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APPRAISING EXPERIENCE IN DIGITAL MEDIA THROUGH LINGUISTIC STANCE AND EVALUATION IN USER-GENERATED HOTEL REVIEW DISCOURSE

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Abstract: The rapid expansion of digital platforms has positioned online hotel reviews as influential forms of user-generated discourse that shape public perceptions of service quality. Against this background, the present study examines how reviewers linguistically construct stance and evaluative meanings in digital hospitality communication. The analysis draws on Stance Theory (Hyland, 2021), Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2021), and corpus pragmatics to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding evaluative language. Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-method corpus approach, analyzing more than 17,000 English-language hotel reviews through computational tools, lexical extraction, collocation analysis, and manual annotation of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources. The results show clear distinctions between positive and negative reviews. Positive reviews predominantly use Appreciation and affective stance markers such as clean, friendly, and comfortable, reflecting satisfaction with amenities and overall experience. In contrast, negative reviews contain higher frequencies of Judgment and intensified Graduation markers, including rude, unprofessional, and extremely disappointed, often accompanied by epistemic justifications and narrative complaint structures. Engagement resources further reveal how reviewers align with wider consumer voices to strengthen credibility. Overall, the study concludes that online hotel reviews function as persuasive interpersonal acts shaped by emotional, rhetorical, and cultural factors, offering new insights for applied linguistics and digital media-based hospitality communication.

Keywords: *stance; evaluative language; appraisal theory; corpus pragmatics; digital discourse.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has fundamentally reshaped hospitality operations, particularly in the domains of service delivery, operational efficiency, and guest experience. Within this digital transformation framework, online hotel reviews have emerged as a critical component of technology-mediated service ecosystems. They function not only as channels for customer feedback but also as data-driven social narratives that influence decision-making, enable real-time service optimization, and co-create guest experiences. In line with (Graham & Sasraku-Neequaye, 2025) perspective, these digital interactions extend beyond passive evaluation; they actively contribute to continuous service improvement, enhance organizational responsiveness, and reinforce customer-centric strategies. Consequently, online reviews are not merely reflections of service quality but integral elements of digitally transformed hospitality operations that shape both perceived value and competitive advantage. Additionally, digital transformation in the hospitality industry performs an essential role in improving operational efficiency while simultaneously enhancing guest experience through the integration of digital feedback systems, data analytics, and customer engagement platforms (Anwar & Deliana, 2024). Online reviews are not merely reflections of service quality but integral elements of digitally transformed hospitality operations. They serve as strategic resources that inform managerial decisions, optimize service

processes, and shape perceived value, thereby strengthening competitive advantage in an increasingly digitalized hospitality landscape (Molinillo et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the study in appraisal theory, can be extended to the context of social media and digital literacy. Recent digital environment, evaluative language, realized through affect, judgment, and appreciation, has become central to how users communicate, interpret information, and construct meaning online. On platforms such as Instagram, X, and TripAdvisor, individuals continuously produce evaluative discourse to express emotions, assess behaviors, and appraise experiences. These linguistic choices not only reflect personal attitudes but also influence public perception and collective understanding. From a digital literacy perspective, the ability to interpret and produce such evaluative meanings is essential, as users must navigate implicit attitudes, recognize bias, and engage responsibly in digital communication (Haryudin et al., 2025). Therefore, appraisal resources function as key components of digital literacy, enabling users to critically engage with online content while actively participating in the co-construction of meaning in digital spaces. In linguistic research, stance refers to the ways speakers or writers express attitudes, judgments, feelings, or levels of certainty toward propositions (Hyland, 2017). The theoretical contribution as neutral epistemic stance introduced a significant extension within the broader framework of stance in discourse analysis. In proper way, stance has been understood as the expression of a speaker's attitudes, evaluations, or degrees of certainty toward a proposition, often categorized along subjective or evaluative dimensions such as certainty, doubt, or affective positioning. However, this article challenges the assumption that all stances is inherently evaluative or subjective by proposing a distinct analytical category that captures instances where speakers adopt a seemingly neutral, non-committal, or informational position (Uba & Baynham, 2018).

In the context of appraising experience in digital media, linguistic stance and evaluation in user-generated hotel review discourse, the concepts of stance and Appraisal Theory provide complementary analytical lenses for understanding how reviewers construct and communicate their experiences in digitally mediated environments. Within user-generated hotel reviews, language does more than describe services; it encodes positions, attitudes, and degrees of commitment that shape how experiences are interpreted by wider audiences (Hawamdeh et al., 2025). Stance refers to the ways in which reviewers position themselves toward their propositions, signaling certainty, doubt, evaluation, or alignment. Stance is not limited to obvious subjectivity but also includes neutral epistemic stance, where writers strategically present information as objective or detached. In hotel review discourse, stance is realized through a range of linguistic markers, including modal verbs ("must," "should," "might"), stance adverbs ("definitely," "probably"), complement clauses ("I think," "I believe"), and evidential constructions ("it seems," "it appears"). These markers signal how strongly reviewers commit to their claims and how they position their voice relative to potential readers. For example, a statement like "I highly recommend this hotel" reflects strong epistemic commitment, while "this hotel seems acceptable" indicates a more tentative stance (Poucke, 2025).

While stance captures positioning, appraisal theory explains evaluation. As elaborated in several studies, appraisal resources are organized into three subsystems: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude encloses affect (emotions), judgment (evaluation of people and behavior), and appreciation (evaluation of things and experiences), all of which are highly prominent in hotel reviews (e.g., "the staff were friendly," "the service was unprofessional," "the room was beautiful"). Engagement concerns how reviewers acknowledge or negotiate alternative voices, often through disclaimers or references to others (e.g., "many guests said…," "i personally found…"), while graduation adjusts the intensity or force of evaluation (e.g., "very clean," "extremely disappointing," "somewhat comfortable") (Creelman, 2022).

From a corpus-based perspective, these linguistic features can be systematically identified and quantified across large datasets of online reviews (Locher & Landert, 2023). Frequent lexical bundles and phraseological patterns reveal how stance and appraisal are routinely co-deployed. Positive reviews tend to exhibit strong boosters and high graduation (e.g., "absolutely amazing," "highly recommended"), along with assertive stance markers that convey certainty and satisfaction (Nasser, 2022). In fact, stance and appraisal do not operate independently; they interact dynamically to shape meaning. Stance markers frame how evaluation is delivered, influencing its perceived credibility and impact,

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while appraisal resources provide the semantic content of that evaluation (Biber, 2020). For instance, a negative appreciation ("the room was dirty") becomes more forceful when combined with strong stance ("this hotel is definitely unacceptable"), or more mitigated when paired with neutral stance ("the room seemed somewhat dirty"); yet, this interaction is central to how readers interpret reviews and form perceptions about service quality (Chen et al., 2019). Furthermore, extensive research on sentiment analysis in hospitality, many studies remains limited to polarity classification (positive vs. negative) without examining the deeper linguistic mechanisms that construct evaluation and stance (Pathak et al., 2007). There is a clear gap in integrating stance theory and appraisal analysis within a corpus-driven framework, particularly in digital hospitality discourse where user-generated content plays a decisive role in shaping consumer behavior. addressing this gap allows for a more nuanced understanding of how language functions not only to express opinion but also to position, persuade, and construct experience (Taboada, 2016).

Based on the theoretical and empirical gaps discussed above, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What stance markers are most frequently used in positive and negative online hotel reviews? (2) How do reviewers linguistically construct evaluative meanings through Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources? (3) How do stance and evaluative expressions interact with sentiment categories (positive vs. negative) in shaping customer perceptions?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute to applied linguistics research by offering a detailed account of pragmatic strategies in digital hospitality discourse and providing insights into how evaluative meanings influence consumer interpretation and engagement.

The discussion of stance in digital discourse can be meaningfully inferred from (Hyland, 2017) work "Metadiscourse: What is it and where is it going?", where stance is conceptualized as a core dimension of meta-discourse. Hyland argued that meta-discourse is not simply a set of textual features but a resource for interaction, enabling writers to organize discourse while simultaneously expressing their attitudes, commitments, and relationships with readers. Within this framework, stance represents the ways writers intrude into the discourse to signal their presence, convey certainty or doubt, and evaluate propositions.

Supported this model, stance is typically realized through features such as hedges (e.g., might, perhaps), boosters (e.g., clearly, definitely), attitude markers (e.g., unfortunately, surprisingly), and self-mentions (e.g., I, we). These elements allow writers to calibrate their level of commitment and to guide readers' interpretations (Li & Gumul, 2024). In addition, stance is inherently interpersonal: it reflects how writers anticipate, align with, or negotiate the expectations of their audience. Thus, stance is not only about expressing personal opinion but also about managing credibility, authority, and engagement (Alghazo et al., 2021).

When extended to digital discourse, Hyland's perspective became even more significant. Online environments, such as hotel review platforms, blogs, and social media, intensify the interpersonal nature of writing because texts are immediately public, interactive, and influential. In these contexts, users rely heavily on stance markers to position themselves as credible reviewers, persuasive evaluators, or trustworthy narrators of experience (Grzech, 2021). For example, a reviewer may use boosters ("I definitely recommend this hotel") to project confidence and authority, or hedges ("it seems a bit noisy") to soften criticism and maintain politeness. Self-mentions ("I stayed here for two nights") help establish authenticity and experiential legitimacy (Molinillo et al., 2016).

Moreover, Hyland's framework suggests that stance in digital discourse is closely tied to community norms and expectations. Writers adjust their linguistic choices based on the perceived audience, platform conventions, and communicative goals. In user-generated hotel reviews, this often results in hybrid discourse that blends personal narrative, evaluation, and persuasion, where stance markers play a crucial role in shaping how experiences are interpreted by potential customers. In the other hand, this discursive view of stance aligns with and complements appraisal theory. While appraisal explains the types of evaluation (e.g., affect, judgment, appreciation), Hyland's stance framework explains how strongly and in what manner those evaluations are presented. Together, they provide a comprehensive account of how meaning is constructed in digital texts (Watson & Spence, 2007). Stance comes as a central interpersonal resource in digital discourse, where writers actively manage their voice, credibility,

and relationship with readers. This is particularly relevant to user-generated hotel reviews, where stance markers function not only to express opinion but also to influence perception and decision-making in a highly competitive digital marketplace (Wyer, 2004).

Evaluation becomes fundamental element of online review discourse, as reviewers do more than simply describe their experiences; they actively assess events, individuals, and environments (Kang & Eshkol-taravella, 2020). It functions as a key linguistic resource that structures discourse, conveys the writer's position, and shapes how readers interpret the information presented. In the context of hotel reviews, evaluative language is used to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction, emphasize particular aspects of service, and justify emotional reactions. Such evaluations can be realized through a variety of linguistic forms, including adjectives (e.g., dirty, luxurious, disappointing), adverbs (e.g., surprisingly, extremely), metaphorical expressions (e.g., a nightmare stay), and narrative strategies that situate judgments within a broader experiential context (Shrestha, 2022). Recent findings indicate that evaluative language is closely associated with the perceived usefulness and credibility of reviews. Reviews that employ intensified or emphatic expressions (e.g., absolutely terrible, incredibly friendly staff) tend to be viewed as more authentic and convincing. Furthermore, negative evaluations often attract greater attention from readers, especially when they are supported by detailed explanations or explicit reasoning. This suggests that evaluation not only reflects emotional responses but also performs strategic communicative functions within digital review environments (Xingyu & Huiying, 2024).

In Indonesian settings, evaluative language is often shaped by socio-cultural norms related to politeness, respect, and emotional moderation. Reviewers commonly soften negative assessments through indirect expressions or by combining criticism with positive remarks, such as acknowledging positive aspects before highlighting shortcomings. This approach helps mitigate the impact of criticism while preserving the reviewer's credibility and maintaining social harmony (Mambetniyazova, 2024). Such patterns indicate that evaluative practices in digital communication are influenced not only by individual perspectives but also by broader cultural expectations. Evaluation in online reviews also operates within a narrative framework. Reviewers frequently organize their experiences into sequential accounts, beginning with initial impressions, followed by key events, and concluding with an overall judgment (Hossain, 2024). This storytelling structure allows readers to engage emotionally with the reviewer's experience and strengthens the persuasive effect of the review. As digital platforms continue to evolve, incorporating multimodal features such as images, emoji, and formatting styles, evaluative meaning is expressed across multiple channels, offering new opportunities for linguistic exploration. At the same time, active user participation in review platforms enhances the visibility and perceived credibility of hotels, influencing consumer decision-making. Variations in evaluative patterns may also arise depending on factors such as destination and hotel characteristics. Overall, encouraging customers to share their experiences online is strategically important, as user-generated content not only reflects satisfaction levels but also shapes market competitiveness and future booking behavior (Nanavaratorn, 2025).

Beyond these aspects, evaluative language is closely intertwined with stance, as reviewers not only evaluate but also position themselves toward their evaluations. Through linguistic choices such as boosters (definitely, absolutely), hedges (somewhat, a bit), and self-mentions (I think, we found), reviewers signal their level of certainty, involvement, and authority. This positioning influences how readers interpret the credibility of the review, as strongly asserted evaluations tend to be perceived as more confident and persuasive, while hedged expressions may appear more cautious or balanced. In addition, evaluative language can be systematically examined through appraisal theory, particularly through the subsystems of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Attitude captures emotional and evaluative meanings (e.g., satisfaction, criticism), Engagement reflects how reviewers align or contrast their views with others, and Graduation adjusts the intensity of evaluation. In hotel reviews, these resources often operate simultaneously, creating layered meanings that go beyond simple positive or negative polarity. For instance, a statement such as "the room was quite clean, but the service was extremely slow" combines mitigation and intensification to present a nuanced evaluation.

Furthermore, a corpus-based perspective reveals that evaluative language tends to form recurring patterns or lexical bundles across large

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datasets of reviews. Expressions such as "very friendly staff," "highly recommended," or "not worth the price" appear frequently, indicating conventionalized ways of expressing evaluation in digital hospitality discourse. These patterns demonstrate that evaluation is not purely individual but also shaped by shared linguistic practices within online communities. Overall, the interaction between evaluative language and sentiment categories highlights the complexity of meaning construction in digital reviews (Simatupang, 2022). While positive reviews typically employ strong intensification and clear endorsement, negative reviews often display a wider range of strategies, from direct criticism to softened dissatisfaction. This variation suggests that evaluation is both expressive and strategic, enabling reviewers to balance emotional expression with social considerations. Consequently, understanding evaluative language in online reviews requires not only identifying sentiment but also analyzing how linguistic resources are used to construct, negotiate, and communicate meaning in digital contexts (Pasaribu & Sinambela, 2022).

Appraisal Theory provides a framework for analyzing evaluative meaning through Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation (Martin & White, 2005). Attitude concerns emotions, judgments, and aesthetic evaluations; Engagement examines how writers negotiate alternative views; and Graduation captures intensity or degree (Wyer, 2004). This framework is well-suited to digital texts, where subtle evaluative shifts shape meaning. It has been widely applied to user-generated content such as social media posts and reviews (Creelman, 2022). In consumer reviews, Attitude often shows clear patterns: appreciation evaluates products, while judgment targets staff behavior. Graduation amplifies or softens evaluations, influencing persuasiveness (Wan & Forey, 2024), and Engagement resources help build credibility by aligning with shared opinions.

In Southeast Asia, appraisal is shaped by cultural norms of politeness and indirectness. Indonesian users, for example, often mitigate negative evaluations or combine them with positive remarks to maintain harmony (Mambetniyazova, 2024). This highlights the need for cultural sensitivity in analysis, especially in multilingual contexts. Appraisal Theory also aligns well with corpus-based methods, enabling systematic coding and large-scale analysis while preserving qualitative depth (Xingyu & Huiying, 2024).

Corpus pragmatics combines corpus linguistics and pragmatics to analyze large datasets of natural language use. It is especially useful for digital discourse, revealing patterns such as stance markers, collocations, and evaluative tendencies that are difficult to detect manually (Han, 2020). In hospitality research, it has been used to study sentiment, complaints, and credibility (Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2011). Cultural differences are evident: Asian reviewers tend to express criticism indirectly, while Western reviewers are more explicit. Corpus analysis also shows how emotional patterns develop across reviews (Rahman et al., 2024).

In digital linguistics, corpus pragmatics highlights how platforms shape language use. By combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, it improves research reliability and captures recurring patterns in large datasets (Anthony, 2023). It also supports detailed analysis of stance, showing how boosters, hedges, and self-mentions interact with evaluation (Stanić, 2024). Strong stance often aligns with intensified positive reviews, while negative reviews vary between strong and mitigated strategies. Additionally, corpus methods enable systematic application of Appraisal Theory by identifying patterns of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation (Liu et al., 2026). This allows researchers to move beyond simple sentiment analysis toward a deeper understanding of how evaluation and meaning are constructed in digital hotel reviews (Moreno-ortiz, 2025).

METHOD

This study is based in the principles of corpus linguistics and corpus pragmatics, which emphasize the systematic investigation of naturally occurring language within large-scale datasets (Lusta & Mohammadzadeh, 2023). The dataset consists of more than 17,000 publicly available English-language hotel reviews collected from major digital platforms such as Google Reviews, TripAdvisor, and Booking.com. These user-generated texts represent authentic digital discourse, making them highly relevant for the study of language in digital media contexts. Since the data are drawn from publicly accessible sources rather than direct participant involvement, the research follows ethical practices in corpus studies, including the use of anonymized and non-identifiable content as well as compliance with platform data policies. The corpus includes 10,214 positive reviews and 6,877 negative

reviews, resulting in approximately 450,000 processed tokens.

The analytical approach is informed by frameworks drawn from corpus linguistics, stance theory, and appraisal theory (Hyland, 2017). Corpus linguistics provides the methodological basis for identifying frequency patterns, collocations, and concordance lines, based on the assumption that meaning emerges from repeated linguistic usage across large datasets (Creelman, 2022). Corpus pragmatics extends this approach by linking quantitative findings to pragmatic functions such as stance-taking, evaluation, and interpersonal meaning. At the same time, stance theory supports the identification of attitudinal, epistemic, and stylistic expressions, while appraisal analysis enables the classification of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources. Together, these perspectives justify a mixed-method design that combines quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative interpretation (Wang & Li, 2024).

To operationalize these frameworks, several computational tools and techniques were employed. Text preprocessing was conducted using Python 3.10 with linguistic libraries for lemmatization and part-of-speech tagging, ensuring that the data were standardized and suitable for analysis (Nasser, 2022). Sentiment classification was validated through both machine learning techniques and lexicon-based approaches, reflecting complementary methods in sentiment analysis. For corpus analysis, tools such as AntConc and LancsBox were used to generate frequency lists, identify collocations, and extract keywords, while cloud-based platforms supported additional analysis where necessary (Alek, 2023). These tools enable the identification of linguistic patterns that are difficult to detect through manual analysis (Anthony, 2023). The research procedures followed a structured yet iterative process. The corpus was compiled using automated data collection techniques aligned with digital discourse research practices. Data cleaning involved the removal of emojis, URLs, metadata, and non-standard characters, as well as the normalization of spelling variations. Although sentiment labels were already available, they were cross-checked using automated sentiment analysis to improve reliability and minimize classification errors (Moreno et al., 2023).

Stance identification in this study follows a framework that includes affective, epistemic, and evaluative dimensions. Lists of linguistic markers such as hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and intensifiers were compiled and used to extract stance features from the corpus. Evaluative language was identified through keyword analysis, collocational patterns, and semantic prosody, drawing on established approaches to evaluative lexis. For appraisal analysis, the study focuses on the three subsystems of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. An initial automated tagging process based on predefined appraisal categories was followed by manual verification of a portion of the dataset to ensure contextual accuracy (Paul & Handford, 2012). To ensure reliability, two trained coders independently annotated a subset of 500 reviews using the appraisal framework. The level of agreement between coders indicated a high degree of consistency, confirming the robustness of the annotation process. Following annotation, the dataset was analysed quantitatively using statistical measures such as frequency counts, log-likelihood, chi-square tests, and co-occurrence analysis. Qualitative analysis was then conducted through concordance examination to uncover pragmatic functions, including complaint strategies, emotional escalation, justification, and alignment with readers. This stage reflects the principles of corpus-assisted discourse analysis, which integrates empirical data with interpretive insights (Fusari, 2026).

It can be concluded that the study adopts a triangulated approach by combining quantitative and qualitative findings to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the data. This integrative method allows for the identification of recurring patterns while also explaining their pragmatic significance within the digital context of hotel reviews. By bridging corpus linguistics, pragmatics, and appraisal analysis, the study offers a detailed account of how evaluative meaning is constructed and communicated in contemporary digital consumer discourse (Paul & Handford, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the corpus analysis reveal clear distinctions in the linguistic construction of stance and evaluative meanings across the 17,000 hotel reviews analyzed in this study. Quantitative analysis shows that positive and negative reviews differ significantly in the frequency, type, and semantic distribution of stance markers. Positive reviews contain a higher proportion of affectively positive stance markers such as amazing, friendly, clean, comfortable, and highly recommended, whereas negative reviews show a concentration of

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strongly intensified negative forms such as dirty, rude, terrible, extremely disappointed, and worst experience. Frequency counts indicate that boosters (e.g., very, really, absolutely) appear 2.4 times more frequently in negative reviews, suggesting that reviewers intensify negative affect more than positive affect. This aligns with earlier findings in digital review studies that negative evaluations tend to be expressed with higher emotional intensity.

Collocation analysis further demonstrates that positive stance markers tend to co-occur with appreciation-related nouns such as room, staff, service, breakfast, and location, forming clusters such as very clean room and friendly staff. In contrast, negative stance markers collocate with nouns denoting service failures or discomfort, including bathroom, noise, receptionist, and smell. Concordance lines reveal that negative reviews often include narrative sequences describing escalating dissatisfaction, beginning with mild assessments *(e.g., the room was not what I expected)* and moving toward stronger judgments (*e.g., the staff were extremely unprofessional*). This escalation pattern reflects a pragmatic strategy of legitimizing complaints through sequential evaluation.

Table 1. *Frequency of stance categories in positive and negative reviews*

Stance Category	Positive Reviews	Negative Reviews
Affective Stance	15,230	9,840
Epistemic Stance	4,230	6,580
Evaluative Stance	18,760	13,220

Positive reviews are dominated by affective and evaluative stance markers such as *amazing, nice,* and *clean,* whereas negative reviews contain more epistemic stance markers indicating justification (*I think, I believe, it seems*).

Table 2. *Distribution of appraisal resources*

Appraisal Category	Positive Reviews	Negative Reviews
Affect	8,200	5,400
Judgment	3,400	6,200
Appreciation	11,200	7,100

Positive reviews focus heavily on Appreciation (e.g., nice room, great location), while negative reviews rely more on Judgment (e.g., unprofessional staff, rude receptionist).

Table 3. *Top 15 frequent evaluative lexis in positive and negative reviews*

Rank	Positive Word	Frequency	Negative Word	Frequency
1	clean	2,540	dirty	2,140
2	friendly	2,310	rude	1,980
3	comfortable	1,980	noisy	1,620
4	amazing	1,850	terrible	1,510
5	great	1,690	disappointed	1,420
6	perfect	1,240	worst	1,350
7	helpful	1,180	unprofessional	1,120
8	beautiful	1,030	smelly	960
9	good	980	broken	940
10	excellent	870	uncomfortable	880
11	nice	820	slow	820
12	quiet	680	unclean	780
13	cozy	610	poor	700
14	enjoyable	550	awful	680
15	recommended	530	disappointing	640

The analysis of stance categories shows that epistemic stance markers are used more moderately overall but appear frequently in contexts where reviewers justify their evaluations. Phrases such as *I believe, I think, it seems,* and *in my experience* appear in both positive and negative reviews, but negative reviews contain more epistemic self-positioning. This pattern suggests that reviewers strengthen the credibility of negative claims by foregrounding personal experience. In comparison, positive reviews rely more on affective stance (expressing emotions such as joy, comfort, or gratitude) than epistemic stance, reflecting a more straightforward evaluative purpose.

Appraisal analysis reveals distinct distributions of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources across the dataset. Attitude markers dominate the corpus, accounting for 62% of all appraisal occurrences. Within Attitude,

Appreciation is the most frequent subtype (e.g., beautiful hotel, excellent facility, disappointing stay, and terrible breakfast), followed by Judgment (e.g., helpful staff, rude receptionist) and Affect (e.g., *loved the view, felt uncomfortable, was shocked*). Positive reviews exhibit a prevalence of Appreciation-driven evaluations, especially related to service quality, staff friendliness, and room cleanliness. Negative reviews, however, display a preference for Judgment, particularly moral or behavioral evaluations of staff and management. This difference indicates that dissatisfied reviewers tend to evaluate people's behavior, whereas satisfied reviewers focus more on evaluating things, places, and experiences.

Engagement resources appear extensively in the corpus, especially in negative reviews where reviewers invoke external voices to strengthen their complaints. Expressions such as many guests mentioned this problem, I read other reviews saying the same thing, or as others have pointed out serve to expand dialogic space and construct a collective stance against the hotel. Positive reviews use fewer Engagement markers; when they do appear, they often function to confirm widely shared positive impressions. This pattern supports the argument that reviewers strategically use Engagement resources to either align with or distance themselves from imagined audiences.

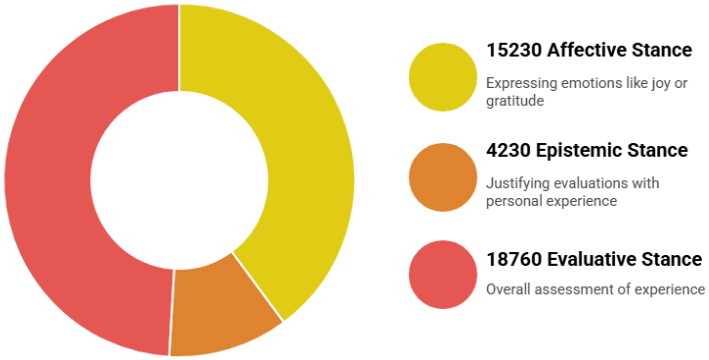


Figure 1. *Distribution of stance categories in positive reviews (occurrences)*

Graduation resources reveal substantial asymmetry between positive and negative sentiments. Negative reviews contain significantly more force and focus intensifiers such as extremely, absolutely, terribly, and incredibly, suggesting that emotional escalation is a key rhetorical strategy in complaint discourse. Positive reviews use more moderate intensifiers (e.g., *really, very*) and softeners (e.g., *quite, fairly*), indicating a preference for less dramatic evaluation. This difference supports claims in appraisal research that negative affect often requires stronger linguistic justification.

The results also reveal a strong interaction between stance markers and sentiment categories. Statistical testing indicates that affective stance markers strongly correlate with positive sentiment, while judgment markers correlate with negative sentiment ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that expressions of judgment toward staff or management are strong predictors of negative reviews. Conversely, appreciation-driven positive evaluations tend to center on environmental or visual aesthetics (e.g., *beautiful view, nice ambience, clean facility*). This division highlights the different aspects of hotel experience that most strongly trigger positive versus negative evaluations.

Qualitative analysis of concordance lines further illustrates the pragmatic functions of stance and appraisal in digital reviews. Positive reviews often employ stance markers to express gratitude or satisfaction, sometimes framing experiences as exceeding expectations. For instance, phrases such as I was pleasantly surprised or this hotel made our holiday perfect represent narrative stance-taking where reviewers construct emotional uplift. Negative reviews, however, frequently include justificatory narratives, referencing timelines, staff interactions, or unmet promises. The pattern at first… but then… is commonly used to signal a shift from neutral expectation to negative evaluation, reinforcing the legitimacy of complaints.

Overall, the findings indicate that stance-taking and evaluative language in online hotel reviews are systematically patterned and strongly aligned with sentiment categories. Reviewers rely on affective, judgmental, and intensified evaluative expressions to construct interpersonal meanings, negotiate credibility, and influence

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reader interpretation. These results confirm that stance and appraisal are central to understanding how digital consumer discourse shapes perceptions of hospitality services.

The findings of this study demonstrate that stance and evaluative language are central to how reviewers construct meaning, express judgment, and negotiate interpersonal alignment in online hotel reviews. The dominant presence of evaluative stance markers and appraisal resources across both positive and negative reviews confirms that online consumer discourse functions not merely as information-sharing but as a form of mediated interpersonal communication. This conceptualization of stance becomes an interpersonal function that positions writers affectively and epistemically in relation to readers. The corpus results show that reviewers employ stance markers strategically to justify personal opinions, manage expectations, and guide reader interpretation, that digital discourse requires explicit stance-taking due to the absence of contextual cues.

A key finding is the asymmetrical distribution of stance markers across sentiment categories. Positive reviews rely heavily on affective and appreciation-driven stance, reaffirming earlier observations that satisfaction tends to be expressed through emotional positivity and evaluative judgments of physical amenities. Negative reviews, in contrast, contain more epistemic stance markers, such as "I think, I believe, or it seems", indicating that negative evaluators provide rationalization and evidence to legitimize their dissatisfaction. Negative digital evaluations often require more justification because they challenge expected politeness norms or social face. In Indonesian contexts, the higher presence of epistemic stance in negative reviews may also reflect cultural expectations surrounding mitigated criticism, consistent with previous research on Indonesian politeness and evaluative practices. The research also indicated a clear preference for judgment markers in negative reviews, while positive reviews emphasize appreciation. This contrast resonates with Appraisal Theory's distinction between evaluating people (Judgment) and evaluating things or experiences (Appreciation). The findings observed that complaints in digital reviews tend to target human behaviour, particularly staff professionalism and hospitality, because interpersonal interactions are central to how guests interpret service quality. This study affirms that dissatisfaction is predominantly person-centered, whereas satisfaction is object-centered. Negative reviews frequently describe staff as rude, unprofessional, aggressive, or unhelpful, suggesting that interpersonal failures are more memorable and more likely to be linguistically intensified. Positive reviews, on the other hand, highlight attributes such as clean rooms, beautiful views, good breakfast, or comfortable beds, confirming that environmental and experiential aspects form the core of positive appreciation.

Graduation patterns also reveal important pragmatic tendencies. Reviewers intensify negative evaluations more strongly than positive ones, using high-force markers such as extremely, absolutely, terribly, and incredibly. This supports prior studies showing that negative emotional expressions tend to be linguistically escalated to enhance the persuasive force of complaints. Positive reviews, in contrast, rely on moderate intensifiers such as very and really, reflecting a more balanced, less dramatic evaluative style. This unequal suggests that emotional escalation is a rhetorical strategy used primarily in negative digital discourse to build credibility and moral justification for dissatisfaction.

The presence of narrative evaluation and justification sequences in negative reviews provides further insight into pragmatic behaviour in digital hospitality communication. Many negative reviews contain narrative patterns such as at first… but then…, where reviewers structure their experiences chronologically to dramatize the shift from expectation to disappointment. The narrative framing in user-generated content enhances emotional engagement and strengthens evaluative claims. Such narrative-pragmatic structures highlight how reviewers use storytelling not only to describe but also to persuade and influence potential hotel guests.

Additionally, the increased use of engagement markers in negative reviews indicated how reviewers invoke collective experience to validate their claims. Engagement resources allow speakers to manage various comments by aligning with or distancing themselves from other voices. In digital review settings, this alignment functions as a persuasive mechanism: reviewers strengthen their complaints by referencing communal dissatisfaction. The strong presence of stance and appraisal markers in the hotel review corpus supports the view that digital media environments encourage explicit evaluative and interpersonal communication. Users construct identities as experienced travellers, victims of poor service, or enthusiastic tourists, thereby integrating stance-

taking with identity performance in online platforms.

On a theoretical level, the integrated use of stance theory, appraisal theory, and corpus as dataset prove effective for capturing the complex evaluative functions in hotel reviews. Stance theory explains the interpersonal positioning; this appraisal theory showed the systematics of evaluation and emotional scaling; and corpus pragmatics provides empirical grounding for both. The triangulation of these frameworks offers a comprehensive understanding of evaluative meaning-making in digital hospitality discourse, an approach largely absent in prior studies, which tended to focus on isolated frameworks or smaller datasets.

Overall, the discussion shows that reviewers strategically mobilize stance and appraisal resources to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction, justify personal experiences, and influence the perceptions of future hotel guests. These linguistic behaviors reveal that online reviews are not just descriptive texts but dynamic interpersonal acts shaped by emotional, cultural, and rhetorical factors. By situating the findings within existing literature and digital discourse theory, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of how evaluative meanings are constructed and negotiated in online hospitality reviews.

CONCLUSION

This study examined stance-taking and evaluative language in a large corpus of more than 17,000 online hotel reviews, integrating Appraisal Theory, stance theory, and corpus pragmatics to uncover how guests construct interpersonal meanings in digital hospitality discourse. The findings show that stance and evaluation are not randomly distributed but systematically patterned according to sentiment category and discourse function. Positive reviews are characterized by abundant Appreciation resources and affective stance, focusing primarily on evaluating physical amenities and pleasant experiences. In contrast, negative reviews rely more heavily on Judgment resources and epistemic stance, reflecting a tendency to evaluate human behavior and justify dissatisfaction through intensified and narrative-driven complaints.

The results also demonstrate that reviewers strategically employ Graduation resources to scale emotional intensity, with negative reviews showing significantly stronger intensification than positive ones. Engagement resources further reveal how reviewers align themselves with broader communities of experience to strengthen credibility and construct shared evaluative positions. These patterns confirm that online reviews are inherently interpersonal, rhetorical, and socially situated rather than merely descriptive records of hotel experiences. In the other hand, this study contributes by demonstrating the value of integrating stance theory, appraisal theory, and corpus to analyze large-scale digital discourse. While previous research often employed these frameworks in isolation or on limited datasets, the present study shows that a triangulated approach offers a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of evaluative meaning-making in user-generated content. Methodologically, the study highlights the utility of combining computational techniques, lexicon-based extraction, and qualitative interpretation to analyze digital texts in a replicable yet context-sensitive manner.

In this research, the findings provide insights for the hospitality industry, suggesting that guests' linguistic expressions of dissatisfaction focus more on interpersonal service quality, while positive evaluations centre on environmental attributes. Understanding these linguistic patterns can help hotel managers identify service issues, improve customer communication, and respond to evaluative discourse more strategically. The results also underscore the importance of digital literacy for consumers and service providers, particularly in interpreting and managing online reputation. It can be inferred that this study find out that stance and evaluative language are fundamental components of digital review communication. By revealing how guests linguistically construct attitudes, emotions, and judgments in online hotel reviews, the study enhances our understanding of digital hospitality discourse and contributes to broader discussions on language use in media-mediated environments.

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