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Unraveling the Interplay of Review Depth, Review Breadth, and Review Language Style on Review Usefulness and Review Adoption

ABSTRACT

To examine whether long reviews are uniformly more useful to readers, this study utilizes the experimental design approach to investigate the interplay of review depth, review breadth, and review language style on readers' perceived usefulness and adoption intention of online hotel reviews. Drawing on the results from two experiments, review depth is proven to exert a positive impact on readers' review usefulness and adoption intention. The moderating role of review breadth is verified, and the positive effect of review depth on review usefulness is attenuated (accentuated) when review breadth is high (low). The moderating role of review language style is also confirmed, and the result shows longer reviews written in literal language are considered more useful to readers than those written in figurative language. Being one of the first studies examining the interplay of review content and review style on review usefulness, this study provides important theoretical and practical contributions.

Keywords: Online reviews; review usefulness; review helpfulness; review depth; review breadth; review language style.

1. INTRODUCTION

Considering the high-priced, high-involvement, and intangible nature of tourism products, particularly hotel accommodation, travelers often read online reviews early in the decision-making process in order to mitigate the risk of making a poor decision (TripAdvisor, 2019). Undoubtedly, the presence of online reviews benefits travelers by reducing information asymmetry (Manes & Tchetchik, 2018). The sheer quantity of online reviews, however, makes it difficult for travelers to process them all and identify the useful ones (Ghose, Opeirotis, & Li, 2019). To identify reviews with high diagnostic value for helping consumers to make better purchase decisions, the question of *"what makes an online travel review useful?"* has been

extensively researched (e.g., Chatterjee, 2020; Hu, 2020; Hu & Yang, 2021; Wang, Tang, & Kim, 2019).

Although the question of *"what makes an online travel review useful?"* has elicited considerable scholarly attention, several research gaps remain unresolved. From the methodological standpoint, previous researchers explored the topic in a uniform fashion. Of those studies examining the aforementioned question, the majority retrieve and analyze archival data from consumer review sites to verify how proposed antecedents influence the count of helpful votes (e.g., Hu, 2020; Li, Liu, & Zhang, 2020; Liang, Schuckert, & Law, 2019). Pan and Zhang (2011) note that using helpful votes as the proxy of review usefulness may contain systematic bias, because advertisers can "plant" helpful votes on positive reviews. Racherla and Friske (2012) add that the count of helpful votes is not an optimal indicator of review usefulness due to its inability of capturing readers' abstaining behavior (i.e., not giving a helpful vote to a review does not mean that review is not helpful). Some recent studies conclude by advising future researchers to investigate review usefulness using an experimental design approach, because it can better confirm the causal relationship between review characteristics and review usefulness (e.g., Kwok & Xie, 2016; Wang, Fong, & Law, 2020). While more primary studies emerged recently (e.g., Huang, Chang, Bilgihan, & Okumus, 2020; Shin, Chung, Xiang, & Koo, 2019), progress on this front can at best be characterized as gradual.

From the topical standpoint, multiple studies test and verify that review depth or review length (as measured by the number of words included in a review) has a positive impact on review usefulness (e.g., Hu & Yang, 2021; Liang et al., 2019; Shin et al., 2019). While prior studies demonstrate that longer reviews are generally more useful to readers, the interplay of review depth and review breadth (as measured by the number of product attributes covered by a review) on review usefulness has been underexplored. Information processing theory suggests that one argument is more persuasive when it provides a larger amount of information (Schwenk, 1986; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Indeed, as a consumer review is an argument made by a reviewer to persuade or dissuade other consumers from buying the same product, the depth and breadth of review content will interactively determine the richness of evidence that a reviewer can offer to support his/her stance (Qazi, Syed, Raj, Cambria, Tahir, & Alghazzawi, 2016).

Since long reviews contain more descriptions and specifics regarding the reviewed product, longer reviews are more persuasive and useful to readers than shorter ones (Hu & Chen, 2016). Likewise, as broad reviews (i.e., reviews covering more product attributes) can help readers thoroughly assess the subject being reviewed and reduce uncertainty, broad reviews are more useful to readers than narrow ones (i.e., reviews covering less product attributes) (Qazi et al., 2016). Although previous research verifies how review depth and review breadth independently affect review usefulness, their interactive impact remains unclear. If two reviews were equally long, would readers perceive the long and broad review as more useful than the long and narrow review? Would review breadth attenuate or accentuate the effect of review depth on review usefulness? Answers to these questions remain unknown at the moment of writing.

The interplay of review depth and review language style on review usefulness is another knowledge gap that has not been systematically examined. As advocated by Sonkowsky's (1959) ancient rhetorical theory and other communication theories (e.g., Gallois & Giles, 2015), conversational style may alter the message receiver's perception towards the sender and his/her shared content. As online reviews are primarily textual-based while content and style in reviews are inherently inseparable, the language used in review writing has a substantial influence on readers' post-reading affect and behavior (e.g., Liu, Xie, & Zhang, 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Pan and Zhang (2011) state that reviews with many emotional statements may introduce idiosyncratic noise and undermine their overall usefulness. Even though the choice of review language style is proven to exert some influence on readers, the interplay of review depth and review language style on review usefulness has seldom been a matter of prime interest in prior studies. Following the notions shared in psycholinguistic literature (e.g., Burgoon, 1995; Gallois & Giles, 2015), long reviews may not always be useful to readers if they are written in figurative language. Given that figurative language uses linguistic techniques like hyperboles or metaphors to conveys additional connotations beyond literal meanings (Fogelin, 2011), long reviews written in figurative language may even be considered as less useful because readers need more cognitive effort to process lengthy and complex ones (Kronrod & Danziger, 2013). Though this proposition is theoretically compelling, knowledge about the interplay of review depth and review language style on review usefulness remains limited.

Noticing the research voids identified above, in this study, we aimed to complement the growing stream of research on online reviews by examining the interplay of review depth, review breadth, and review language style on readers' perceived review usefulness and adoption intention. Review depth, review breadth and review language style were highlighted in the current study because Sonkowsky's (1959) ancient rhetorical theory suggests that message content (i.e., *"what to say"*) and message delivery mode (i.e., *"how to say"*) are equally critical in determining the efficacy of social communication. To be specific, the objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to re-examine the impact of review depth on readers' perceived usefulness and adoption intention of online hotel reviews; (2) to examine whether the impact of review depth on review usefulness and adoption intention is moderated by review breadth; and (3) to examine whether the impact of review depth on review usefulness and adoption intention is moderated by review language style. Drawing on the findings of two between-subject experiments with online hotel review readers, the present investigation will unveil the differential impact of review depth on readers' perceived usefulness and adoption intention of online travel reviews.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Defined as the extent to which a receiver perceives a review to be useful in performing his/her task at hand, review usefulness has been extensively researched in hospitality (e.g., Chatterjee, 2020), marketing (e.g., Schoenmueller, Netzer, & Stahl, 2020), information systems (e.g., Filieri, Galati, & Raguseo, 2021), and many other disciplines (e.g., Filieri, 2015; Qazi et al., 2016). The problem of information overload is the leading reason why review usefulness became a hot topic (Hong, Xu, Wang, & Fan, 2017). Thanks to the emergence of social media, consumers now have more avenues to share personal knowledge, experience, and opinions about travel and hospitality products and services. From the receivers' point of view, the proliferation of online reviews reduces their search cost because they can now easily obtain information to use in decision-making. However, the abundance of online reviews increases receivers' cognitive cost in processing a substantial amount of information (Kwok & Xie, 2016). Since receivers are incapable of analyzing all reviews available online, adding to their preference of adopting selective processing patterns (Gottschalk & Mafael, 2017), many researchers endeavor to

identify the characteristics of reviews which are perceived as more useful than others in the eyes of receivers.

Table 1 summarizes the studies examining factors affecting perceived usefulness of online travel reviews. As shown in the Methodology column, studies using primary data solicited from survey questionnaires and experiments are scarce (Filieri, 2015; Shin et al., 2019). Conversely, studies using panel data analysis are dominant and reviews from Yelp are often used for validating the influence of the discussed factors. After analyzing 3,000 reviews collected from Yelp, Racherla and Friske (2012) found that reviews provided by reputable and expert reviewers are perceived as more useful to readers. Liu and Park (2015) conducted a similar study, and they unveiled that review readability is a vital determinant of readers' perceived review usefulness.

Reviews from TripAdvisor were also frequently retrieved and analyzed in prior studies. By harnessing the negative binomial regression method to analyze attraction review data from TripAdvisor, Fang, Ye, Kucukusta, and Law (2016) suggested that reviews expressing more extreme sentiment receive more helpful votes. Using archival data from TripAdvisor, Liang et al.'s (2019) study reported that readers are more likely to give helpful votes to informative and readable reviews with extreme ratings. Also, reviews produced by experienced and reputable reviewers are more likely to be considered as helpful by readers. While studies using panel data analysis can contribute valuable insights to theory and practice, many researchers challenge the validity of those study findings because helpful votes can be manipulated (Pan & Zhang, 2011). Adding that the count of helpful votes is subject to under-reporting bias (i.e., cannot capture readers' abstaining behavior; see Racherla & Friske, 2012; Yang, Hlee, Lee, & Koo, 2017), more primary studies are warranted to enrich the knowledge about *"what makes an online travel review useful"*.

Please Insert Table 1 Here

Regarding the set of factors that has been examined in prior studies, a few observations are worth noting. First, the impact of review depth on review usefulness is inconclusive. While many empirical studies verify that review depth has a positive impact on review usefulness (e.g., Kim & Hwang, 2020; Park & Nicolau, 2015), conflicting results could still be found in studies like Chatterjee (2020) and Filieri (2015). In view of the inconclusive results in the extant literature, the impact of review depth on review usefulness merits additional investigation in order to verify if the expression *"the longer the better"* is correct. Second, existing knowledge about the impact of style-related factors on review usefulness is limited at the moment of writing. As exhibited in Table 1, previous researchers mostly focused on the impact induced by content- and reviewer-related factors. Scholarly attention towards the impact of style-related factors on review usefulness is scarce. Again, Sonkowsky's (1959) ancient rhetorical theory underscores that message content (i.e., *"what to say"*) and message delivery mode (i.e., *"how to say"*) are critical in determining the efficacy of social communication. While several studies empirically confirm the positive influence of review readability (e.g., Liang et al., 2019; Sirvastava & Kalro, 2019), the impact of linguistic style and particularly review language style on review usefulness is still in its infancy.

Last but not least, extant studies always overlook the interactive impact of discussed factors on review usefulness. As can be seen in Table 1, most prior studies assume the impact of review- or/and reviewer-related factors to be additive. Even though prior researchers often considered multiple factors in their studies, besides a few notable exceptions (e.g., Lee, Jeong, & Lee, 2017; Ma et al., 2018), each factor is assumed to influence review usefulness independently. Following the principles of Doty, Glick, and Huber's (1993) configuration theory, factors rarely influence outcomes of interest in isolation. Instead, factors often jointly and interactively determine the outcomes of interest (Zhu, Liu, Zeng, & Huang, 2020). Considering that review content and review style are inseparable, it is essential to know how they interactively affect review usefulness in order to gain a thorough understanding of *"what makes an online travel review useful"*. Yet, to the best of the author's knowledge, the interplay of review content and review style on review usefulness lacks scholarly coverage in the literature.

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

3.1. Review Depth

As a representation of the word-level informativeness of online reviews, review depth has long been recognized as a decisive determinant of review persuasiveness and review usefulness (Fink, Rosenfeld, & Ravid, 2018; Hu & Yang, 2021). Typically measured by the number of words or characters included in a review for a specific product, review depth is often hypothesized to be positively related to review usefulness (Liang et al., 2019; Liu & Park, 2015; Racherla & Friske, 2012). Numerous studies have also proven the expression *"the longer the better"* to be a valid one (Hong et al., 2017; Kim & Hwang, 2020; Srivastava & Kalro, 2019). For instance, Mudambi and Schuff's (2010) pioneering study verifies that review depth can increase the diagnosticity and usefulness of online reviews. Hu and Yang's (2021) recent study corroborates that the effect of review depth on review usefulness is stable over time.

The reasoning underlying the positive relationship between review depth and review usefulness rests on three arguments. First, longer reviews are less likely to be overlooked than shorter ones because they take up more screen space (Kuan, Hui, Prasarnphanich, & Lai, 2015). Second, as longer reviews generally comprise more product descriptions as well as specifics about how and where the product is used, their rich information can help readers mitigate product quality uncertainty and allow them to picture themselves using the product (Pan & Zhang, 2011). Third, review depth signals the involvement of review writers (Racherla & Friske, 2012). As the writers of long reviews are usually more enthusiastic due to their very positive or negative experience with the subject under review, these writers can thus share more knowledge and insights with prospective customers.

While many studies consistently prove that review depth has a positive impact on review usefulness, several researchers underscore that the marginal utility of review depth may become negative after passing the point of optimum cognitive load (Fink et al., 2018; Huang, Chen, Yen, & Tran, 2015). Since humans have a finite ability to process information, the overabundance of information may impair readers' comprehension and render additional information detrimental to

decision-making. Still, considering that extremely long reviews are rarely found (Mariani, Borghi, & Gretzel, 2019) and reviews with elaborate information tend to be more persuasive than those with less information (Daft & Lengel, 1986), it is deemed appropriate to assume that review depth has a positive impact of review usefulness. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H1. *Review depth (as measured by the number of words included in a review) has a positive impact on (a) readers' perceived review usefulness and (b) readers' review adoption*

3.2. Review Breadth

As a surrogate of the topic-level informativeness of online reviews, review breadth is another critical determinant that may influence readers' evaluation of review usefulness (Dong, Schaal, O'Mahony, McCarthy, & Smyth, 2013). Considering that products generally possess many different attributes (e.g., hotel: room size; cleanliness; accessibility; mobile: screen size; screen resolution; storage volume), review breadth does matter because readers' evaluation of review usefulness often takes into account the comprehensiveness of their review content (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). Besides, since a consumer review is theoretically an argument made by a reviewer to persuade or dissuade other consumers from buying the same product, the number of attributes described in a review is a reliable proxy reflecting the richness of evidence that a reviewer can offer to support his/her stance (Qazi et al., 2016).

The direct impact of review breadth on review usefulness is tested and supported by various studies. Drawing on the analysis of reviews from TripAdvisor, Qazi and colleagues (2016) report that comparative reviews discussing more product aspects receive more helpful votes than those discussing less aspects. Bae, Lee, Suh, and Suh's (2017) study corroborates that reviews with both lodging and surrounding area information (versus reviews with lodging information only) are rated as more useful by Airbnb users. A more recent study by Srivastava and Kalro (2019) reveals that the number of attributes discussed in a review positively influences its helpfulness level. By applying the Tobit regression to analyze review data from TripAdvisor and Yelp, the authors conclude that broad reviews discussing more features are more useful to consumers than those discussing fewer features. Though the direct impact of review breadth is

proven, the interplay between review breadth and review depth on review usefulness remains unclear. Sirvastava and Kalro (2019) assert that the information comprehensiveness of a review is contingent on the breadth of features discussed plus the depth of descriptions provided. Sun, Han, and Feng (2019) echo that the informativeness of a review should be a function of the breadth and depth of its content. Since review breadth and depth jointly determine review informativeness and thereby affect review usefulness, following the theorem of configuration theory (Doty et al., 1993), two possible outcomes may be observed.

Following Daft and Lengel's (1986) information richness theory, high levels of review breadth and review depth might create a multiplicative effect and further enhance review usefulness. Cheung et al. (2008) suggest that comprehensive reviews with detailed information describing multiple (rather than single) product attributes are more useful to consumers because its comprehensive content are more effective in reducing consumers' uncertainty of making a poor purchase decision. Liu and Hu's (2021) latest study also shows that review comprehensiveness positively moderates the effect of review length on review helpfulness. This denotes that the positive effect of review depth on review usefulness might be accentuated (attenuated) when review breadth is high (low).

Another possible outcome would be the other way round. Given that lengthy and comprehensive reviews may result in information overload (Sun et al., 2019), a high level of review breadth may offset and even discount the positive impact induced by review depth. Hu (2020) notes that some but not all attributes discussed in reviews are important to consumers. Filieri and colleagues (2021) echo and verify that not all hotel attributes in reviews are influential to consumers' judgment of review usefulness. The inclusion of many unimportant attributes in reviews may even increase readers' cognitive cost. That is, the positive effect of review depth on review usefulness might be accentuated when review breadth is low. On the contrary, the positive effect of review depth on review usefulness will be attenuated when review breadth is high. No matter which outcome is observed, it is believed that the impact of review depth on review usefulness is contingent upon the level of review breadth. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H2. *The impact of review depth on (a) readers' perceived review usefulness and (b) readers' review adoption is moderated by review breadth (as measured by the number of product attributes covered by a review)*

3.3. Review Language Style

Unlike traditional word-of-mouth sharing, written text is the primary medium used by review writers to describe their experience and opinions on the reviewed subject. Given that providers can freely choose the language and writing style to compose their reviews, it is essential to examine how review language style affects readers' comprehension of review content as well as their assessment of review usefulness (Gottschalk & Mafael, 2017; Liu et al., 2018; Lockie, Waigung, & Grabner-Kräuterb, 2015; Wang et al., 2019). Generally speaking, review providers use either literal language or figurative language in review writing (Kronrod & Danziger, 2013). Reviews using literal language describe an experience in a descriptive and rational fashion. Unpretentious words are used to describe product attributes and usage experience without adding additional connotation (e.g., *"the guestroom is very spacious"*). Conversely, reviews using figurative language describe an experience in an affect-rich manner. Writers often use metaphors, hyperboles, idiomatic expressions, and exaggerated words to reflect their emotions (e.g., *"the size of the guestroom soooooooo big – it makes me feel like royalty"*).

Burgoon's (1995) language expectancy theory suggests that figurative language is often used by individuals in intimate social relationships since it conveys high levels of affect intensity, whereas literal language conveys rationality and formality, making it more appropriate for conversation among unfamiliar individuals. Burgoon's (1995) assertion garners support from other researchers. Pan and Zhang (2011) underscore that reviews with many emotional statements introduce idiosyncratic noise and therefore undermine their overall usefulness. Papathanassis and Knolle's (2011) grounded theory study also stresses that narrative emotionality is a hidden sign of subjectivity, which reduces the factual value of review content. In line with the concepts of conversational norms and linguistic expectations, Wu et al. (2017) note that consumers exhibit less favorable attitudes and lower reservation intention after reading reviews using figurative (versus literal) language.

As the choice of review language style is proven to affect the effort required by readers in comprehending the content of reviews and assessing their usefulness, review language style is also expected to moderate the impact of review depth on review usefulness. Since previous studies suggest the use of figurative language in review writing might make reviews look irrational and unreliable (e.g., Liu, Lei, Guo, & Zhou, 2020; Wu et al., 2017), the positive impact of review depth on review usefulness may be less prominent when figurative language is used. Given that readers need more cognitive effort in interpreting lengthy content in reviews written in figurative language, following the resource-matching principle, long reviews written in figurative language may be considered as less useful because figurative language triggers additional elaboration beyond what literal message requires to decode them (Bertele, Feiereisen, Storey, & van Laer, 2020). The use of figurative language may also result into a decrease in processing fluency and thereby affecting consumers' review usefulness assessment (Schwarz, 2004). Compared to reviews using figurative language, reviews using literal language tend to be more convincing and easily understood because information is conveyed in an objective manner (Kronrod & Danzinger, 2013). Since readers require less cognitive effort in comprehending reviews written in literal language, readers are more likely to acknowledge the value brought by long reviews and thereby perceiving them as more useful due to its high processing fluency (Schwarz, 2004). Drawing on the notions shared in past literature, this study postulates that the positive impact of review depth on review usefulness may be more prominent when literal language is used:

H3. *The impact of review depth on (a) readers' perceived review usefulness and (b) readers' review adoption is moderated by review language style*

H3-1. *The positive impact of review depth on (a) readers' perceived review usefulness and (b) readers' review adoption will be accentuated when literal language is used*

H3-2. *The positive impact of review depth on (a) readers' perceived review usefulness and (b) readers' review adoption will be attenuated when figurative language is used*

4. STUDY 1

4.1. Method

We conducted an online experiment with 2 (review depth: high vs. low) × 2 (review breadth: high vs. low) between-subject design in order to examine whether review depth has a positive impact on review usefulness and review adoption (H1) as well as the moderating role of review breadth on this relationship (H2).

4.1.1. Procedure

The online experiment was conducted using Qualtrics. The experiment commenced with an introduction of the research project and the verification of participants' eligibility. As the target population of this study are past hotel customers who read online hotel reviews before making a reservation, participants were firstly asked to answer a qualifying question (i.e., *"Did you read at least one online hotel review before selecting a hotel on your previous trip(s)? [Yes/No]"*). Qualified participants were then exposed to the hypothetical scenario – *"Imagine that you are looking for a hotel in Hong Kong you plan to visit next year. When you search the information online, you visit a hotel review portal and find the following review"*. Afterwards, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and read an online hotel review (see section 4.1.2). After reading the assigned review, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire included questions pertinent to their perceived usefulness of the review, adoption intention after reading the review, and demographic profile. The questionnaire also included manipulation-check, attention-check, and realism-check questions (see section 4.1.3).

4.1.2. Stimulus Material

The stimulus material for Study 1 was a set of hotel reviews including the treatments for review depth and review breadth. As noted earlier, review depth is measured by the number of words included in reviews. Duverger (2013) found that customers generally write around 40

words per review. To create an evident difference, reviews with a higher level of review depth had around 110 words whereas those with a lower level of review depth had around 30 words. For the manipulation of review breadth, reviews with a higher level of review breadth discussed three attributes (i.e., guestroom, location, and staff service) while reviews with a lower level of review breadth discussed one attribute only (i.e., guestroom). These attributes were chosen because they are the most frequently mentioned features in online hotel reviews (Berezin, Bilgihan, Cobanoglu, & Okumus, 2016). To create realistic conditions, a fictitious online review platform called "Hotel Monitor" was developed based on TripAdvisor.com. The review contents were adapted from authentic online reviews to enhance realism. To control the impact induced by extraneous variables, all aspects of the reviews (e.g., reviewer's profile photo, date of posting, and headline) remained unchanged. A fictitious hotel brand was also used since participants' experience and knowledge about brands may affect their judgment (Dou, Walden, Lee, & Lee, 2012). Two senior academics and ten graduate students reviewed the stimulus material to ensure its clarity and validity. Apart from the two manipulated variables, all participants agreed that the content of the stimulus materials are identical and no confounding variable is existed. Appendix I shows the text presented in the stimulus materials, and Appendix II exhibits one sample review.

4.1.3. Measures

Review usefulness was measured using three items borrowed from Qiu, Pang, & Lim (2012) using a 7-point semantic differential scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90). Review adoption was measured based on three statements adapted from Tseng and Wang (2016; Cronbach's alpha = 0.90). Minor adjustments were made to the wording to fit the research context, and the 7-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree) was used as the response scale.

To verify whether the manipulation of review depth was successful, participants were asked to indicate their perception towards the depth of review content by answering the following question: *"Based on the number of words it includes, the amount of information available in this review is high. [1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree]"*. To check the manipulation of review breadth, participants indicated their perception towards the breadth of review content by answering the following question: *"Based on the number of product attributes*

it covers, the comprehensiveness of information available in this review is high. [1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree]".

Two attention-check questions were included in the questionnaire. The first question is a typically attention-check question, asking participants to select a specific option (AC1: *"Please choose 'strongly disagree'"*). The second attention-check question asked participants to select the hotel which was discussed in the review (AC2: *"[Plaza Hotel Hong Kong/Centric Hotel Hong Kong] was the hotel which was discussed in the shown review"*). Two questions were asked to examine participants' perceived realism of the scenario (i.e., *"The situation described in the scenario is realistic [1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree]"*) and the stimulus material (i.e., *"The shown review is similar to ones I can find in consumer review sites [1: strongly disagree – 7: Strongly agree]"*). Lastly, participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, and level of reliance on online reviews before making a hotel booking, and number of online reviews they read before making a hotel booking. Appendix III presents the questionnaire used in Study 1.

4.1.4. Participants

The research subjects of Study 1 were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Workers from MTurk were chosen because various studies verified that MTurk is a trustworthy source for sampling (Baker & Kim, 2020; Wu et al., 2017). Before administering the main experiment, the stimulus material and the questionnaire were reviewed by two senior academics to ensure the accuracy and face validity. A pilot test was also conducted with 40 MTurk workers. Participants unanimously agreed the procedure and stimulus materials were clear. The strength of all proposed manipulations was also confirmed. The main experiment was conducted in January 2020. To assure the quality of the collected data, all eligible workers recruited from Amazon MTurk must have completed over 500 human intelligence tasks (HITs) and obtained a 90% or higher HIT approval rate. A total of 200 MTurk workers participated and completed the online experiment. After data cleaning (e.g., substantial missing data; unreasonable completion time of less than 30 seconds), 178 valid responses were included in the analyses. Regarding the profile of these participants, 54.5% were female and 45.5% were male. Most were aged 26-35 (n = 58, 32.6%) and 36-45 (n = 41, 23%). Participants were highly reliant on online reviews (M =

5.1, SD = 0.93) and read an average of 10 reviews (M = 10.05; SD = 9.90) before making a hotel booking.

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Manipulation Check, Attention Check and Realism Test

Prior to the hypotheses testing, two separate two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to verify if the manipulations of review depth and breadth were successful. The first two-way ANOVA test results showed the manipulation of review depth was successful ($F(1,174) = 116.22$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.40$). For the manipulation check question for review depth (MC1), the mean value rated by the high-depth group was significantly higher than the low-depth group ($M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.89$; $M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 3.63$; $p < 0.01$). The manipulation check of review depth was not confounded by review breadth (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$) and the interaction effect (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$).

The manipulation of review breadth was also deemed successful, as the test results of another two-way ANOVA showed that review breadth had a main effect on the breadth manipulation check question (MC2; $F(1,174) = 51.54$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.23$). The mean value given by the high-breadth group was higher than the one given by the low-breadth group ($M_{High\text{-}Breadth} = 5.39$; $M_{Low\text{-}Breadth} = 3.81$; $p < 0.01$). The manipulation check of review breadth was not confounded by review depth (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$) and the interaction effect (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$).

All participants provided the correct answers to the two attention-check questions. Pertinent to the realism test, participants generally agreed that the scenario ($t = 19.03$, $p < 0.01$; M = 5.82, SD = 1.28) and the stimulus material ($t = 16.27$, $p < 0.01$; M = 5.67, SD = 1.37) were realistic. These results demonstrated the high believability of the experiment from the participants' point of view.

4.2.2. Hypotheses Testing

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test H1 and H2. As presented in Table 2, review depth had a positive impact on readers' perceived review usefulness (Wilks' lambda = 0.72, $F(1,174) = 63.69$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.27$). The contrast test results showed readers considered longer reviews as more useful than shorter ones ($M_{\text{High-depth}} = 5.89$; $M_{\text{Low-Depth}} = 4.53$; $p < 0.01$). This empirical evidence lends support to H1a. Besides influencing readers' perceived review usefulness, review depth was also found to exert a positive impact on readers' review adoption ($F(1,174) = 54.02$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.24$). Compared to shorter reviews, readers were more likely to adopt and follow the suggestions made in longer reviews ($M_{\text{High-depth}} = 5.66$; $M_{\text{Low-Depth}} = 4.28$; $p < 0.01$). As reviews with elaborate information are more persuasive than those with less information (Daft & Lengel, 1986), it is understandable why H1b is supported.

Please Insert Table 2 Here

The bottom part of Table 2 exhibits the interplay of review breadth and review depth on review usefulness. In line with what was hypothesized in H2a, review breadth moderated the impact of review depth on readers' perceived review usefulness (Wilks' lambda = 0.83, $F(2,174) = 16.87$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.16$). Surprisingly, the high levels of review breadth and review depth did not create a multiplicative effect and further enhance review usefulness. As illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 1, the mean difference in review usefulness between the high-depth and low-depth conditions was 1.89 when review breadth was low ($p < 0.01$). The corresponding figure, however, decreased to 0.85 when review breadth was high ($p < 0.01$). Given that lengthy and broad reviews may lead to information overload (Sun et al., 2019), a high level of review breadth may offset the positive impact brought by review depth. Hence, the positive effect of review depth on review usefulness is attenuated when review breadth is high.

The interplay of review depth and breadth produced a similar effect on readers' review adoption ($F(2,174) = 12.03$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.12$). When review breadth was low, the mean difference in review adoption between the high-depth and low-depth conditions is 1.79 ($p < 0.01$). Yet, when review breath was high, the mean difference was reduced to 0.98 ($p < 0.01$). In other words, the impact of review depth on review adoption was also moderated by the comprehensiveness of review content.

Please Insert Figure 1 Here

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5. STUDY 2

5.1. Method

To re-test H1 as well as to examine whether review language style moderates the impact of review depth on readers' review usefulness and adoption intention (H3), another experiment with 2 (review depth: high vs. low) × 2 (review language style: literal vs. figurative) between-subject design was conducted.

5.1.1. Procedure

Study 2's experiment was largely identical to that of Study 1. Participants' eligibility was assessed at the beginning of the experiment. Participants were asked to answer a qualifying question in order to confirm they were past hotel customers who read online hotel reviews before making a reservation. After confirming their eligibility, qualified participants were exposed to the same hypothetical scenario (see 4.1.1). Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and read an online hotel review (see section 5.1.2). The experiment ended with the completion of a questionnaire with main questions, manipulation-check questions,

attention-check questions, realism-check questions, and demographic-related questions (see section 5.1.3).

5.1.2. Stimulus Material

Similar to Study 1, the stimulus material for Study 2 was a set of hotel reviews which accommodated the manipulation of review depth and review language style. Based on the combinations of those two variables, four simulated reviews were designed. Consistent with Study 1, reviews with a higher level of review depth had around 110 words whereas those with a lower level of review depth had around 30 words. For reviews written in literal language, the review content was written in a descriptive fashion without adding any connotations (e.g., *"The room is bigger than what we expected. It is spacious enough to accommodate a family of four"*). For reviews written in figurative language, exaggerated words and idiomatic expressions were used to describe an experience in an affect-rich manner (e.g., *"The room is bigger than in a palace. It is spacious enough for 5+ people to chill after dinner"*). To control the impact brought by review breadth, all reviews discussed one aspect (i.e., guestrooms) only. To enhance realism, the review contents were adapted from authentic online reviews. The simulated reviews were published under the name of a fictitious online travel agency, "Go Travel". One senior researcher and twenty graduate students with a major in linguistics checked the stimulus material prior to the main experiment. All participants agreed that the content of the stimulus materials are identical with the exception of the two manipulated variables. The text presented in the stimulus materials and a sample review are available in Appendices I and II, respectively.

5.1.3. Measures

In Study 2, review usefulness was measured using three items borrowed from Qiu et al. (2012; Cronbach's alpha = 0.89). We measured review adoption based on a three-item scale adapted from Tseng and Wang (2016; Cronbach's alpha = 0.88). Regarding the manipulation check, review depth was checked with a single item: *"Based on the number of words it includes, the amount of information available in this review is high. [1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly*

agree]". To verify if the manipulation of review language style was successful, two questions were asked to check whether the writer of the review shown to participants described his/her experience using descriptive words only or using exaggerated words and idiomatic expressions. The two attention-check questions used in Study 1 were also included in the questionnaire of Study 2. The same measure was used to examine participants' perceived realism of the scenario and the stimulus material. The experiment concluded by asking participants to indicate their demographic profile. The questionnaire used in Study 2 is available in Appendix III.

5.1.4. Participants

Prior to the commencement of the main experiment, two senior academics were invited to rigorously review the stimulus material and the questionnaire. Two pilot tests were also conducted with 88 undergraduate and graduate students from a private university in Macau. Drawing on the comments and suggestions shared by pilot test participants, some amendments on wording were made to render the difference in review language style more evident. The research subjects of Study 2 were recruited via a representative panel from Sojump, a Chinese-based online survey platform. Following Brislin's (1976) back-translation procedure, the lead author first converted the stimulus materials and the questionnaire in Chinese. Six graduate students, who are proficient in English and Chinese, were recruited to verify the precision of the translation. After the review, they confirmed that the materials and questionnaire were easily understood by Chinese speakers. The main experiment was conducted in March 2020 and lasted for two weeks. A total of 163 bilingual speakers participated and 153 were confirmed to have given valid responses. From those who provided the valid responses, 54.2% were female and 45.8% were male. The average age of all participants was 38.9 and most were aged 26-35 (n = 48, 29.4%). Consistent with Study 1, participants were highly reliant on online reviews (M = 4.94, SD = 1.03) and read approximately thirteen reviews (M = 12.66; SD = 16.44) before making a hotel booking.

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Manipulation Check, Attention Check and Realism Test

The manipulation of review depth in Study 2 was successful ($F(1,149) = 59.31$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.29$). Participants presented with longer reviews rated their reviews as having more information than those presented with shorter ones ($M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.49$; $M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 3.64$; $p < 0.01$). Review language style (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$) and the interaction effect (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$) did not confound the manipulation of review depth. Regarding the manipulation of review language style, participants presented with reviews written in literal language (versus figurative language) gave a higher average rating on the item *"The writer of this review described his/her experience using descriptive words only"* ($F(1,149) = 32.55$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.18$; $M_{Literal} = 6.08$; $M_{Figurative} = 4.86$; $p < 0.01$). No confounding effect by review depth (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$) and the interaction effect (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$) was identified. On the contrary, participants presented with a review using figurative language (versus literal language) gave a higher average rating on the statement *"The writer of this review described his/her experience using exaggerated words and idiomatic expressions"* ($F(1,149) = 94.58$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.39$; $M_{Literal} = 3.59$; $M_{Figurative} = 6.08$; $p < 0.01$). Similarly, no confounding effect by review depth (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$) and the interaction effect (n.s., partial $\eta^2 = 0.00$) was identified.

All participants provided the correct answers to the two attention-check questions. Participants' average ratings on the believability of the scenario ($t = 16.17$, $p < 0.01$; $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.42$) as well as the stimulus material ($t = 14.75$, $p < 0.01$; $M = 5.31$, $SD = 1.55$) were significantly higher than the neutral score (i.e., 4). This suggested that the experiment and scenario were realistic in the eyes of the participants.

5.2.2. Hypotheses Testing

First, H1 was re-examined, and the result is shown in Table 3. In line with the findings of Study 1, review depth had a positive impact on readers' perceived review usefulness (Wilks' lambda = 0.81, $F(1,149) = 34.17$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.19$). H1a was supported since readers considered longer reviews as more useful than shorter ones ($M_{High\text{-}depth} = 5.76$; $M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.56$;

$p < 0.01$). H1b also garnered empirical support ($F(1,149) = 23.39$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.14$). Readers were more likely to adopt the suggestions made by longer reviews than shorter ones ($M_{High\text{-}depth} = 5.48$; $M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.38$; $p < 0.01$). In view of the consistent findings presented in Study 1 and Study 2, the positive impact of review depth on readers' review usefulness and adoption intention was deemed reliable.

Please Insert Table 3 Here

The interplay of review depth and review language style on review usefulness is presented in Figure 2. Following what H3a postulates, review language style moderated the impact of review depth on readers' perceived review usefulness (Wilks' lambda = 0.86, $F(2,149) = 11.45$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.13$). When literal language was used in review writing, the positive impact of review depth on review usefulness was comparatively stronger (mean difference = 1.83, $p < 0.01$). However, when figurative language was used and many idiomatic expressions were included in the review content, the positive impact of review depth on review usefulness was discounted (mean difference = 1.19, $p < 0.01$). This demonstrated that the use of exaggerated words to express emotion and describe experience may undermine its overall usefulness.

Results of the MANOVA test also supported the postulation of H3b ($F(2,149) = 6.37$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.08$). When literal language was used in reviews, the mean difference in review adoption between the high-depth and low-depth conditions was larger (mean difference = 1.40, $p < 0.01$). In contrast, when figurative language was used, the mean difference in review adoption was reduced to 0.92 ($p < 0.01$). This suggested the positive impact of review depth on review adoption was accentuated (attenuated) when reviews were written using literal (figurative)

language. Put in a nutshell, the impact of review depth on review adoption was influenced by the choice of review language style. The hypotheses testing outcomes are summarized in Table 4.

Please Insert Figures 2 and Table 4

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6. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Discussion

Considering that the exponential growth of online reviews makes it difficult for travelers to process all of them and identify the useful ones, a plethora of research has been conducted in order to resolve the question of *"what makes an online travel review useful?"* (see Table 1). In spite of their significant contributions to knowledge and practice, several research voids are still unresolved.

Since prior studies on the impact of review depth on review usefulness, albeit ample, remain inconclusive, one leading objective of this study is to verify whether the expression *"the longer the better"* is correct. In line with the empirical findings in many hospitality (e.g., Kim & Hwang, 2020; Srivastava & Kalro, 2019) and non-hospitality studies (e.g., Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Sun et al., 2019), review depth was proven to exert a positive influence on readers' perceived review usefulness as well as adoption intention. As noted by Huang et al. (2015), the increase in word count increases both the quantity and the quality of information because word count reflects the extensiveness of the review content. Qazi et al. (2016) echo and supplement that short reviews often lack a comprehensive evaluation of the reviewed subject, while long reviews generally include richer product descriptions for consumers to obtain indirect consumption experience. Given that the richness of information can help readers reduce product quality uncertainty (Daft & Lengel, 1985) and allows them to imagine the experience concretely

(Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011), it is plausible that readers considered longer reviews as being more useful than shorter ones.

Apart from verifying the positive impact derived from review depth, unraveling the interplay of review depth and review breadth on readers' review usefulness and review adoption is another interesting finding of this study. In contrast with the central tenet of Daft and Lengel's (1986) information richness theory, Study 1's result shows that the high levels of review breadth and review depth do not create a multiplicative effect and further enhance readers' review usefulness and adoption. Instead, the high level of review breadth discounts the positive effect of review depth on review usefulness and adoption. Two possible reasons can partially explain this contrasting result. As discussed in section 3.2, lengthy and comprehensive reviews may result in information overload (Jackson & Farzaneh, 2012; Sun et al., 2019). Given that additional cognitive effort is required to comprehend such lengthy and comprehensive reviews, and people tend to be cognitive misers (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), those reviews are therefore perceived as less useful to readers. The overwhelming importance of guestroom-related information to readers is another possible explanation for this contrasting finding. In Study 1, reviews with higher breadth discuss three features (guestroom, location, and staff service) while reviews with lower breadth discuss guestrooms only. Since guestrooms are the core offering of hotels and hotel guests often spend most of their time in guestrooms, the description of guestrooms is of utmost importance to review readers (Berezina et al., 2016; Hu, 2020). As such, given that the significance of guestroom-related information is much higher than that of location and staff service, the additional description of hotel location and staff service may thus be redundant to readers and thereby discount its usefulness level.

Concordant with the tenet advocated by Sonkowsky's (1959) ancient rhetorical theory as well as other communication theories (e.g., Burgoon, 1995; Kronrod & Danziger, 2013), the present investigation verifies that the choice of review language style is important to readers in assessing the usefulness level of online reviews. In line with the theorem of Burgoon's (1995) language expectancy theory, literal language conveys rationality and formality, making it more appropriate for conversation among unfamiliar individuals. Given that the atypical use of figurative language makes such reviews look unreliable (Liu et al., 2020), and the fact that readers require more cognitive effort to interpret the content of reviews written in figurative

language, the positive impact of review depth on review usefulness is less prominent when figurative language is used. In contrast, reviews using literal language are more convincing and easily understood (Kronrod & Danzinger, 2013). Coupled with the fact that readers can spend less cognitive effort in comprehending reviews written in a descriptive fashion, the positive impact of review depth on review usefulness may be more prominent when literal language is used.

6.2. Implications

From the theoretical standpoint, the current study contributes new knowledge in various ways to the growing stream of research about online reviews. As underscored in the Introduction section, even though the impact of review depth on review usefulness has been extensively researched (e.g., Hu & Yang, 2021; Liang et al., 2019), the interplay of review depth and review breadth on review usefulness has been under-investigated. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study appears to be one of the first attempts to examine the interplay of review breadth and review depth on readers' perceived review usefulness and adoption intention. As this study verifies that the impact of review depth on readers' review usefulness and review adoption is moderated by the comprehensiveness of review content, this study complements published studies and enriches the theoretical knowledge about *"what makes an online travel review useful".*

Unraveling the interplay of review depth and review language style on readers' review usefulness and review adoption is another theoretical contribution of this study. As shown in Table 1, the impact of style-related factors, and particularly review language style on review usefulness, has seldom been a matter of prime interest for researchers. Given that content and style in reviews are inherently inseparable (Ludwig, de Ruyter, Friedman, Brüggen, Wetzels, & Pfann, 2013), the present study exhibits that both content- and style-related factors should be taken into consideration in order to thoroughly understand the mechanism of *"what makes an online travel review useful"*.

Besides the two contributions listed above, this is one of the limited studies that consider how their factors of focus interactively affect readers' review usefulness and review adoption. As noted in the final part of the Literature review section, prior studies mostly assume the impact of review- or/and reviewer-related factors to be additive. But according to the principles of Doty et al.'s (1993) configuration theory, different factors often interactively determine the outcomes of interest (Zhu et al., 2020). Being one of the few studies that examine the interactive (but not just joint) impact of content- and style-related factors on readers' review usefulness and review adoption, this study is expected to provide a new direction for future researchers who want to further investigate the question of *"what makes an online travel review useful?"*

From the managerial standpoint, the current study provides practical guidelines for interested parties (including hoteliers, operators of online travel agencies, and consumer review sites) to acquire more useful reviews on their sites. Hu and Chen (2016) suggest that the presence of useful reviews do not only help review sites to gain more traffic but also benefit product or service providers through fairer assessments of the discussed subject. Since the research findings show that longer reviews written in literal language are perceived as more useful to readers, hoteliers should encourage or even incentivize their customers to provide detailed information about their stays with their hotel. Drawing on the results from two between-subject experiments, this study successfully verifies that useful online hotel reviews mostly: (1) discuss fewer attributes of the hotels in question, (2) contain more text and descriptions, (3) describe the experience and emotions using literal language. If hoteliers desire to have more useful reviews available on different websites, they should recommend to their customers that they provide a detailed description in their reviews of several (but not too many) aspects they experienced. They should also encourage their customers to use unpretentious words and describe their experience in a descriptive fashion.

On the other hand, the current findings provide consumer review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor.com and Yelp.com) and online travel agencies (e.g., Hotels.com and Expedia.com) with some clues for sorting useful reviews from all the reviews they receive. Unlike Amazon.com, which can sort and present a batch of "Top customer reviews" based on some criteria (e.g., recency, length of content, verified purchase), most consumer review sites and online travel agencies do not offer this function. As noted earlier, the large number of online

reviews poses a potential threat of information overload for information seekers (Sun et al., 2019). To minimize the time that website visitors have to spend to identify useful reviews, operators can do this themselves by drawing from the findings presented in this study to enhance their visitors' information search experience.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

Like other research studies, this study is subject to some limitations which may restrict its generalizability. First, with reference to participants' response to the question about their level of reliance on online reviews (i.e., *"Before making a hotel booking, you rely on online reviews … [1: not at all – 7: very much]"*), participants of this study tend to highly rely on online reviews before making a hotel booking (see sections 4.1.4 and 5.1.4). Future researchers should cautiously generalize the findings to those travelers who do not rely on online reviews. Second, given that only one review was shown to the participants, when actually travelers often read multiple reviews before making a booking, the volume and conformity of reviews were not investigated in this study. To redress this, future research should present multiple reviews in the stimulation materials in order to make it similar to the situation in real life. Last but not least, given that all factors included in this study are in the form of text, another direction for future research is to explore the impact of pictorial elements (e.g., presence of photo(s) in a review, reviewers' profile pictures) on readers' assessment of review usefulness and review adoption.

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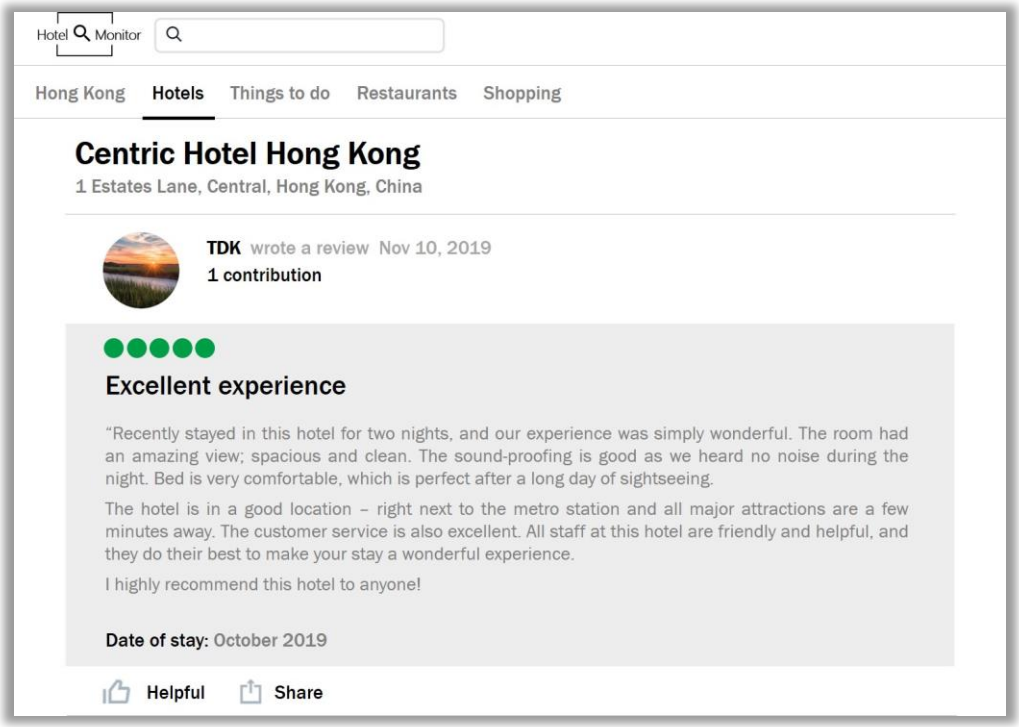
Appendix I. Text presented in the stimulus materials

	Low review breadth (discussing one attribute)	**High review breadth** (discussing three attributes)
Low review depth (with 30 word)	The guestroom is spacious, and its sound-proofing is good. Bed is comfortable, and the bathroom has all toiletries (which are all free of charge). Highly recommended!	The guestroom is spacious with good sound-proofing. Bed is comfortable, and the bathroom has all toiletries (free). Hotel location is great - situated right next to the metro station. Customer service is great too. Highly recommended!
High review depth (with 110 words)	Recently stayed in this hotel for two nights, and our experience was simply wonderful. The room we stayed in had an amazing view of the city. The room is bigger than what we expected. It is spacious enough to accommodate a family of four. The room is clean and tidy. The housekeeping has done an excellent job daily. The sound-proofing is good as we heard no noise from the street, staff or other guests during the night. Bed is very comfortable, which is perfect for us after a long day of sightseeing. I highly recommend this hotel to anyone!	Recently stayed in this hotel for two nights, and our experience was simply wonderful. The room had an amazing view; spacious and clean. The sound-proofing is good as we heard no noise during the night. Bed is very comfortable, which is perfect after a long day of sightseeing. The hotel is in a good location – right next to the metro station and all major attractions are a few minutes away. The customer service is also excellent. All staff at this hotel are friendly and helpful, and they do their best to make your stay a wonderful experience. I highly recommend this hotel to anyone!
	Literal language	**Figurative language**
Low review depth (with 30 word)	The guestroom is spacious, and its sound-proofing is good. Bed is comfortable, and the bathroom has all toiletries (which are free of charge). Highly recommended!	The guestroom is bigger than in a palace, and completely shielded from the outside noise. Bed is super comfy. The free toiletries are a MASTERSTROKE. Highly recommended!

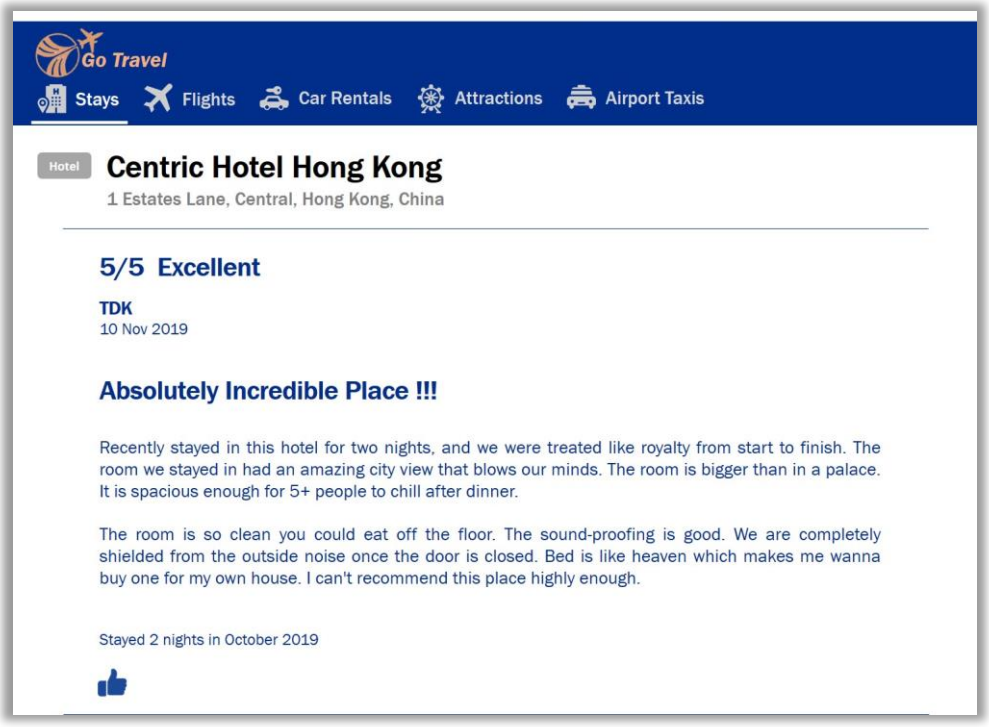
High review depth (with 110 words)	Recently stayed in this hotel for two nights, and our experience was simply wonderful. The room we stayed in had an amazing view of the city. The room is bigger than what we expected. It is spacious enough to accommodate a family of four. The room is clean and tidy. The housekeeping has done an excellent job daily. The sound-proofing is good as we heard no noise from the street, staff or other guests in the night. Bed is very comfortable, which is perfect for us after a long day of sightseeing. I highly recommend this hotel to anyone.	Recently stayed in this hotel for two nights, and we were treated like royalty from start to finish. The room we stayed in had an amazing city view that blows our minds. The room is bigger than in a palace. It is spacious enough for 5+ people to chill after dinner. The room is so clean you could eat off the floor. The sound-proofing is good. We are completely shielded from the outside noise once the door is closed. Bed is like heaven which makes me wanna buy one for my own house. I can't recommend this place highly enough.

Appendix II. Sample reviews

Study 1 (High review depth; High review breadth)



Study 2 (High review depth; Figurative language)



Appendix III. Questionnaire

Dimension / Measurement item	**Sty1**	**Sty2**
Eligibility check		
Did you read at least one online hotel review before selecting a hotel in your previous trip/s? *[Yes/No]*	√	√
Review usefulness (Source: Qiu, Pang, & Lim, 2012)		
RU1: Overall, this review is *[1: not valuable at all - 7: very valuable]*	√	√
RU2: Overall, this review is *[1: not useful at all - 7: very useful]*	√	√
RU3: Overall, this review is *[1: not helpful at all - 7: very helpful]*	√	√
Review adoption [a] (Source: Tseng & Wang, 2016)		
RA1: When you decide which hotel you would stay, you would consider the information and suggestions made by this review	√	√
RA2: When you decide which hotel you would stay, you would adopt the information and suggestions made by this review	√	√
RA3: When you decide which hotel you would stay, you would follow the suggestions made by this review	√	√
Manipulation check [a]		
MC1: Based on the number of words it includes, the amount of information available in this review is high	√	√
MC2: Based on the number of product attribute/s it covers, the comprehensiveness of information available in this review is high	√	-
MC3: The writer of this review described his/her experience using descriptive words only	-	√
MC4: The writer of this review described his/her experience using exaggerated words and idiomatic expressions	-	√
Attention check		
AC1: Please choose 'strongly disagree'	√	√
AC2: *[Plaza Hotel Hong Kong/Centric Hotel Hong Kong]* was the hotel which was discussed in the shown review	√	√
Perceived realism [a]		
RE1: The situation described in the scenario is realistic	√	√
RE2: The shown review is similar to the one I can find in consumer review sites	√	√
Demographics		
Gender *[Male / Female]*	√	√
Age *[Fill in the number]*	√	√
Before making a hotel booking, you rely on online reviews *[1: not at all – 7: very much]*	√	√
Before making a hotel booking, the number of review/s you read is approximately *[Fill in the number]*	√	√

Note: [a] The 7-point Likert scale [1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree] was used as the response scale.

Figure 1.
Study 1: Interaction effect of review depth and review breadth

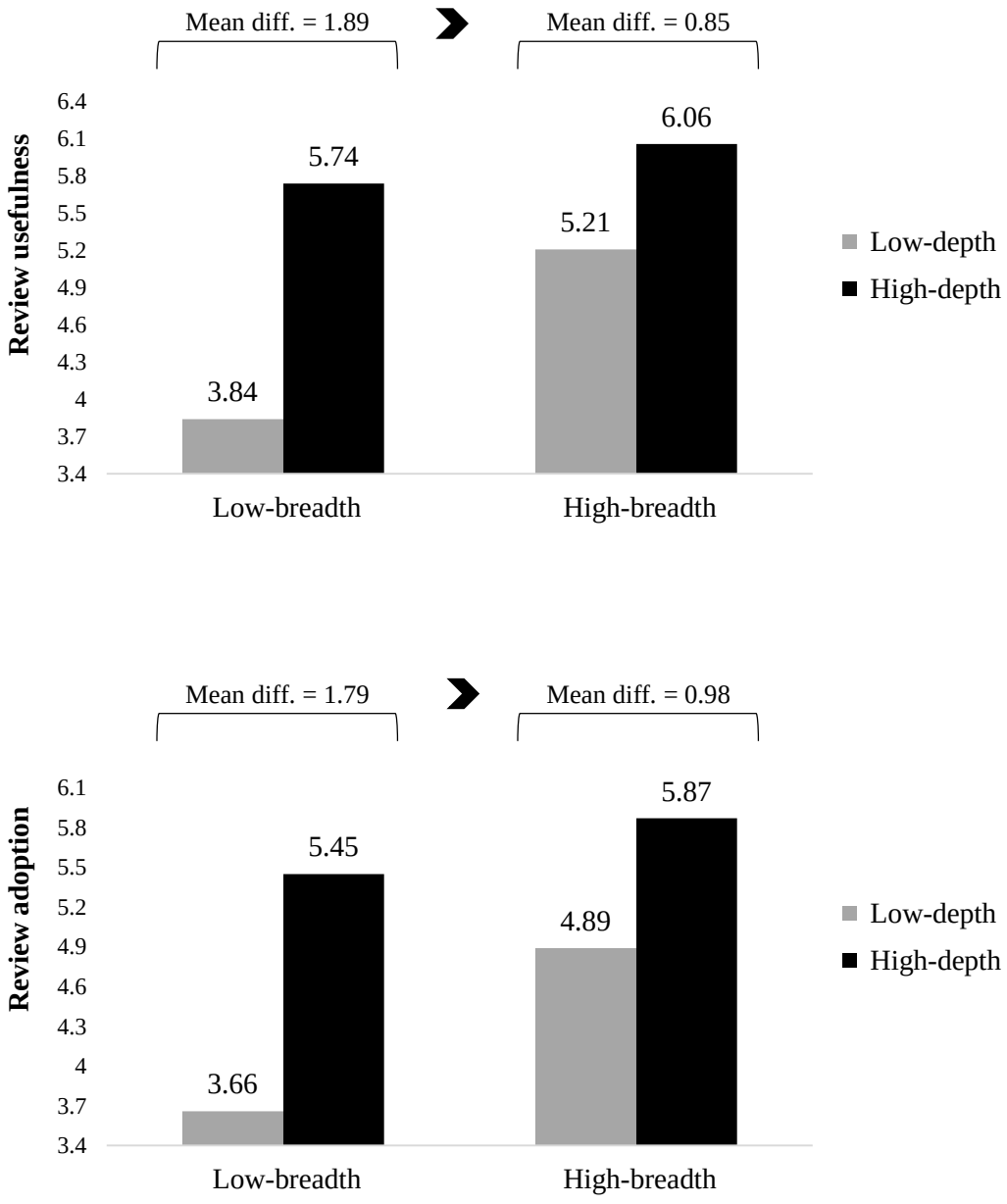
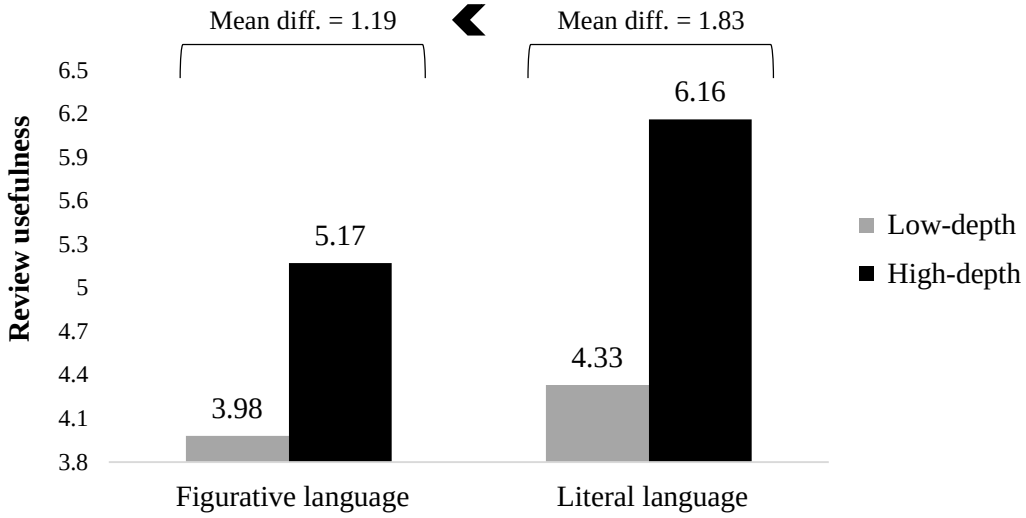


Figure 2.
Study 2: Interaction effect of review depth and review language



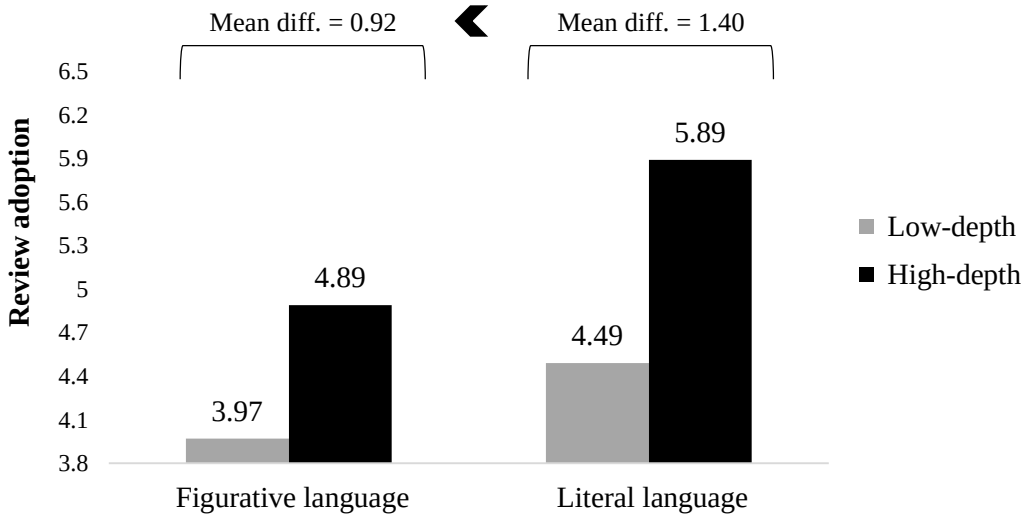


Table 1. Summary of studies of factors affecting perceived usefulness of online travel reviews

Author(s) (Year)	Review domain	Methodology *(Source)*	Review-related factor(s)		Reviewer-related factor(s)
			Content-related	Style-related	
Racherla & Friske (2012)	Restaurants and spas	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from Yelp)*	Rating extremity *Review depth*	-	*Identity disclosure* Reviewer expertise Reviewer reputation
Ngo-Ye & Sinha (2014)	Restaurants	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from Yelp)*	Selected review words	-	Recency of last purchase Total number of purchases Average transaction cost
Zhu, Yin, & He (2014)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from Yelp)*	Review depth Rating extremity [a]	Review readability	Reviewer expertise [a] Reviewer attractiveness [a]
Casaló, Flavián, Guinalíu, & Ekinci (2015)	Hotels	Experiment *(Customers of an online travel agency)*	Review valence Inclusion of picture	-	Reviewer expertise
Filieri (2015)	Accommodations, and restaurants	Questionnaire survey *(Online review users)*	Information quality *Information quantity* Customer ratings	-	Source credibility
Liu & Park (2015)	Restaurants	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from Yelp)*	Review valence Review depth	Review readability	Identity disclosure Reviewer expertise Reviewer reputation
Park & Nicolau (2015)	Restaurants	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from Yelp)*	Review valence Review depth	Review readability	*Identity disclosure* Reviewer expertise Reviewer reputation
Fang, Ye, Kucukusta, & Law (2016)	Attractions	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review depth	Review readability	Past rating distance Past rating distribution *Reviewer experience* Reviewer reputation
Hu & Chen (2016)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review depth Review sentiment	Review readability	Reviewer past contribution Reviewer membership length
Kwok & Xie (2016)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review rating [a] *Review depth* Manager response [a b c]	-	Reviewer demography [b] Reviewer travel experience [c]
Qazi, Syed, Raj, Cambria, Tahir, & Alghazzawi (2016)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review breadth [a]	Review type [a]	-
Salehi-Esfahani,	Restaurants	Experiment	Review extremity	-	Source credibility

Ravichandran, Israeli, & Bolden (2016)		*(302 students from a university in Ohio)*			
Hu, Chen, & Lee (2017)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review rating Review depth Review sentiment	*Review readability*	Recency of last purchase Total number of purchases Average transaction cost
Lee, Jeong, & Lee (2017)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review valence [a] Negative intensity [a] Review depth	Review readability	Reviewer expertise Reviewer reputation
Yang, Shin, Joun, & Koo (2017)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review rating Review depth Review photo	-	Reviewer location Reviewer level Reviewer helpful vote
Yang, Hlee, Kee, & Koo (2017)	Restaurants	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review rating Review depth (Environmental) image volume (F&B) image volume	*Review readability*	*Number of past reviews* Number of friends Reviewer reputation
Filieri, Raguseo, & Vitari (2018)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Rating extremity [a b c] Review depth [a] Review photo [b]	Review readability	Origin of the reviewer [c] Identity disclosure Reviewer expertise
Ma, Xiang, Du, & Fan (2018)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor and Yelp)*	Text-only review [a] Image-only review [a]	-	-
Shin, Chung, Xiang, & Koo (2019)	Destinations	Experiment *(Customers of Korean-based tour operators)*	Review concreteness	-	-
Srivastava & Kalro (2019)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor and Yelp)*	Review rating Review depth Review breadth Review clarity Review photo volume	Review readability	Identity disclosure Reviewer reputation Reviewer expertise
Liang, Schuckert, & Law (2019)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review depth Review extremity	Review readability	Identity disclosure Reviewer experience Reviewer reputation Reviewer cultural background
Wang, Tang, & Kim (2019)	Restaurant	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from Yelp)*	Review rating	Review readability Linguistic style matching	Reviewer elite status
Chatterjee (2020)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Total sentiment [a] Content polarity [a]	-	Reviewer's past helpful votes

			Arousal emotions *Review depth* Review rating		
Hu (2020)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(85,963 reviews from TripAdvisor.com)*	Reviewed attributes	-	-
Huang, Chang, Bilgihan, & Okumus (2020)	Restaurants	Experiments *(430 workers from Amazon MTurk)*	Review valence [a] Emoticons presence [a]	Review format	-
Kim & Hwang (2020)	Hotels	Panel data analysis *(Reviews from TripAdvisor)*	Review rating [a] Review depth Emotional expression [a]	-	Reviewer expertise
Hu & Yang (2021)	Tourism and hospitality	27 published references	*Review valence* Review length	*Review readability*	Reviewer expertise Profile disclosure
Lee, Yang, & Koo (2021)	Restaurants	Panel data analysis *(5,368 reviews from Yelp.com)*	-	-	Reviewer-reader similarity

Note: Insignificant relationships are shown in *italics*.

[a b c] represents that the interaction effect between the two factors was examined.

Table 2. Study 1: Multivariate analysis of variance test results (N = 178)

Dependent variable	Type III	F	Sig.	η^2	Contrast test *(mean diff.)* [a b]		
Main effect: Review depth							
Review usefulness	83.67	63.69	< 0.01	0.27	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.89 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.53$	*(mean diff. = 1.36)***	
Review adoption	85.52	54.02	< 0.01	0.24	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.66 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.28$	*(mean diff. = 1.38)***	
Interaction effect: Review depth × Review breadth							
Review usefulness	44.34	16.87	< 0.01	0.16	Low-breadth:	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.74 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 3.84$	*(mean diff = 1.89)***
					High-breadth:	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 6.06 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 5.21$	*(mean diff. = 0.85)***
Review adoption	38.10	12.03	< 0.01	0.12	Low-breadth:	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.45 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 3.66$	*(mean diff. = 1.79)***
					High-breadth:	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.87 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.89$	*(mean diff. = 0.98)***

Note. [a] ** represents $p < 0.01$. [b] $M_{High\text{-}Depth}$ represents the mean value given by readers of reviews with a high level of review depth; $M_{Low\text{-}Depth}$ represents the mean value given by readers of reviews with a low level of review depth.

Table 3. Study 2: Multivariate analysis of variance test results (N = 153)

Dependent variable	Type III	F	Sig.	η^2	Contrast test *(mean diff.)* [a b]		
Main effect: Review depth							
Review usefulness	55.396	34.17	< 0.01	0.19	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.76 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.56$	*(mean diff. = 1.20)***	
Review adoption	46.160	23.39	< 0.01	0.14	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.48 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.38$	*(mean diff. = 1.09)***	
Interaction effect: Review depth × Review language style							
Review usefulness	37.12	11.45	< 0.01	0.13	Figurative:	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.17 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 3.98$	*(mean diff. = 1.19)***
					Literal:	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 6.16 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.33$	*(mean diff. = 1.83)***
Review adoption	25.25	6.37	< 0.01	0.08	Figurative:	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 4.89 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 3.97$	*(mean diff. = 0.92)***
					Literal:	$M_{High\text{-}Depth} = 5.89 > M_{Low\text{-}Depth} = 4.49$	*(mean diff. = 1.40)***

Note. [a] ** represents $p < 0.01$. [b] $M_{High\text{-}Depth}$ represents the mean value given by readers of reviews with a high level of review depth; $M_{Low\text{-}Depth}$ represents the mean value given by readers of reviews with a low level of review depth.

Table 4. Summary of hypotheses-testing outcomes

Research hypotheses	Study 1	Study 2
H1a. Review depth has a positive impact on readers' perceived review usefulness	Supported	Supported
H1b. Review depth has a positive impact on readers' review adoption	Supported	Supported
H2a. The impact of review depth on readers' perceived review usefulness is moderated by review breadth	Supported	-
H2b. The impact of review depth on readers' review adoption is moderated by review breadth	Supported	-
H3a. The impact of review depth on readers' perceived review usefulness is moderated by review language	-	Supported
H3-1a. The positive impact of review depth on readers' perceived review usefulness will be accentuated when literal language is used	-	Supported
H3-2a. The positive impact of review depth on readers' perceived review usefulness will be attenuated when figurative language is used	-	Supported
H3b. The impact of review depth on readers' review adoption is moderated by review language	-	Supported
H3-1b. The positive impact of review depth on readers' review adoption will be accentuated when literal language is used	-	Supported
H3-2b. The positive impact of review depth on readers' review adoption will be attenuated when figurative language is used	-	Supported