

Why Wi-Fi is Keeping Hotels from Receiving 5 Star Reviews

There is only one thing that guests would prefer over a complimentary breakfast or free parking, and that is Wi-Fi. Nowadays, the first thing a guest tries, before your quality breakfast or your comfortable bed, is the quality of your Wi-Fi.

Modern travelers are hyper connected and cannot bear to be offline. Business travelers need to be able to check their emails and take online conference calls, while leisure travelers are eager to use the internet to connect with friends and family, discover local attractions and enjoy music and videos after a long day of travel.

Given the critical importance of Wi-Fi to guests, hospitality decision-makers are keeping a watchful eye on their hotels'

SUMMARY

Revinate performed a deep dive into their online review data and analyzed about 53 million English language reviews from multiple review sites and OTAs. The data revealed the following:

INTERNET-RELATED REVIEWS HAVE LOWER AVERAGE SCORES

compared to reviews that don't mention internet services.

3.8★

Avg score of internet-related reviews

VS

4.0★

Avg score of non-internet related reviews

TOP GUEST CONCERNS REGARDING WI-FI:



SPEED



RELIABILITY



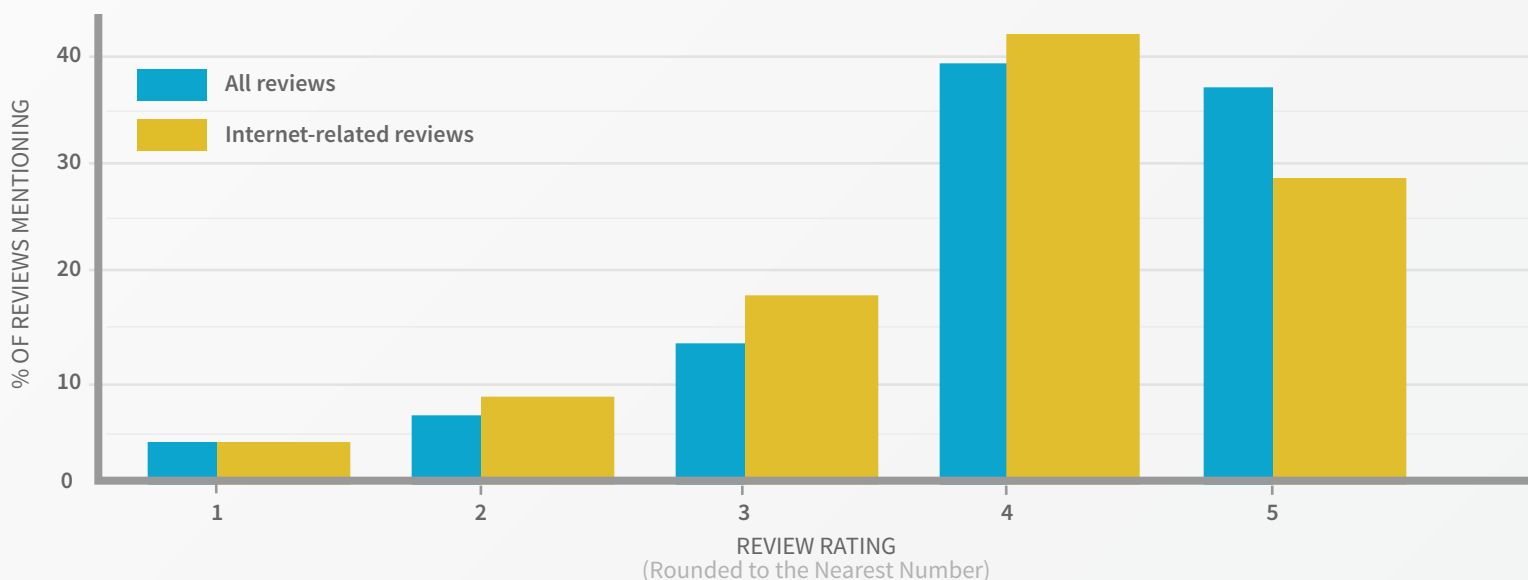
PRIVACY

Internet service offerings. However, the effects of poor Internet service on guest satisfaction and consequently on hotels' online reputation have yet to be

thoroughly explored.

To better understand the guest perspective, we performed a deep dive

DISTRIBUTION OF REVIEW RATINGS



into our online review data and analyzed about 53 million English language reviews from multiple review sites and OTAs. A little more than two million reviews explicitly mentioned the terms "internet", "wifi" or "wi-fi."

We found that internet-related reviews have lower average scores (3.8 vs 4.0) than reviews that don't mention internet services, suggesting that when the internet is mentioned in a review, it is normally seen as a drawback to the hotel experience. A deeper look into the data reveals that internet-related reviews seem to most negatively affect the occurrence of 5 star reviews.

From our investigation, we can infer that the fact that there are fewer five star reviews that mention Internet, suggests that people expect perfect Internet service. Since it's expected, they don't think to write about it when it's flawless. But when they don't have a good Internet experience, they can't award a hotel five stars.

To take the research one step further, we looked at what topics were routinely discussed in relationship to Wi-Fi and outlined some simple steps to combat the problem.

SPEED

The number one concern of reviewers was the speed of the Internet service. Guests not only use their internet connections for light email and browsing. They are also using streaming video services such as Netflix to unwind after a long day of travel or to chat with their family and friends via Skype. One reviewer complains:

The internet service has such restricted bandwidth that it is virtually unusable for most common purposes such as Skype, etc. It is barely adequate for reading email and looking at the weather.

Others actively dissuade other guests from booking with that hotel because of their poor Internet:

I only ever book hotels with in - room Internet because it is a necessity for me when I travel. This hotel has wifi in certain areas and wired ports in all the rooms [...] My biggest disappointment was with the speed – the login page lists it as 256 kb/s up/down but usage was much slower and felt like dial up. Be warned if you like your internet fast and hot, this ain't the place to stay.

HOW TO ADDRESS

Test the speed of your Internet connection and compare it to the average in your local area. If you are below the average, talk with your Internet service about how to increase

the speed of your connection.

When discussing Internet service upgrades with your IT department, it is good to have an idea of what your users will need. Faster is always better, but the reality is that hoteliers have budgets to stick to. Take the time to understand how your guests are using the Internet and choose your service plan accordingly.

To give a bit of context of what guest are used to in the United States, Comcast, a major American internet provider, starts at speeds of 3Mbps for \$40 per month, and ramps up to 105 Mbps for \$200 per month.

RELIABILITY

After speed, the reliability of an Internet connection was a major concern to reviewers. While light Internet use (email, web browsing) is possible on an intermittent connection, video and music streaming services require a strong, consistent connection. Moreover, business travelers depend on cloud software (Salesforce, Marketo, etc) and VPNs (GotoMeeting, join.me) that require a dependable always-on

| SPEED | FUNCTIONALITY |
|------------|--|
| < 1 Mbps | Functional for email, general browsing. However, Netflix, YouTube and Skype video will probably stutter or freeze. |
| 1 – 5 Mbps | Video, music and voice streaming work properly. Issues likely to arise when using all at once on multiple devices. |
| > 5 Mbps | Ideal speed. Allows for simultaneous use of VPN (conference calling), video streaming, and file download. |

connection; intermittent connections can make business travel disastrous.

Hotels frequently lack sufficient wireless access points or fail to position them intelligently such that they cover the entire property well. Another common issue is that during times of high occupancy, high Internet use can cause dips in performance. These operational shortcomings leave many guests complaining about having to wander in search of a strong Internet signal, as evidenced by these two reviews:

I had a purchased a 24hr block of wireless internet [...] but could barely get a signal because the room was so far away...I eventually realized that I needed to go on the balcony to get a good signal.

The Internet signal was very weak there. The rooms closer to the middle of the building had a better signal, so we needed to go to the hall every time we needed to access the web.

The image of a guest wandering

around his room searching for the optimal signal so he can continue a conversation with his friend seems ridiculous – but one that happens too often. On a recent business trip with a colleague, I was amused to find that I received a strong signal in my 3rd floor suite, while he struggled to load a page from his 5th floor suite.

HOW TO ADDRESS

If you provide wireless Internet at your property, walk around with a phone or laptop and monitor the strength of your Wi-Fi connection on different floors and sides of the property. If your wireless Internet signal is not powerful enough to reach all areas of your property, you may need to invest in equipment to expand its range.

SECURITY/PRIVACY

With public awareness of identify theft and personal data, reviewers are mentioning security and privacy concerns more frequently. If the Wi-Fi network is insecure, their browsing could be hijacked, video calls could be monitored and most importantly, their financial information could be compromised while making online purchases.

HOW TO ADDRESS

Ensure that your Internet connection is protected with WPA2 encryption. This is built into almost all Internet routers and should be relatively easy to do. Ensure that your password isn't publicly displayed in your hotel. And, preferably, provide each guest with an individual password and username.

Knowing that the average review score is a 4.0, and knowing that Internet-related mentions in reviews brings down the average to a 3.8, it's critical that hotels look at their Internet service as a make-or-break amenity. In today's world, just a few negative guest experiences can result in bad reviews that can hinder future bookings.

i To see the sentiment related to your Internet services, request a free reputation report from Revinate by visiting:
<http://www.revinate.com/resources/competitive-insight-report/>

ABOUT REVINATE

Revinate helps hotels and restaurants compete with a user-friendly software solution for managing and tracking reviews and media mentions on OTAs, review sites, and social networks. Developed exclusively for the hospitality industry, Revinate allows hotels and restaurants to turn online guest feedback into actionable plans to quickly respond to competition and market demands, increase customer satisfaction and drive revenue. Revinate is based in San Francisco and has over 23,000 hotel and restaurant clients worldwide.

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