

THE MUSICSCAPE IN HOTEL BUSINESSES:  
EVIDENCE FROM ONLINE REVIEWSOzan Çatir<sup>a</sup>

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**ABSTRACT**

Musicscape is an important topic in tourism and hospitality contexts. However, there are few studies on this subject in the accommodation sector. The study aims to determine the effect of ‘musicscape dimensions’ on customer behavior. To achieve this aim, 2357 online reviews of 28 hotels in Antalya, Turkey were analyzed by content analysis. The framework proposed by Oakes was used in the study. The research findings provide hotel managers with practical advice on the effective use of musicscape in tourism and hospitality settings. In addition, it was concluded that customers evaluated the loudness and fast tempo of music negatively, and that the harmony of music broadcasts and their environment offered by a hotel is positively perceived by customers.

**KEYWORDS**

hotels, online reviews, musicscape, content analysis, customer behavior

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

A hotel experience is an emotional one that incorporates components from both indoor and outdoor environments as well as the service provided. Hotel management must comprehend the multi-emotional character of the hotel experience and sound or music is one of the most essential factors that contribute to the hotel environment. Music is widely acknowledged as an essential element that influences consumer behavior and reactions (Bruner, 1990; Garlin, Owen, 2006; Jain, Bagdare, 2011; Kämpfe, Sedlmeier, Renkewitz, 2011; North, Hargreaves, Krause, 2016; Turley, Milliman, 2000).

Significant research has been conducted on music as an atmospheric element (Oakes, 2000; Turley, Milliman, 2000), however, there have been few studies on the musical atmosphere in lodging environments

(Harrington, Ottenbacher, Trueter, 2015; Jacob, 2006; Magnini, Parker, 2009). The following is the main research question, particularly for the hospitality industry: What are the interactions between musicscape and consumer behavior found in user-generated online reviews? A framework based on Oakes’s (2000) musicscape model was developed to help guide research addressing this question. The purpose of this study is to expand on the findings of Harrington, Ottenbacher, Trueter (2015) in terms of hotel businesses.

The conceptual framework is explained in the first section. The procedures used in data extraction and analysis are then explained in the method section. Following that, we present the results of the analysis and conclude by discussing the study’s limitations and potential research avenues, as well as the academic and managerial implications of the findings.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

All environments where customers and staff interact are defined as 'servicescapes'. Servicescapes can be an effective marketing tool for service managers in terms of creating positive attitudes, strengthening or reinforcing the image of the service provider, repositioning a service, influencing customer behavior, differentiating a service, delighting customers, improving customer experience and maximizing operational efficiency (Trompeta et al., 2022).

In this study, we used the 'Mehrabian-Russell (M-R) model' and the 'Musicscape model'. The Mehrabian-Russell (M-R) model (1974) employs the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm, which provides a concise description of the environmental variable's (stimulus) effect on the moderating variables, the customer's emotional/mood state (organism), and how that mood state influences their behavioral response to the environmental stimulus under consideration (Trompeta et al., 2022).

The M-R model is appropriate to describe the response variables that consumers give to the stimulus. According to this model, consumers' reactions depend on their positive emotions toward the stimulus (Mehrabian, Russell, 1974; Novak, La Lopa, Novak, 2010).

Oakes (2000) suggests that the musicscape model was a synthesis of previous work. This approach proposed value (preference) moderators that may interact with the arguments (music composition properties) and musical familiarity and demography were among such moderators. Lastly, the 'musicscape model' investigated cognitive (expectations, perceived time), affective and behavioral impacts.

### Online reviews in the hospitality sector

Mudambi and Schuff (2010) stated that online reviews can be used as a tool to gather information and identify risks when consumers make purchasing decisions and product selections. Zhou et al. (2014) and Sridhar and Srinivasan (2012) discovered that evaluations have an impact on hotel development and purchasing decision processes. Online reviews and customer ratings for hotels reduce negative thoughts about the hotel experience (Sridhar, Srinivasan, 2012), and it has been concluded that it increases the intention to re-book (Sparks, Browning, 2011).

In previous studies, customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction were examined through online reviews about hotels (Levy, Duan, Boo, 2013; Li, Ye, Law, 2013; Magnini, Crotts, Zehrer, 2011; Zhou et al., 2014). On the positive side, the headings of personnel, service, cleanliness, facilities, location and value were analyzed (Magnini, Crotts, Zehrer, 2011; Zhou et al., 2014). The negative factors analyzed related to the hotel were

bed comfort, room decoration, front office attitude, value for money, food, parking, restaurant, bathroom, cleanliness and noise (Levy, Duan, Boo, 2013; Li, Ye, Law, 2013).

Recent research has examined online reviews using machine learning approaches (i.e. computer-aided) to extract sentiment from words (Barreda, Bilgihan, 2013). Analyzing the quality factors in hotels, Crotts, Mason and Davis (2009) explained hotel quality through 15 factors in the study he carried out using online reviews and interview techniques. The negative comments were under room, price/value, entrance, service and décor, while in the positive comments room, staff, location, restaurant/bar and 'general' were identified. Some research has employed content analysis (codes and themes) using traditional approaches (Levy, Duan, Boo, 2013), whereas others used machine learning analysis (Li, Ye, Law, 2013).

Examining the online reviews with both content and computer-assisted analysis is necessary for a clear understanding of visitors' thoughts about hotel services. As a result, the dynamic paths used in the research will help to obtain reliable results (Crotts, Mason, Davis, 2009) and the use of various methodologies will enhance the outcomes of the content analysis of online hotel reviews.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

Content analysis technique was used to search for and learn about online music reviews. The ideal strategy to handle data while boosting the rigor and flexibility of the study is to use manual content analysis (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, Le, 2014) as this properly classifies the study subjects and online reviews that arose in the first stage. This technique enables the identification of hidden message content consisting of ideas that cannot be measured (Neuendorf, 2019). Data were created using the classification of subjects and frequency evaluation (Hayes, Krippendorff, 2007). To identify statements, two researchers independently examined online comments and produced precoding classifications. The researchers discussed the data together to avoid similarities in the themes and primary notions uncovered.

The researchers first coded and analyzed 2537 comments. The two steps in the content analysis are as follows:

Step 1: Based on the definition of music dimensions, the researchers selected keywords or phrases associated with these dimensions in the descriptions and then calculated the frequencies.

Step 2: Next, the researchers generalized the statements in Step 1 and classified them into several specific attributes.

The authors gathered qualitative data from the target platform in the form of reviews and comments on music-related issues. To gather an adequately accurate dataset on music, TripAdvisor, a review platform that ranks higher than other review sites and online tourism firms, was picked. As a result, our text data contains user-generated music reviews. The author collected 2537 reviews from 28 hotels between 2010 and 2022, accounting for 100% of online reviews with the keyword ‘music’ in our sample. Each review is critical to understanding customers’ music-related hotel experiences and, as such, is required for the creation of the entire dataset. The research design was developed within an interpretive paradigm that used a general inductive qualitative approach, as the goal of the research was to gain a detailed understanding of the customers’ music-related hotel experience. The research process is shown in Figure 1.

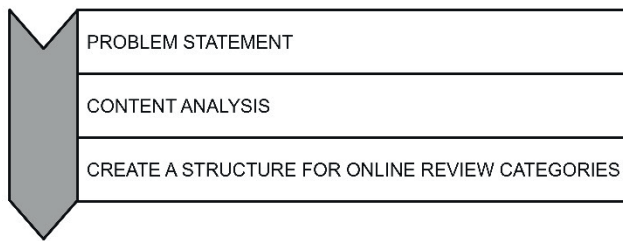


Figure 1. Research process  
Source: author

Each researcher independently assessed the sample’s content. The preliminary results were compared. When differences developed, they were evaluated, and the researchers studied the context together until they came to conclusions. Reliability was examined to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the content analysis. The coding consistency rate was 91%.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. HOTEL FEATURES

The 5-star hotels in Antalya, which is an important tourism destination in Turkey, were chosen as the sample. The reason for choosing this destination is that it is a region that hosts around 10–15 million tourists annually. Five-star hotels are preferred because these hotels have more corporate businesses and offer high-level services. After the sample was determined, the Antalya destination was selected on the TripAdvisor website and using filters it was found that there were 41 five-star hotels. Those with few comments were excluded from the study, and reviews of 28 hotels were obtained. Music-related comments were separated using the ‘music’ keyword and 2537 comments were analyzed.

### 4.2. RESULTS ON MUSIC DIMENSIONS

According to the literature review, there are five dimensions related to music in tourism studies (Trompeta et al., 2022). These dimensions are musical presence, music tempo, music volume, music congruence and music liking. These five dimensions were used as the coding and analytical framework. The analysis unit was the sentences collected from the statements made about music in hotel businesses. The researchers then clustered the sentences using qualitative analysis. The results of the content analysis are summarized in Table 1. A detailed discussion of some of the key findings follows.

Table 1. Dimensions and keywords of music

Music dimensions	Keywords
1. Presence	music, hear, live music
2. Tempo	beat, rhythm, tempo
3. Volume	loud, blasting, noisy, disturbing, lower, quiet, sounds, booming
4. Congruence	good, beautiful, perfect, fantastic, amazing, wonderful
5. Liking	dislike, loved, like, enjoy

Source: based on Trompeta et al. (2022).

### 4.3. MUSIC PRESENCE

After reviewing the comments, it was found that the presence of music in hotels is very important for the guests. It can be said that it provides a positive atmosphere in all hotel environments (bar, disco, lobby, beach, etc.). Some comments in original spelling:

The lobby has a very relaxing atmosphere but sadly this time the heavenly music played by Barbara was not heard. Hope next time that we are there, live music is there as well.

Lounge bar is comfy with live music that really makes your experience unforgettable and pleasant.

There is so much entertainment at this hotel, there is always something going on. As well as all the usual things you would expect throughout the day they also have shows or live music.

It can be stated that the presence of music has a positive emotional impact on the guests and increases their desire to return to the hotel. Some comments in original spelling:

One evening we went hotel club where there was live music. The atmosphere and drinks were good. :) I can recommend this hotel.

As I am writing this review I'm looking at one of the most beautiful sunsets ever with live music playing in the background.

Watching movies nearby pools at night or enjoying live music in the lobby, playing tennis also available, I would like to thank all the staff and I WOULD come back again.

It was concluded that the music that accompanied the guests' activities increased their satisfaction. Some comments in original spelling:

The hotel also had live music on in the bar in the evening dressed up for a few light beverages and classics. Turkish was the vibe for one of the evenings ... great entertainment. We also spent a great Saturday night at the Jolly Joker, brilliant live music and atmosphere.

The entertainment is good. We really enjoyed the live music.

The presence of music in all hotel environments contributes to a positive perception of service quality. Some comments in original spelling:

We loved the Sea Lounge and the live music played in there every day. The entertainment staff Mr. T and Mario were also great fun, and Anna was excellent with her aerobics classes. Overall an amazing holiday and we will definitely be back!

#### 4.4. MUSIC TEMPO

The tempo of the music was investigated. As a result, the guests reacted negatively to the music tempo being too fast and noisy. Some comments in original spelling:

And how shocked we were when on our first night we had to deal with blasting music coming from the Social Club right in front of our room till very midnight! After our complaints and requests to change the type of music or at least to lower down its volume the guest relation personnel simply answered that it's a new concept of the hotel and they can't (read "don't want") change anything so it will take place every day!

They complained that they could not sleep comfortably in their rooms and that it was not ideal for families with babies. Some comments in original spelling:

Today we were ready to move to that room when noticed in that area the preparations for a big wedding that is happening at this precise moment with loud live music band, dances, and all that wedding celebration might entail ... As a result of its our 6th night with no sleep ... not only sleep but actually, it's impossible to do whatever ... whether it's reading a book or watching TV ... its simply impossible to focus on any activity when hard techno beats crawl in your head! What's interesting is that most people that come to this club are from the outside and are not the guests of this hotel,

which means that the hotel's management is more interested in additional income rather than its guests comfort! The guest relation staff keeps telling us that we are the only ones that are complaining about loud music, which turned out to be a complete lie since while our talk with them few other guests approached and supported our speech with the same complaints!!! All our hopes for a relaxing and peaceful vacation are vanished! Tomorrow we'll try again to directly address the main manager but for now we continue fighting the headache and are trapped to tolerate this unprecedented sound attack!!!

It has been stated that no loud or fast-paced music should be played in areas such as the pool, lobby or beach. Some comments in original spelling:

The only thing that I can complain about is the music beside the pool. It's so loud. They turn the volume down for a few hours a day, and that's it. Be warned!

The main problem is that I like to read and have a sleep by the pool but this was impossible as several times a day they blare out loud music and the animation team shout into microphones. We did go to the adult relax area but it was still booming out. They only seem to have about 5 songs that play in a loop and every afternoon they come round amongst the sunbeds beating drums for some strange reason. It's like they don't want you to relax! It's a shame as like I say it's a nice hotel but please can you let people get some peace. If I had wanted club 18 to 30 I would have asked for it!

The tempo of music has also been shown to have a negative impact on activities such as reading and sleeping. Furthermore, it has been stated that the upbeat music that plays until late is disturbing. Some comments in original spelling:

Three nights we suffered from headache trying to fall asleep before midnight! And when we addressed the staff again we were offered a room in a supposedly 'quiet' aisle of the building...

#### 4.5. MUSIC VOLUME

When the comments are analyzed, the guests negatively perceive the fact that the music broadcast in the hotels is extremely loud. Some comments in original spelling:

Had a live jazz band who were very talented! They have no Beach, but a rocky swimming cliff face. Nice clean pools! Very clean property. Very friendly staff. Avoid the Southern wing overlooking the wedding party grounds. The loud music will keep you up until midnight. Rooms are very pricy for what you get especial the suites.

The room overlooks the next hotel with limited sea views and views of the corrugated roofs of the kitchen areas. The next hotel is VERY noisy with very loud music.

The fact that the music begins very early and is very loud and noisy has a negative impact on the guests' satisfaction. Some comments in original spelling:

Way too loud. Music starts at 10 am and is ridiculous. I understand wanting some background noise but it was horrendous. And by the swim up rooms the music echoes so it's even louder. Completely unable to concentrate and enjoy time by the pool reading by constant beat of music.

There is an indoor pool but also freezing ... our room was very nice and cleaned every day, large enough for 2 adults and 2 children, view was looking out the front of the hotel so a poor view, my grandparents room was smaller but still a nice size, there hotel was facing next doors hotel and they had loud music every night until 11:45 pm, no such thing as a quiet night for them, (the music was boom boom boom right up until 11:45).

It has been stated that due to loud music, it is impossible to read books or even watch television in hotel rooms. Some comments in original spelling:

If you're staying on a weekend, though, make sure there's no weddings/events in the grounds. There was a wedding directly below our window near the pool (and we were in an ocean front room) that was LOUD one of the nights we were there, even with doors shut. The music was turned off by midnight but those with children would be impacted by this.

We like the shade and to read (a bit boring for some) so we sat in the adult pool in the morning and moved to the White Bar area in the afternoon. If you do like a bit of quiet it is difficult to find a peaceful spot. The noise from the main pool is so loud and by the adult pool you get the loud music.

Due to the loud music, it has been reported that it was difficult to even have a conversation, particularly in areas such as the lobby, pool or beach. Some comments in original spelling:

The only thing we really disliked was the House/Dance music that played constantly in Pablito's restaurant and bar. As well as being repetitive and irritating, it was played so loudly that conversation was difficult. A hotel bar should be somewhere you can go for a quiet drink after dinner, not a wannabe club.

We didn't eat dinner at the hotel, mainly because the music in the ground floor restaurant was very loud, and it's not my idea of fun to shout as dinner conversation. There are some nice restaurants within walking distance, and the public buses are frequently and cheap to go to the harbor and old town if you want more choice.

#### 4.6. MUSIC CONGRUENCE

When the comments are examined, it is possible to conclude that the music provided by the hotels in various settings is good, excellent, fantastic and harmonious. It has been determined that the harmony of music with the environment (pool, beach, lobby, restaurant, etc.) allows guests to enjoy their activities more. Some comments in original spelling:

Right now im in the hotel and happy to choose that. Breakfast is good. U can find varity of food and good quality. Room is clean and comfort. The only prob i have and actually u cant say problem at all, u cant hear any good music anywhere. U shud only lissten to ursong and always carry a ipod and ect ...

Thanks baia lara hotel for everything. The advantages is: Very nice person at guest relation. Her name was "Parastoo". Good food especially pizza in snak bar Good pool area Good seaside Good music band for nights Disadvantages: Small aqua park Don't have very fun at hotel.

This was our 4th time visiting Baia Lara and it's still the best place for a vacation. Great staff in and around the hotel. Especially the entertainment team and DJ are sweet, friendly and fantastic! You can't miss the party's for the good music and amazing dancers.

When the comments are examined, it is seen that the satisfaction of the customers increases when the music congruence is good. It was concluded that expectations were met and emotional satisfaction was achieved.

#### 4.7. MUSIC LIKING

It was found that the guests enjoyed the music provided by the hotel. Although there are some that dislike loud music, young and middle-aged guests enjoy music for entertainment purposes. The musical shows provided by the hotels, as well as musical events for children and entertaining music at the disco, allow guests to spend their vacations more positively. Some comments in original spelling:

The entertainment team are incredible, fabulous bunch of people full of energy and hilarious! They are all so warm and friendly, special mention for Rambo and Mario – fab fab guys. The entertainment itself is wonderful, professional shows, live bands and singers of the highest standard, especially loved the live music.

The entertainment team were amazing, they really wanted you to enjoy your holiday. They had games at pool at 11:30 every day, also music.

Entertainment team brilliant and always there to help make a good time ... staff all made us to feel welcome and all times

and always helpful and never rude ... loved it and would recommend ... and go back.

AMAZING shows here gob smacked, Billy Bones, Moscow Circus, Street Dance and many more. My mum & I sat in amazement & said 'we would have to pay to watch to watch these kind of shows at home, and we have them here for free: D' And from there we ALL go to the beach bar for live music.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This research has enabled us to make generalizations about the effects of music according to the perceptions of the guests in the context of hotel businesses. The study has tried to explain how guests are affected by music by qualitatively synthesizing empirical evidence in the comments of hotel establishments. The research analyzed 2537 comments from 28 hotels and it was concluded that music is very important for hotel guests but its importance differs according to the music dimension. Volume and high tempo were evaluated negatively by guests. The presence of music in various environments of the hotel, the harmony of the music with the environment, and its appreciation produced positive effects on the guests. This study extends existing studies on the impact of music in service settings. The findings partly confirm and partly extend previous ones. Music has an effect on the feelings and thoughts of the guests, however, when the personnel, room characteristics, and environmental factors are considered together, it can be said that there is a low significant contribution.

While the results are consistent with some previous studies, they contradict others. Kämpfe, Sedlmeier and Renkewitz (2011) and Behne (1999) found that music did not have a significant effect. Since the effects differ according to the perceptions of the guests, it is thought that its level of importance is low.

The nature of value sought by guests may differ in the degree to which they see certain atmospheric stimuli as relevant, appropriate and expected in certain contexts (Garlin, Owen, 2006; Roschk, Loureiro, Breitsohl, 2017). These findings are supported by the results of our study.

The tempo and high volume of the music affect guests negatively. It has been determined that satisfaction with the services offered by the hotel has decreased due to noise and guests cannot enjoy the holiday.

It was found that guest perceptions are positive in terms of music congruence and music liking. These findings are consistent with studies that concluded that music congruence and music liking have positive effects on guests (Garlin, Owen, 2006; Herrington, Capella, 1994; Michel, Baumann, Gayer, 2017; Oakes, North, 2008).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Music can be used as a tool for hotel businesses in terms of market differentiation and customer satisfaction. It is used in hotel businesses to create and enhance an ambiance and is one of the methods used to influence the feelings and thoughts of the guests (Roschk, Loureiro, Breitsohl, 2017). This study helps hotel managers understand the effects of music and guests' reactions to it. Hotel managers can understand the positive, negative or neutral effects using the findings of this study and, by making use of them, environments can be created through the selection and design of music allowing guests to have a pleasant holiday and accommodation experience.

The tempo of the music and its sound should be adjusted carefully. Hours must be set at times when guests will not be disturbed. It would also be beneficial to make necessary sound insulation in hotel rooms. The places where events are held should be designed in a way that does not disturb the guests in the rooms. The fast tempo and loud presentation can negatively affect the guests. Guest complaints must be managed successfully.

The music must be compatible with the environments in which it is presented. The music to be played at the beach, pool and lobby should be well-chosen. Environments should be created where guests can have fun in a harmonious way. Since taste in music may differ according to the demographic characteristics of the guests, attention should be paid to market segmentation and the target market for the music to be selected. Music preferences according to the target market should be constantly researched and analyzed.

The method of this study is based on secondary data. For this reason, the results of our study are limited according to the data obtained by survey and interview techniques. The study is limited to comments about 5-star hotel businesses operating in Antalya. The data obtained includes comments from a travel site within a certain date range.

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