Table 8 shows that the factors relating to the cabin influencing the satisfaction of luxury cruise ships included cleanliness, spaciousness, the bed, balcony, and room facilities.

Table 8. Factors influencing customer satisfaction with cabins on luxury cruise ships

Category	Cabin	
Factors	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Balcony	71	38.8%
Cleanliness	50	27.3%
Spacious cabin	34	18.6%
Comfortable bed	15	8.2%
Room facilities	13	7.1%

From Table 8, it can be seen that the factor of a comfortable bed and room facilities were emphasised as influencing customer satisfaction, respectively accounting for 8.2% and 7.1% of 'excellent' comments. In this research, passengers focused on room amenities such as the shower, sink, TV, and bathtub. Room facilities are identified as an important component in accommodation (Fan & Hsu, 2014). However, Table 8 shows that a comfortable bed and room facilities had less impact on customer satisfaction in comparison to the other three factors. According to Table 8, the results showed that the factors of balcony, cleanliness, and spaciousness were the important influences on customer satisfaction with cabins on luxury cruise ships.

4.3.5.1 Balcony

In Table 8, the main factor related to the cabin affecting customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships is identified as the balcony, accounting for 38.8%. Three examples mentioning the balcony were collected from the 'excellent' comments section on TripAdvisor:

"If you don't want to spend big bucks on the private balcony rooms, I can't recommend the lanai staterooms enough. Wonderful view of the water as it goes by from the sliding glass door (with mirrored glass, so no one can see inside) and the lower promenade deck." (Las Vegas, couple)

"Our cabin, with balcony, was wonderful. The attention given by our cabin crew was outstanding. Each night we would come back to our room and find an animal arranged out of towels. We spent the mornings and some evenings sitting out on the balcony watching the wildlife and looking at the scenery." (Alaska, couple)

"Mid-ship balcony cabin was what I expected, plenty of storage, all our suitcases fit under the bed, water pressure in shower was good, rooms were clean. Nothing spectacular, but was good enough for the 4 of us and wasn't as bad as I thought sharing one room for 4 people for 7 nights. The kids LOVED the bunk beds coming out of the wall/ceiling. Nice to have 2 separate beds for the kids to sleep on." (Australia, family)

Most passengers were satisfied with a cabin with balcony, because passengers living in a cabin with a balcony can enjoy the beautiful view. From the comments, passengers enjoyed the outside 'scenery' and 'the wildlife' which created significant memories of the luxury cruise experience. The results of this study showed that a balcony with a beautiful view could create memorable experiences, contributing to the generation of a high level of customer satisfaction. Room views are recognised as important influences on customer satisfaction (Kasiri et al., 2017). Ahola et al. (2015) stated that memorable experiences are attractive to customers of luxury cruise ships. As the passengers have higher expectations of luxury cruise ships (Chua et al., 2015), the balcony with beautiful scenery had a considerable impact on customer satisfaction.

4.3.5.2 Cleanliness

Table 8 shows that 27.3% of passengers paid attention to the factor of cleanliness. Following are three examples from the 'excellent' comments section on TripAdvisor:

"The cabin was immaculate, the bedding and towels were changed daily, the towels were made into all sorts of animals, which fascinated us all, the cabin was also hoovered and all surfaces wiped down every single day, sometimes twice, I never ever saw a single bug or spider in the whole 2 weeks we were there." (Israel, couple)

"Room had a port hole. There was 3 of us in room and there was plenty of storage and room for very comfortable and clean." (Wisconsin, family)

> *"Butler and room steward were never far from us and constantly cleaned and straightened rooms." (Australia, friend)*

According to the 'excellent' comments, passengers used 'spotless', and 'immaculate' to described their cabins. From the results of this study, the factor of cleanliness was also the important factor for customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Previous studies have noted that room cleanliness plays an important role in increasing the level of customer satisfaction (Kasiri et al., 2017; Rychalski & Hudson, 2017). Chua et al. (2015) supported the view that room cleanliness produces an increase in customer satisfaction. Ponton and Asero (2018) also highlighted the importance of cleanliness to enhance customer satisfaction. Therefore, the factor of cleanliness in cabins also plays a role in improving customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

4.3.5.3 Spacious cabin

The factor of a spacious cabin also had an influence on customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships, at 18.6% (see Table 8). Three examples mentioning a spacious cabin were collected from the 'excellent' comments section on TripAdvisor:

> *"Plenty of room, lots of closet and drawer space, bathroom is plenty big enough. Couch is a little small, but will fit two." (Canada, family)*

> *"The room was huge in cruise ship terms. The shower was as large as in your home and the bathroom had three shelves for storage. This cabin had two twin beds pushed together to form a queen, just under the very large window." (United States, family)*

> *"Room had a port hole. There was 3 of us in room and there was plenty of storage and the room was very comfortable and clean." (Australia, family)*

The comments mentioned that there was plenty of storage room and enough space in the cabin. The findings indicate that a roomy cabin can increase customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. A spacious room could meet different requirements of customers, and that was considered to be an important influence on customer satisfaction (Hana & Hyun, 2017). Ahola et al. (2015) stated that a spacious room was the main concern for customers, especially on long journeys, because customers need more space to keep their own belongings tidy. The factor of the spacious room is beneficial for the enhancement of customer satisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

4.4   Customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships

This section discusses the factors that cause customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. According to Table 9, the findings show that the main influences on customer dissatisfaction were identified as three categories, namely cabin, dining and service.

Table 9. Categories mentioned in comments reflecting dissatisfaction

'Terrible' comments			
Categories	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Ranking**
Service	78	45.9%	1
Dining	54	31.8%	2
Cabin	21	12.4%	3
Entertainment	7	4.1%	4
Pool and sundecks	6	3.5%	5
Activities	4	2.3%	6

Most passengers were dissatisfied with service, accounting for 45.9%. Next, 31.8% of 'terrible' comments mentioned the influence of dining, followed by the cabin at 12.4%. The categories of activities, entertainment, and pool and sundecks had less impact on customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships, at 2.3%, 4.1%, and 3.5% respectively. These categories were rarely mentioned in the customer comments, which will not be discussed in this research. This research focusses on the important influence three categories have regarding customer dissatisfaction – cabin, dining and service. Each category includes the factors that led to customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. The following sections identifies the factors affecting customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships based on these categories.

4.4.1   Service

From Table 9, it can be seen that the category of service was the most frequently mentioned category amongst the 'terrible' comments, at 45.9%. Influences on customer

dissatisfaction with service aboard luxury cruise ships included unhelpful customer service, and rude and unprofessional staff (see Table 10).

Table 10. Factors influencing customer dissatisfaction with service on luxury cruise ships

Category	Service	
Factors	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Unhelpful customer service	53	67.9%
Attitude of staff	25	32.1%

According to Table 10, influences on customer dissatisfaction regarding service aboard luxury cruise ships were identified as the attitude of staff, and unhelpful customer service.

4.4.1.1 Attitude of staff

Table 10 shows that the attitude of staff had an influence on customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships, at 32.1%. Following are three examples collected within the 'terrible' comments section on TripAdvisor:

> *"There was not enough staff in the restaurant and the waiters were run off their feet resulting in very slow service. The management in the restaurant were a waste of time as were the staff on reception. Have been on loads of cruises with different companies and this has to be the worse service we have ever had and it was nothing to do with the waiters but the management." (United Kingdom, family)*

> *"The staff on this cruise is not helpful at all, in fact very rude. They repeatedly left out important information that was needed to leave the ship and when the day came around we were not able to do the things we were anticipating for. I will not be returning to this ship because I found most of the crew rude and had an attitude. I just went down to try and sort issues out & I treated them with much respect, but in return received a condescending attitude." (Caribbean, solo)*

> *"The areas on the ship were not clean, the staff was rude and couldn't be bothered with making the guests feel welcome." (Port Orange, friends)*

The findings showed that poor service experiences led to the dissatisfaction of cruise passengers. From the customers' perspective, passengers were dissatisfied with the rude attitude of staff, because the employees' negative attitudes made the passengers feel disrespected. Previous studies noted that the negative comments of customers are caused by the service attitude of employees (Chua et al., 2015; Sparks & Browning, 2010). The findings also support this statement that the performance of employees has an impact on cruise passengers' experiences (Cruz Ruiz et al., 2018). Customer dissatisfaction was produced by the negative attitude of staff.

4.4.1.2 Unhelpful customer service

From Table 10, it can be seen that the factor of unhelpful customer service was the most important influence on customer dissatisfaction with service aboard luxury cruise ships, at 67.9%. Following are three examples collected from the 'terrible' comments section on Trip Advisor:

> *"Normally I don't feel the need to write reviews but, the customer service on this cruise is not helpful at all, in fact very rude. They repeatedly left out important information that was needed to leave the ship and when the day came around we were not able to do the things we were anticipating for. I will not be returning to this ship because I found most of the crew rude and had an attitude. I just went down to try and sort issues out & I treated them with much respect, but in return received a condescending attitude." (Florida, friends)*

> *"I have tried to contact to present a claim to someone in customer service after and it has been impossible. I received only a very rude and unpolite email." (Iceland, solo)*

> *"Poor Customer Services - as I expect you can guess, we complained about this cruise, both on and off the ship. The only compensation we received was an upgraded drinks package for the final week - which amounted to not very much, two more complimentary 'fine dining' experiences, and a bag of free laundry. When I wrote to customer services on my return I was told that this was more than they would have given me!" (Indiana, couple)*

Additionally, the findings also note the influence of customer service on customer dissatisfaction with service aboard luxury cruise ships. In the 'terrible' comments section, customers complained about customer service. When customers were confronted with issues, the response of some cruise management was irresponsible, or the passengers were ignored or received an uncaring response, showing the cruise management lacked the ability to resolve customer complaints. The findings state that unhelpful customer service

caused customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Hana and Hyun (2017) claimed that passengers' dissatisfaction with cruise experiences results from poor customer service. It is noted that customer service plays a vital role in the influence of customer satisfaction (Maurer & Schaich, 2011). Therefore, unhelpful customer service has a considerable impact on customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

4.4.2 Dining

According to Table 11, the category of dining had an influence on customer dissatisfaction aboard luxury cruise ships. Influences of customer dissatisfaction related to the dining category were identified as food quality, food choice and food service.

Table 11. Factors influencing customer dissatisfaction with dining on luxury cruise ships

Category	Dining	
Factors	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Food quality	34	63.0%
Food service	14	25.9%
Food choice	6	11.1%

The findings show that dissatisfied passengers mentioned the factor of food quality frequently, at 63.0%. The factors of food choice and food service had the impact on customer dissatisfaction aboard luxury cruise ships, accounting for 11.1% and 25.9% of comments respectively.

4.4.2.1 Food quality

The factor of food quality was one of the reasons that caused customer dissatisfaction with the dining experience aboard luxury cruise ships. Following are three examples from the 'terrible' comments section on TripAdvisor:

> *"Fine Dining' a joke - food was tepid and tasteless. No vegetarian choices on a number of menus. Meat/fish dishes were poor quality - no fresh produce is brought on to the ship after departure. All meat/fish is frozen." (United States, family)*

"We had to send our soup back several times because it was either warm or cool (French Onion soup should not be served any other way than hot!). Other meals served seemed to have been prepared and left under a warming lamp as they were just warm - no hot meals in the dining room." (Texas, family)

"The Food - Horrible. We paid for specialty restaurants - what a joke! It was more like especially BAD! One night we were served chicken that was raw. The food was extremely salty and covered in these horrible sauces." (Florida, couple)

Table 11 shows that the most important factor related to dissatisfaction with dining experiences aboard luxury cruise ships was poor food quality. According to the 'terrible' comments collected from TripAdvisor, passengers used 'terrible', 'awful', and 'worse', to describe food quality. Based on these customer perspectives, the 'terrible' comments were produced by passengers because they encountered terrible food experiences. The findings support the statement that poor quality of food led to customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships (Chua et al., 2015). Poor food quality is a significant reason causing customer dissatisfaction (Chua et al., 2015). Therefore, the factor of terrible food has a negative impact on customer experiences.

4.4.2.2　Food service

Food service was identified as an influence that affected customer dissatisfaction with the dining experience onboard luxury cruise ships. Following are three examples from the 'terrible' comments section on TripAdvisor:

"The food service is awful. Main dining room is bad, the buffet is much worse. Dining room and buffet food had temperature issues, appearance was sloppy, quality and certainly taste and variety was lacking. The pizza they claim as the best at sea was terrible." (California, couple)

"We additionally had paid extra for a speciality dining experience. We had terrible service not even receiving the pre-dinner appetizers. Our water glasses were constantly empty. We inquired about our food and sides on multiple attempts but eventually left the restaurant due to such terrible service." (Texas, couple)

"The food service was so horrible everywhere. We ate once at the main dining assigned area and the rest we tried every extra charge restaurant on the ship... so, so bad." (California, family)

The findings showed that the factor of food service had an influence on customer dissatisfaction. The comments showed that dissatisfied customers had disappointing food

experiences onboard. For example, unprofessional food delivery processes caused the bad impression guests gained regarding food service. Fan and Hsu (2014) suggested that food service is the main influence on customer dissatisfaction in the service industry. The findings state that poor food service affects cruise passengers' dining experiences, and resulted in customer complaints.

4.4.2.3 Food choice

This study identified food choice as a factor affecting customer dissatisfaction aboard luxury cruise ships. In Table 11, it is shown that customers were dissatisfied with the limited food choices and dining experiences onboard. Following are three examples collected from the 'terrible' comments section on TripAdvisor:

> *"Food: Food options were limited around the ship, we ate most of our breakfasts and lunches and all of our dinners in the main dining room." (Hawaii, couple)*

> *"There was few food choices. You could eat in the dining room, the lido deck (cafeteria) or the Dive In, by the pool. Although there are three restaurants they require reservations but are not included in your cruise cost." (California, family)*

> *"The food options are not as flavourful as our personal taste prefer. They have buffet options." (United Kingdom, family)*

Some passengers made 'terrible' comments about luxury cruise ships because of the food choice. Based on the customers' perspectives, dissatisfied passengers complained about the limited food choices onboard, as the food available did not meet their needs. Fernandes and Fernandes (2018) stated that customers have high expectations of dining experiences, and the standard of food has a significant impact on customer dissatisfaction. Although some of the 'terrible' comments were caused by limited food choices, the factor had less impact on customers' dissatisfaction than food quality and food service.

4.4.3 Cabin

The results show that two factors regarding cabins led to customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. These included uncleanliness and room amenities (see Table 12).

Table 12. Factors influencing customer dissatisfaction with cabins on luxury cruise ships

Category	Cabin

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Uncleanliness	15	71.4%
Room amenities	6	28.6%

Table 12 shows that most passengers who mentioned cabins in their comments complained about the sanitary condition of their cabin, at 71.4%. Fewer passengers were dissatisfied with poor room amenities, accounting for 28.6% of comments.

4.4.3.1 Uncleanliness

The factor of uncleanliness of the cabin was one of the reasons that caused customers' dissatisfaction of luxury cruise ships. Following are three examples mentioning uncleanliness which were collected from the 'terrible' comments section on TripAdvisor:

> *"Our first experience in our cabin was the putrid and filthy water out of the bathroom tap; the colour was dark brown. In addition the trap was clogged and the air conditioning wasn't working." (Virginia, couple)*

> *"There was a smell from the shower drain that at times was unbearable. Our stateroom attendant was amazing however the smell remained. Unacceptable for a new ship." (Michigan, friends)*

> *"This is a very dated ship that has not been well maintained, including standing water in the tub/shower that would have back-flow of unspeakable things, including someone else's body hair of various types." (California, couple)*

The uncleanliness of the cabin was the main reason leading to 'terrible' comments about the cabin category. According to the 'terrible' comments, passengers were dissatisfied with unbearable smells, unclean water and mouldy tiles. The findings show that dissatisfied comments regarding luxury cruise ships were influenced by the uncleanliness of the accommodation. Maurer and Schaich (2011) noted that unclean accommodation had a considerable impact on customer dissatisfaction. The sanitary condition of accommodation is considered as a basic requirement for customers (Souri, 2017). Hence, the factor of uncleanliness resulted in the customers' disappointment with cruise experiences and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

4.4.3.2 Room amenities

In this study, room amenities were identified as a factor influencing customer dissatisfaction of luxury cruise ships. The three examples below mention room amenities and were collected from the 'terrible' comments section on TripAdvisor:

> *"Our suite was HORRIBLE! The shower was set to hot and we were unable to use it! My husband tried and nearly brunt* [sic] *himself. Three mechanics came in, removed the knobs and told us it was set to the very hottest setting. the shower head had mildew, light fixture in the room was broken." (Virginia, family)*

> *"This is a very dated ship that has not been well maintained, including standing water in the tub/shower that would have back-flow of unspeakable things, including someone else's body hair of various types." (Alabama, solo)*

> *"The shower curtain had mould spots, the shower head had mildew, light fixture in the room was broken." (Canada, friends)*

Dissatisfied passengers paid attention to the influence of room amenities. In the 'terrible' comments section, passengers complained about dissatisfying experiences relating to problems with room facilities. The facilities such as the bathroom tap, air conditioning and shower, were old or broken. The findings show that the 'terrible' comments were caused by room amenities that did not meet customers' expectation. Sparks and Browning (2010) stated that poor room facilities have a negative influence on customer satisfaction. But compared to the factor of uncleanliness, the room facilities had less impact on customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

4.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the influences on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. The main results of this research are summarised as follows. Firstly, customers' satisfaction focusses on five categories onboard, including service, dining, cabin, entertainment and activities. Secondly, the key factors influencing customers' satisfaction with luxury cruise ships were friendly staff and high-quality service. The influences of the cabin such as cleanliness, space, a view, and a comfortable bed had a positive impact on the customer satisfaction of luxury cruise ships. Customer satisfaction is affected by a high quality of food, food service and a variety of food choices. The factors affecting customer satisfaction also include well-organised activities and entertainment. Thirdly, dissatisfied customers paid more attention to three onboard

categories – service, cabin and dining. Lastly, bad customer service is the main influence on customer dissatisfaction. Other factors also result in customers' dissatisfaction of luxury cruise ships, such as the negative attitude of employees, poor quality of food and food service, uncleanliness of the cabin, and problematic situations relating to room amenities. The next chapter brings this dissertation to a conclusion.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The research explored the factors influencing satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. This chapter aims to summarise the important results of this research and present the implications and recommendations for cruise management. This chapter also discusses the limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Review of the findings

This research used online comments from TripAdvisor as a secondary data source and analysed 570 'excellent' and 'terrible' comments in order to explore influences on satisfaction and dissatisfaction aboard luxury cruise ships. The results are as follows. Service had the strongest influence on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. The pool and sundecks were rarely mentioned in the cruise passengers' comments, and had the lowest impact on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction of luxury cruise ships.

5.2.1 Main factors affecting customer satisfaction

The main factors affecting customer satisfaction were identified as empathy and responsiveness. Customers were impressed with staff who had a positive attitude and offered a high-quality service, for example, the staff who remembered customers' names made customers feel respectful. High-quality services were reflected by an efficient service process. Passengers were satisfied with first class service, such as quick check-in, the collection of bags, well-controlled embarkation, and efficient parking. The dining category was the second category that affected customer satisfaction. The results showed that food quality and food choice were significant influences on customer satisfaction. According to Rychalski and Hudson (2017), customers have a high expectation relating to dining experiences. This research also concluded that excellent food quality and a variety of food choices had the ability to meet customers' expectations. The cabin category also plays a role in influencing customer satisfaction. Customers' satisfaction with luxury cruise ships can be generated by the cleanliness of a cabin and by having a balcony with a memorable view. The factors of well-organised off-board excursions and entertainment also had a positive impact on customers' satisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Additionally, although passengers mentioned onboard activities in their comments, the findings stated that onboard activities had less influence on customer satisfaction.

5.2.2 Main factors affecting customer dissatisfaction

The main factors affecting dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships included the attitude of staff and unhelpful customer service. From the results, most dissatisfied customers complained about an inadequate response from customer service. Cruise companies lacked problem-solving abilities. For example, cruise passengers were disappointed with the way that cruise management dealt with complaints. The negative attitude of staff also caused customer dissatisfaction aboard luxury cruise ships (Cruz Ruiz et al., 2018). The findings showed that dissatisfied customers felt disrespected because of employees' performance. Furthermore, poor food quality had a negative impact on customer satisfaction (Hana & Hyun, 2017). Customers' dissatisfaction resulted from the terrible quality of food offered. The results also found that the cabin was identified as another category influencing customer dissatisfaction. The uncleanliness of a cabin and problems with room amenities resulted in customer dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships.

5.3 Implications

This dissertation has explored the factors influencing customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Practical and theoretical implications should be considered as follows. Based on the findings, service quality was the most important factor influencing satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships. Empathy and responsiveness influences passengers' satisfaction in the cruise sector. Kasiri et al. (2017) also stated that customers' level of satisfaction relies on an emotional connection between customers and staff. Cruise operators should pay attention to employee training to enhance customer satisfaction. Staff with a positive attitude help passengers to leave with a positive impression of their cruise experiences (Sparks & Browning, 2010). In addition, this research found that most dissatisfied customers complained about cruise management, resulting in the posting of 'terrible' comments on TripAdvisor. Maurer and Schaich (2011) consider that service recovery plays a vital role in cruise management. Luxury cruise managers should actively resolve problems and conflicts. Thus, cruise operators should focus on the importance of service recovery because it can reduce negative effects on the companies' reputations.

Moreover, this research also found that the factors of attractive entertainment and well-organised activities had a positive impact on enhancing customer satisfaction. This is because high involvement activities and entertainment enable the passenger to deeply absorb and concentrate on the cruise journey. Fan and Hsu (2014) stated that high involvement experiences contribute by absorbing passengers in cruise travelling. Cruise

managers should provide high-quality cruise experiences for passengers which help to produce positive word-of-mouth recommendations from customers. For example, cruise management can provide interesting shows onboard, and other onboard activities such as a casino, fitness centre, and dance class.

Furthermore, from the dining aspect, the findings reflected that excellent food quality satisfied cruise passengers. Poh and Cheng (2017) also highlighted the importance of food quality in the hospitality industry. Customers have a high expectation of food quality and this is related to the level of customer satisfaction (Chua et al., 2015). Therefore, the suggestion for luxury cruise operators is that emphasis is placed on providing high-quality food to create a positive impression for customers.

From a theoretical aspect, the most significant contribution of this dissertation is that the results provide the influences on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the luxury cruise sector from online customers' perspectives and guide cruise providers to improve passengers' level of satisfaction. Additionally, this research offers cruise researchers a meaningful contribution in the research method of utilising TripAdvisor as the database to identify the factors affecting passenger satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the luxury cruise sector. Further, cruise researchers are able to use the factors influencing satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the luxury cruise sector and continue to develop in-depth research on influences and explore other factors.

5.4 Limitations

Although this research has contributions for cruise studies, three limitations of this research have been identified. Firstly, this research adopted secondary data which was compiled from an online website, TripAdvisor. This platform is where people like to share experiences online, and it may be more popular with a younger audience, rather than a broader audience including elderly people. The passengers' comments regarding luxury cruise experiences may omit the perspective of other types of passengers, including elderly people. The limitation of this research can lead to unilateral understanding. Secondly, the data analysed in this dissertation was collected from online comments, instead of interviews or questionnaires. The selection of comments may be affected by personal preference. This leads to a lack of confidence in this tourism study. Thirdly, the sample timeline focused on the month of August 2019. The results may be affected by seasonality, as other seasons may have more customers, which may have an impact on the sample size.

5.5 Recommendations for future study

Future studies can adopt primary data to explore customers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with luxury cruise ships, which contributes to produce in-depth understanding. Additionally, the time period of this study may have an influence on the results because of the season chosen. Future studies can pay attention to a longer time period in order to enhance confidence in the research. Furthermore, the advice for future study is to explore the influences on different groups, such as family, friends, couples, and solo travellers. Therefore, it is recommended for any future study to focus on the influences on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction amongst different types of tourists on luxury cruise ships.

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