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Guest Surveying as a Tool for Prioritizing Guestroom Improvements in Urban Hotels

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Abstract

The article examines guest surveying as a strategic instrument for managing the guestroom inventory of urban hotels, one that converts visitors' subjective impressions into quantitatively measurable priorities for capital expenditure. The relevance of the study stems from the high velocity of the urban lodging segment, where constrained budgets necessitate rational choices for modernization and where the reputation index directly correlates with profitability metrics. The novelty of the work lies in a methodological framework that combines survey data with booking-management and CRM systems to account for customer lifetime value, thereby enabling a multi-tiered priority map. The main results demonstrate that combining NPS, CSAT, and CES indices with content analysis of open-ended comments, as well as audience segmentation, provides a reliable mechanism for ranking guestroom improvements based on their projected economic impacts. It establishes the fact that regular operationalized surveying can help shift management attention from being reactive to proactive, whereby every investment decision must be based on evidence relating to satisfaction drivers and their impact on RevPAR and ADR. The paper also documents typical practical mistakes—such as too general questions, lack of CRM linkage, one-off surveys, and non-inclusion of free-text reviews—elimination of which increases the reliability of analytics and adds managerial value to feedback. The article will be helpful to hospitality researchers, hotel practitioners, quality and strategy consulting professionals, and students in relevant academic programs.

Keywords: *Guest Surveying, Guestroom Inventory, Urban Hotels, Investment Prioritization, Satisfaction, NPS, CSAT.*

INTRODUCTION

The accelerated tempo of urban hotels, devoid of seasonal pauses, dictates the need for precise resource management: hoteliers must balance costs against guest expectations, as patrons stay briefly yet leave a digital trail in the form of reviews. Aggregated on platform intermediaries, these reviews form a composite reputation index that can materially influence profitability: a Cornell University study shows that a one-percent increase in the reputation index raises the average daily selling price of a room by almost one percent and adds more than one percent to revenue per available room, while simultaneously lifting occupancy (Cuete, 2024). A similar conclusion emerges from J. D. Power's 2024 survey: in higher price tiers, the condition and equipment of the room are identified as the key determinant of satisfaction, outpacing even staff service (Effler, 2024).

The strategic weight of feedback is further amplified by its multilayered channels: beyond verbal remarks at the front desk, guests assign numerical ratings in the mobile app, describe nuances in open-comment fields, and thereby create a multidimensional data space. In the urban hotel context, this information serves a dual purpose. First, it acts as an early detector of weak points: before engineering registers a decline in system indicators, the guest is already noting noise or an unstable network signal. Secondly, the regularity of check-in/checkout makes measurements quasi-experimental. Every micro-change is a new iteration on which causality between an intervention and a satisfaction metric can be traced.

Meanwhile, the capital-improvement budget is low, while the potential upgrades are high, including furniture, plumbing, sound insulation, and a wireless network. Intuition cannot be trusted when it comes to directionality, as financial errors can be costly. Properly constructed surveying converts raw impressions into numerical priorities: the response of a repeat corporate client who visits five times a year carries more weight than that of a transient tourist,

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and the combination of scaled and open-ended questions enables the estimation not only of dissatisfaction levels but also of the potential economic benefits after remediation. According to an analytical report on the impact of renovation on satisfaction, properties that proactively informed guests and targeted the most painful zones for rapid upgrades registered a decline in satisfaction of only five to ten percent. In contrast, properties without clear communication lost up to one-third of their positive ratings (Vestian, 2024).

Thus, systematic feedback becomes an investment navigator: it not merely signals that something somewhere requires improvement, but ranks which element of the guestroom inventory will yield the most significant uplift in satisfaction and revenue. The consistent application of surveying as a prioritization instrument enables the urban hotel to transcend reactive management and adopt a proactive model, in which every unit of capital works to raise the reputation index and secure a durable competitive advantage.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The study combines a systematic analysis of sources with applied modeling to connect guest impressions to the economic indicators of urban hotels. The empirical base comprises academic works on the impact of the reputation index on lodging performance (Cuete, 2024; Anderson, 2012), industry reports on the determinants of satisfaction (Effler, 2024), and analytical publications concerning the effects of renovation measures and communication strategies with guests (Vestian, 2024). Other data come from studies of digital feedback channels, including engagement metrics in mobile apps, QR surveys, and email campaigns (Ashley, 2024; Crudu, 2025; Revinate, 2024). The theoretical base is a multidimensional analysis of satisfaction, in which the Net Promoter Score, Customer Satisfaction Index, and Customer Effort Score are the primary indicators of satisfaction. They relate to audience segmentation characteristics rather than being viewed in isolation. To establish the methodological framework, an integration approach combining survey data with booking management and CRM systems was employed. This allowed weighting responses by customer lifetime value and developing a tiered priority map. The economic impact modeling of the specific improvements became possible because they could be matched with their implementation costs and the forecasted uplift in profitability (Came, 2024).

Methodologically, the study comprises three blocks interlinked. Academic and industry sources are reviewed to form an understanding of the correlations between changes in the reputation index and core financial metrics, such as ADR and RevPAR. Open-ended comments are analyzed through morphological normalization and irrelevant data filtering, which helps in the construction of frequency matrices and raises latent issues for further consideration. Third, survey-delivery channels are compared based on response statistics and A/B tests on how wording and delivery conditions affect completion rates (Rolstad et al., 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Surveying in an urban hotel setting pursues a dual objective: to convert diffuse guest impressions into a numerical profile of their experience and thereby create an objective priority map for capital investments. Three indicators are central. The Net Promoter Score measures willingness to recommend and, through a single question, reflects potential loyalty. The Customer Satisfaction Index measures momentary satisfaction with a specific service, while the Customer Effort Score assesses the effort required by the guest to achieve a desired outcome. Taken together, these indices capture both emotional response and friction at touchpoints. Digitization is critical: without it, different guest segments—business travelers with predictable repeatability and weekend tourists with sporadic frequency—dissolve into an average rating and, consequently, into inefficient budget allocation.

Numerical indicators are valuable only to the extent that they translate into financial outcomes. The Cornell Center for Hospitality Research, consolidating ReviewPro and STR data, showed that a one-percent increment in the reputation index yields up to 0.89% growth in average room price and 1.42% growth in revenue per available room; occupancy rises in parallel, translating reputation improvement directly into levers for RevPAR and ADR (Anderson, 2012). At the same time, the most decisive influence on hotel choice is exerted by factors of guest-experience quality, location, and price. In contrast, environmental programs have the least impact, as depicted in Figure 1.

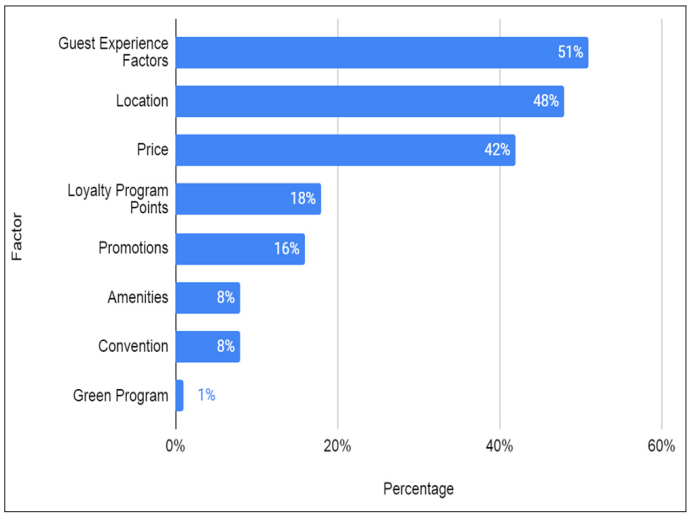

Fig. 1. Determinants of Hotel Selection (Anderson, 2012)

Current dynamics are corroborated by J.D. Power's 2024 index study: despite record rates in luxury and upscale segments, guest satisfaction in these segments remains stable, indicating that the quality of the guestroom inventory tempers price elasticity and sustains a willingness to pay more (Effler, 2024).

The revenue experience linkage strengthens when Net Promoter Score is introduced into analytics as a proxy for future demand. Meanwhile, Cloudbeds' research indicates

that guests with NPS ≥ 50 show a higher propensity for direct booking, and their average check for ancillary services is 12% higher than that of detractors; thus, a high NPS not only lifts ADR but also expands cross-sales in restaurants, spas, and conference areas (Came, 2024).

Collectively, NPS, CSAT, and CES form a continuum that, if properly segmented, enables the prediction of which specific element of the guestroom inventory will catalyze growth in financial KPIs. If CSAT signals sagging sound insulation and CES indicates Wi-Fi connection hurdles, then precisely these zones—demonstrably influencing NPS—enter the investment short list. In this way, surveying ceases to be an ex post quality report. It becomes an early-warning system, directing each unit of capital to the locus where it maximizes RevPAR and a durable price premium.

The choice of delivery channel sets the baseline for engagement. E-mail remains the default option, but average yield hovers around 5%: Revinate's fresh North American benchmark reports a 5.4% overall response rate, with 1–50-room properties achieving as high as 7.2%, as shown in Figure 2 (Revinate, 2024).

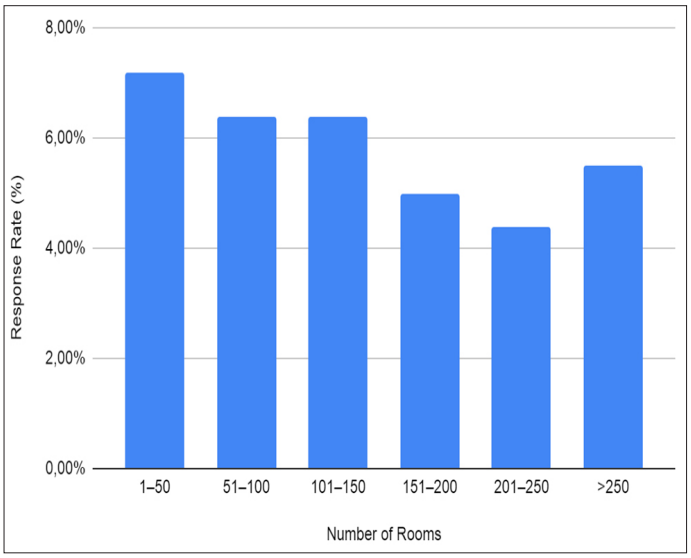

Fig. 2. Survey Response Rate by Hotel Size (Revinate, 2024)

QR codes widen the funnel: according to the Washington Hospitality Association, 70% of hotels already use them, directing guests straight to the survey form after scanning (Ashley, 2024). Mobile applications provide an even warmer circuit: Phocuswright finds that 82% of travelers readily use smartphones during their stay, and hotels that embed in-app rating forms gain a 40% increase in positive reviews by enabling immediate signaling of dissatisfaction (Crudu, 2025). The combination of three channels creates a cascade in which email captures all, QR codes serve unregistered direct guests, and the app nets loyalists, thereby raising the likelihood of capturing the full spectrum of opinions. At the same time, guests show the strongest preference for mobile check-in and digital room-service requests, whereas real-time feedback garners the least interest, as depicted in Figure 3.

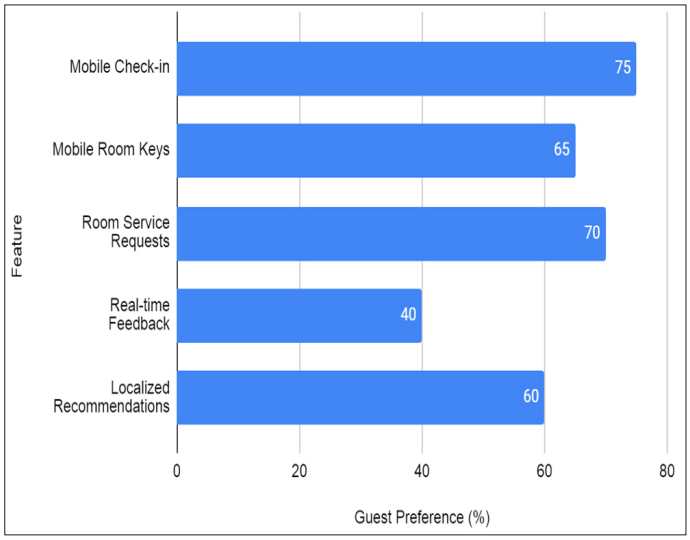

Fig. 3. Guest Preferences for Digital Hotel Features (Crudu, 2025)

Channels are futile, however, if the questionnaire itself is too long. A Value in Health meta-analysis demonstrated a statistically significant inverse relationship between the number of questions and completion rates: as length increases, the probability of submission declines, $p \leq 0.0001$ (Rolstad et al., 2011). Hence, the optimum is a compact block of metric questions (NPS, CSAT, CES) plus one or two open fields—enough to keep the survey within five to seven minutes while preserving analytic density.

Adaptive logic helps lower cognitive load. After launch, one should test not only content but also the wrapper: a series of ten A/B experiments in a five-star hotel showed that changing day and hour of dispatch, personalizing subject lines, or invoking scarcity- and curiosity- appeals often shifted open rates by no more than two percentage points—and sometimes not at all—compelling a move from one-time tuning to a continuous cycle of tests. Thus, sound questionnaire design is not just a short list of questions, but a dynamic architecture where each branch and formulation proves its viability in live traffic.

Once the questionnaire has been pared down to a concise, adaptive form, the next stage is to collect responses and harmonize them into a unified standard that is amenable to the extraction of economic meaning. The raw stream is heterogeneous: some guests leave scattered phrases, others fill scales, and a few submit a single character to claim a bonus. The researcher's first job is to separate noise from the signal. Every response is mapped to a unique stay identifier, and duplicates, blanks, as well as suspiciously uniform rating sequences are flagged. An algorithm is implemented for consistency checking: if a guest reports poor sleep quality but rates their overall experience highly, the system requests clarification of the response or flags the record as an anomaly. Open comments are parsed morphologically; normalization of rare words, and removal of profane and not pertinent expressions - such cleaning that does not allow for distortion of the terminal frequency matrix.

Clean responses attain value only after integration with the hotel's operational systems. Details on bookings, total spending, sources of channels, and frequency of visits are obtained from the property management system. Communication history, preferences, and marketing campaign data come from the guest relationship platform. The intersection of surveys with these registers yields a multi-level vector, where identical complaints can carry different weights—a high-frequency corporate client's remark takes higher priority than an equivalent note from a rare, transient traveler. This segmentation enables cohorting by trip purpose, purchasing power, and expected relationship duration, and then modeling which improvement in the guestroom inventory most strongly elevates loyalty in the key groups.

The process concludes with a data showcase wherein every cleansing step and variable is transparently surfaced: the analyst can trace the path from the source comment to the aggregated metric and back. This builds managerial trust, enhances reproducibility, and clears the way for subsequent steps—constructing a priority matrix and estimating the financial effect of specific investments in the guestroom inventory.

The curated data display encourages analysis in which primitive feelings provide control coordinates. The variables are first plotted on a satisfaction–importance graph. Importance is judged by how often a particular room attribute is mentioned in the comments of key cohorts, and satisfaction is measured by the mean scores on a scale of loyalty. Points that fall predominantly in the upper-left quadrant indicate attributes about which guests care (i.e., those considered necessary) and for which they have low ratings; this shows the dimension with the big potential for improvement. Conversely, the lower-right sector houses functions that consume resources but have a minimal impact on the decision to return. A single diagram thus transforms a heterogeneous textual mass into the outline of a future investment plan, ordered by strength of effect on the stay experience.

The next step is personalizing weights via a recency–frequency–monetary model. Each review receives a coefficient indicating how recently the author stayed, how often they return, and the revenue they generate. The terminal weight grows exponentially when high frequency is met with significant spend, meaning that a repeat corporate client can skew the balance by eleven times more than the one-off responses from transient tourists. This, of course, shifts the priorities back to attributes important for long-term contracts. It removes the egalitarian illusion and pinpoints real centers of profit gravity.

After priority maps and weights are reconciled, the financial effect is calculated. For each improvement, the difference between the forecast satisfaction uplift and the implementation costs is calculated. Uplift turns into revenue by means of an increase in average price that can be achieved, as well as occupancy that can be attained. Meanwhile, costs are not only direct capital outlay but also the downtime of the room during the works. Cumulative profit compared to discounted expenditures becomes net value when applied to this project schema, thereby leading management consistently out of a portfolio of reactive conjecture and toward proactive investment of capital, wherein each unit maximizes long-term returns.

In establishing feedback systems, hotels often confront errors that can nullify even sophisticated analytics and sever the link between spending and financial outcomes. The first trap lies at the level of question design. When a survey is confined to the generic question 'Did you enjoy your stay?', it deprives the researcher of insight into actual pain points. Guests are forced to compress a complex experience into an average score, bleaching out contrast in the data and obscuring what truly impedes loyalty. The remedy is characterized by fine-grained detailing across key room and service attributes, with sufficient specificity that responses map directly to budget lines—whether it be mattress replacement or enhanced sound insulation.

The next issue is the disconnect between the survey and customer relationship systems. When responses are stored apart from the stay profile, we lose the ability to weight feedback by customer lifetime value. The remark from a repeat corporate patron and that from an occasional tourist become equivalent, though the former may generate multiple times the revenue. Integration with booking platforms and behavioral data enables each response to be assigned a significance coefficient, shifting priorities toward segments that are most consequential for margin.

No less damaging is the ask once and forget approach. A one-time survey can deliver a momentary snapshot, but it cannot track how specific improvements affect satisfaction indicators over time. Without regular iteration, dynamics vanish and the management team reverts to intuition. A continuous cadence of short, calendar-embedded surveys establishes control points at which one can detect—early—that an implemented measure has not produced the expected effect and reallocate investment.

The final standard error neglects free-text comments. Structured scales are convenient statistically, yet text fields contain subtle signals of emergent problems not yet reflected in numerical ratings. Automated topic extraction, lemmatization, and subsequent content analysis convert spontaneous remarks into early indicators; omitting this step leaves leadership blind to latent discontent.

By avoiding these pitfalls, the hotel upgrades surveying from a formal procedure to a strategic instrument: data becomes precise, linkages to financial metrics become direct, and the improvement process becomes continuous and measurable.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that guest surveying in urban hotels is not a perfunctory exercise in feedback collection but a key

managerial instrument that transforms subjective impressions into measurable priorities for strategic investment. It creates a strong connection between the experience of staying and financial results, taking guestroom-inventory management out of intuition and into economically based action. Regular, structured feedback proves that metrics like NPS, CSAT, and CES, when segmented correctly, reveal the most at-risk parts of the guestroom inventory, whose impact is directly related to not only satisfaction but also loyalty and, thereby, profitability. This model enables the ranking of capital expenditures not by administrative intuition, but by forecasted financial effect, made possible by analytics.

A significant result of this is that certain factors become clearly evident as distorting the potential of surveying: questions that are too general, disconnected from CRM systems, one-off campaigns without dynamic continuation, and, finally, the neglect of open-ended comments. Remove these to ensure continuity in the survey, segmentation, and investment decision cycle that builds managerial transparency and confidence in conclusions.

Accordingly, surveying becomes a navigational system capable of steering limited capital resources toward zones of maximum return, minimizing the risk of misallocated investments, and ensuring the long-term resilience of the urban hotel's competitive position.

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