

E-WOM : Online Customer Reviews on Premium Casual Dining Restaurants in Goa

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Abstract : *As the restaurant industry is flourishing daily, people need help selecting the best available option. With the mounting use of social media and Online Consumer Review platforms, it is easier for prospective customers looking for information to select restaurants from the available alternatives. It allows users to express their opinions to millions of prospective customers. This study highlights the importance of e-Word of Mouth and emphasizes whether the reviews from restaurant aggregator apps such as Zomato and Tripadvisor apps match. The top 10 premium casual dining restaurants are taken each from North Goa and South Goa, and their information on overall ratings and variables, viz. food, service, and ambience, are collected based on reviews from restaurant aggregator apps such as Zomato and Tripadvisor apps. After analysing the data using t-test, it was proved that food is not the only criterion for the overall rating. Even service and ambience play a significant role in the purpose of overall satisfaction of the customers.*

Keywords : Customer Satisfaction, e-Word of Mouth, Online Consumer Reviews, Premium Casual Dining Restaurant, Restaurant Reviews.

Introduction

Word Of Mouth (WOM) has been considered an essential factor in decision-making processes especially for industries which are customer oriented. It is defined as an informal communication between a perceived communicator and a receiver regarding any product or service (Harrison-Walker, 2001). E-Word of Mouth is basically Word of Mouth communication through electronic mode such as social media platforms, blogging websites, video blogging websites,

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microblogging websites. According to Antoni Serra Cantallops (2014), “The main differences between WOM and e-WOM can be identified in the reach of the reviews’ impact (number of people who can be influenced) and the speed of interaction.” This is that the effectiveness of traditional WOM and electronic-WOM (e-WOM) depends upon their impact on prospective buyers. However, traditional WOM communication operates within limited social boundaries, whereas e-WOM can reach a wider geographical area (Mohammad Reza Jalilvanda, 2011).

Increasing consumer voice through the internet has become a huge part of consumer empowerment wherein consumers are free to give their opinions on their experiences and spread them to millions of people through e-WOM. With the increase in reviewed restaurants, Online Consumer Review (OCR) websites have achieved democratization (Kevin Mellet, 2014). Websites and social media platforms have given customers more comprehensive options to interact with family and friends worldwide. The internet platforms such as blogs, forums, social media, review websites, and apps have given rise to Consumer Generated Media (CGM). CGM plays a crucial role in the process of selecting a restaurant as the customer depends on reviews before making a decision and then after experiencing the restaurant service, they also share their opinion on their preferred restaurant (Yang, 2013). With many options available, sometimes customers need clarification while making a decision, and therefore, there are some platforms where ranks are provided to the variables and they also categorised with the price and place. This makes it easier for customers to go through the available information. The main motive of this type of platforms is to help the customers in decision making (Santos, 2017).

Literature Review

In this study, we have analysed reviews of restaurant aggregator apps such as Zomato and Tripadvisor which allows restaurant owners to share their information on restaurant food and service. On the other hand, customers can share their reviews based on their experience. This facilitates the aggregator app users, who are potential customers to identify restaurants based on their preferences such as food quality, ambience, service apart from other parameters such as location, cost of food, facilities such as parking, kids play area, etc.

Electronic word of mouth and reviews play a very important role in the tourism industry as tourists highly depend on the recommendations before making any decision (Marios D. Sotiriadis, 2013). Electronic word of mouth has also

overpowered the hotel industry and there are many studies that have been conducted on factors influencing electronic word of mouth in hotel industry (Rana Tajvidi, 2017). Many customer reviews overflows every now and then and this has made it easy to understand customer satisfaction and expectation (Shaowu Liu, 2013). It is proved that highly satisfied customers become loyal customers, and they also deal in the recommendation process (J.M & K.N, 1994).

Word of mouth becomes essential when an individual had zero experience with a service. When it comes to e-WOM, reviews with photos and videos have more impact as it has more authenticity (Lo, 2014). According to Knoll's latest research (2015), the impact of e-WOM has to be studied with consumer behaviour towards the availability of information (knoll, 2015). Some researchers have reported WOM has more impact than any other mode of publicity (Engel, 1969).

As WOM is a consumer-dominated channel, it is more reliable and trustworthy as the sender is independent of the market (S. S. Doma, 2015). Although e-WOM is derived from traditional WOM, wherein WOM is more face-to-face communication, whereas, e-WOM is through online platforms (Hoffman, 1996). Due to the easy transfer of information through online platforms, e-WOM has faster transmission of information than traditional WOM. On the other hand, e-WOM is measurable and can be used by researchers who wish to study various variables that satisfy customers (Park, 2009).

Word-of-mouth communication is a critical factor in building marketing strategies and communications, and it is a widely accepted promotional tool. The emergence of the internet and increased social media have added a new dimension to traditional WOM, thereby, translating it into e-WOM (Anubhav Mishra, 2016). Web based technologies have shaped many opportunities for e-WOM communication. Online communication impacts retailers as this information could affect the customers' decision who depend on online reviews (Christy M.K. Cheung, 2008). Vigorous use of social media comprehensively influenced generation Y's intentions to engross in e-WOM about their positive or negative service experiences. (Tingting (Christina) Zhang, 2017). Positive e-WOM motivates customers to make purchases, whereas negative e-WOM depresses customers from acquiring products/ services. When compared between negative and positive e-WOM, negative e-WOM has more impact on customers (Vo, 2017). It was found that "positive emotional experiences have a positive effect on satisfaction, e-WOM generation, and company reputation." This means emotional experiences are the powerful initiator of constructive e-WOM (Antoni Serra-Cantallops, 2018).

Consumers are encouraged or influenced by the environment during the decision buying process. This environment may include factors like social media, reviews, personal motives, family and so on (R. D. Blackwell, 2006). (Nantel, 2004) Opinions of experienced customers were found to be a great source of information and an influencer on new customers' buying decision process. The increase in blogs, online review platforms, and social media platforms have become a part of the pre-purchase stage, where the customers read and then go ahead with the buying decision (J. Lee, 2008). The amount of information flooded through e-WOM has influenced customers to take the pre-purchase stage more seriously. Moreover, customers look for more negative comments than positive ones before making a buying decision. (R. T. Frambach, 2007) Consumers finding information through online sources go through the pre-purchase stage, purchase and post-purchase stage, which means consumers search for product and service information at the pre-purchase stage, then make the buying decision and then share their experience at the post-purchase stage.

E-Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

Having a more number of reviews is highly influential and in addition negative reviews can damage the image of the service provider. Reading positive reviews has a stronger influence in making a buying decision (Wen-Chin Tsaoa, 2015). Word of mouth has always been a major factor in hospitality and tourism industry and with consumers sharing their opinions online it has given rise to e-WOM (Chih-Lun Alna Yena, 2015). E-WOM through social media has made it more convenient to people to discuss on the products and services that they use with their friends and family. E-WOM not only depends on the characteristics of e-word of mouth information but also depends on the consumer behavior towards e-WOM (Ismail Erkan, 2016).

Now a day's food bloggers are becoming influencers in the restaurant industry and customers really look for their opinion (Nur.Hanifati, 2015). (Al-Azzam1, 2016) According to them, restaurant selection is based on four attributes positive and negative word of mouth, restaurant website, community trustworthiness and source credibility out of which getting trust worthy information had a highest outcome. Which means e-WOM with true and trust worthy information will influence customers buying decision. The one who is posting information on social media should be very responsible as people must be following their opinion. In order to get engaged with consumers the companies should get involved with online consumer communities and provide the relevant information as customers are more influenced by many online sites (Mohammad Reza Jalilvanda, 2011).

In his study it was found that communication through social media is much more faster than offline communication. One of the respondents in his paper says that he would provide e-wom not to benefit the restaurant but to benefits his friends. The use of social media has changed reception of the information and people now-a-days are dependent more on social media information to make their buying decisions (Gavin Fox, 2016).

According to (FICCI, Indian Food Services Industry: Engine for Economic Growth & Employment, 2017) Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (in their report on 'Indian Food Services Industry: Engine for Economic Growth and Employment') :

- The restaurant industry is one of the rapidly growing industries. This Industry has also generated employment opportunities in the country.
- Categorized the Indian Food Services Industry into 3 Phases. Phase 1 focuses on rapid development in metro and mini-metro cities which influenced the growth of restaurants in the 1990s. Phase 2 highlighted the increasing urbanization and rise in income influenced the growth in the restaurant industry also restaurant segmentation started in the 2000s and Phase 3 mainly focused on Customer Relationship Management.
- The segmentation was based on the services that the restaurant provided and was categorized as QSR, ACDR, PCDR and FDR.
- Growth drivers of the Indian food services Industry are Changes in Cultural and family behavior, large employment generation, a high segment of the young and working population, Nuclear families, working women, growing middle-class families and experience of Dining Out.
- The recent trends that are recoded in food service industry are Virtual Kitchen, Ingredient Players, food on the go, variation in Cuisines, Social Media Marketing and online orders and table reservations.
- The growth in food services industry in India has given a wide opportunity to food-tech companies to enter into the market. Some of the food-tech companies that we have are Swiggy, Zomato, Foodpanda and so on.

Premium Casual Dining Restaurants in Goa, India :

Restaurant plays vital role in the social life of people. Through migrations and tourists coming from all over the world to Goa to Goa, it has given Goan restaurant owners a scope to diversify their menu and expand their business.

Not only Goan's but people from other states and countries have opened up their restaurants in Goa as they feel that there is lot of growth potential in this State as it is a tourist destination.

This segment of Restaurant is a combination of Fine Dining Restaurant and Casual Dining Restaurant. Premium Casual Dining Restaurants offer moderately priced food between Rs.1000 – Rs.2000 for two. Some of the popular Premium Casual Dining Restaurants in Goa are Fisherman's Wharf, Ritz Classic, Kokni Kanteen, Martin's Corner, Edward's Yard, The Yellow Chilli and Mum's Kitchen.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze whether the reviews from Zomato match the reviews from Tripadvisor.
- To scrutinize the most important variable preferred by reviewers.
- To find out the most used app for reviews.

Hypotheses of the Study

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the reviews from Zomato and Tripadvisor apps with regards to variables (food, service and ambience).

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the overall ratings from Zomato and Tripadvisor.

H_0 : Food is not an important variable for overall positive ratings.

H_0 : Service is not an important variable for overall positive ratings.

H_0 : Ambience is not an important variable for overall positive ratings.

Research Methodology

This study investigates the genuineness of online customer reviews on premium casual dining restaurants displayed on restaurant aggregator apps, i.e., Zomato and Tripadvisor. In this research the top 10 premium casual dining restaurants were selected from North and South Goa each, and accordingly, their ratings were collected from restaurant aggregator apps Zomato and Tripadvisor based on food, service, and ambience. Apart from these three variables, the respondents have also shared the overall ratings of the restaurants.

This study would help restaurant owners know about customers' opinions on premium casual dining restaurants. The results would also benefit the restaurant apps (which provide platforms for reviews) by giving them insight into the behaviour of their reviewers. The online review platforms have given more scope to word of mouth, benefiting the new customers with zero experience as these reviews allows them to get a glance at the product/services. There are very few studies on restaurant review apps. This paper highlights the analysis of the reviews posted on restaurant review apps, which is a good insight for the customers to know more about such platforms to make wise decisions.

The list of the top 10 Premium Casual Dining Restaurants in North and South Goa are as follows:

North Goa Restaurants include Brittos, Thalassa, Copperleaf, Peep Kitchen, Fisherman's Wharf, Antares, Route 66, Mum's Kitchen, Goenchin, and Edward's Yard. South Goa Restaurants include Martin's Corner, Zeebop, The Camron, The Avenue, Peppers, Pantagon, Star Light, Spicy family Restaurant, Fisherman's Wharf and The Garden.

Restaurant aggregator apps Zomato and Tripadvisor apps have three variables in common for consumers' ratings, i.e., food, service, and ambience; apart from these, overall ratings are also included. These variables are tested with the help of t-test.

Data Collection

Secondary Data is collected from restaurant aggregator apps Zomato and Tripadvisor, wherein the top 10 Premium Casual dining restaurants were selected each from both the districts of Goa i.e. North Goa and South Goa, India. The selected restaurant ratings were collected (dated up to 30th March 2019) on three variables: food, service, and ambience and also overall restaurant ratings were considered. Further to arrive at appropriate findings, Independent t- test and paired sample t-test were used to fulfil the intended research objectives.

Analysis and Results

Objective-1 : Analysing whether the reviews from Zomato are matching reviews from Tripadvisor.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the reviews from Zomato and Tripadvisor apps with regards to variables (food, service and ambience).

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the overall ratings from Zomato and Tripadvisor.

Table-1 : t-test for Reviews from Zomato and Tripadvisor Group Statistics

Variables	App	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Food	Zomato	20	4.3000	.73270	.16384
	Tripadvisor	20	4.0000	.98675	.22064
Service	Zomato	20	3.3500	2.03328	.45465
	Tripadvisor	20	4.0500	.35909	.08030
Ambience	Zomato	20	3.9500	.99868	.22331
	Tripadvisor	20	2.7250	2.06139	.46094
Overall Ratings	Zomato	20	4.2300	.30453	.06809
	Tripadvisor	20	4.2250	.30240	.06762

Source : Primary Data.

Table-2 : Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Food	Equal Variances assumed	.737	.396	1.092	38	.282	.30000	.27482	-.25635	.85635
	Equal variances not assumed			1.092	35.067	.282	.30000	.27482	-.25788	.85788
Service	Equal Variances assumed	32.016	.000	-	38	.138	-.70000	.46169	-	.23464
	Equal variances not assumed			1.516	20.184	.145	-.70000	.46169	1.63464	1.66251

Contd...

Ambience	Equal Variances assumed	36.532	.000	2.392	38	.022	1.22500	.51219	.18813	2.26187
	Equal variances not assumed			2.392	27.453	.024	1.22500	.51219	.17489	2.27511
Overall Ratings	Equal Variances assumed	.828	.368	.052	38	.959	.00500	.09596	-.18927	19927
	Equal variances not assumed			.052	37.998	.959	.00500	.09596	-.18927	19927

Source : Authors' Compilation.

As per the above tables 1 and 2, the reviews from Zomato and Tripadvisor have almost similar reviews on food for premium casual dining restaurants. This is proved by Levene's test for equality of variances, which shows that the p-value is 0.396. This means that equal variance is assumed, as it is above 0.05 significant level. According to the t-test with p-value 0.282, it is clear that the null hypothesis is accepted, i.e., there is no significant difference between the reviews from Zomato and Tripadvisor regarding food reviews. The same applies to overall ratings of premium casual dining restaurants as the Levene's test for equality of variance p-value is 0.368, which means equal variances are assumed and as per the t-test p value 0.959, we accept the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the overall ratings of Zomato and Tripadvisor on premium casual dining restaurants.

On the other hand, regarding service and ambience the Levene's test for equality of variance shows 0.000 which is less than 0.05, which means equal variances are not assumed for service and ambience. The t-test shows p-value for service 0.145, which means there is no significant difference between the reviews from Zomato and Tripadvisor.

With regards to ambience, the p-value of t-test is 0.024, which means we reject the null hypothesis that indicates there is significant difference in the review of Zomato and Tripadvisor regarding ambience of premium casual dining restaurants. Every person could have a different perception with regards to ambience and therefore the ratings vary. Another reason could be some reviewers

may give high emphasis to ambience to judge the quality of the restaurant but others may focus more on food and service even this could bring difference in opinion among the reviewers.

Objective-2 : Scrutinising the most important variable preferred by reviewers.

H₀ : Food is not an important variable for overall positive ratings.

H₀ : Service is not an important variable for overall positive ratings.

H₀ : Ambience is not an important variable for overall positive ratings.

Table-3 : Paired Sample Correlation

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Overall Ratings & Food	40	.362	.022
Pair 2 Overall Ratings & Services	40	.466	.002
Pair 2 Overall Ratings & Ambience	40	.181	.263

Table-4 : Paired Differences

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Differences				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Overall Ratings & Food	.07750	.81224	.12843	-.18227	.33727	.603	39	.550

Contd...

Pair 2 Overall Ratings & Services	.52750	1.37038	.21668	.08923	.96577	2.435	39	.020
Pair 2 Overall Ratings & Ambience	.89000	1.68657	.26667	.35061	1.42939	3.337	39	.002

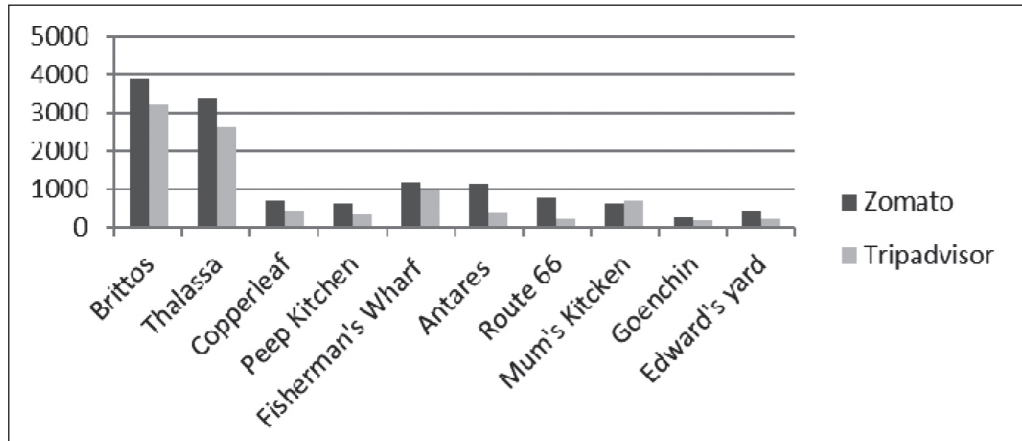
Source : Authors' Compilation.

As seen in the above table 3 of paired sample correlations, a positive relationship exists between all three pairs, which indicates that food, service, and ambience play a vital-role in the overall rating of premium casual dining restaurants. If the customer is pleased with all three variables, he/she will give good ratings to the restaurant.

In table 4 of paired sample test, it is clear that food is not the only important variable for the positive overall rating of premium casual dining restaurants, i.e., the p-value is 0.550 with regards to overall ratings and food, which means we accept the null hypothesis. In the other two cases, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, i.e., service, and ambience are important for the overall rating of the premium casual dining restaurant. It is clear that the food is not the only criterion for the overall rating; even service and ambience play a major role in the overall satisfaction of the customers. Since it is a premium casual dining restaurant, the customers also pay for the service and ambience along with the food that they order. Some customers visit premium casual dining restaurants to experience high quality ambience and to relax. There are people who spend more on the themed restaurants to get a good exposure of the services and exotic menu.

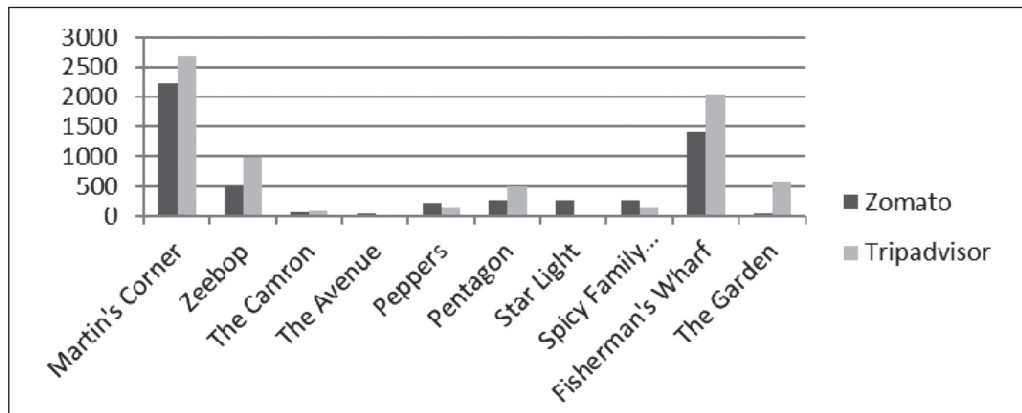
Objective-3 : Finding out the most used app for reviews:

Graph-1 : North Goa Data Interpretation



Source : Authors' Compilation.

Graph-2 : South Goa Data



Source : Authors' Compilation.

As per the above graph 1 and graph 2 X-axis indicates the total number of reviews given by the reviewers of Zomato and Tripadvisor app and Y-axis indicates the names of the Premium Casual Dining Restaurants. Graph 1 represents the restaurants in North Goa and Graph 2 represents the restaurants in South Goa.

According to the reviews of North Goa of premium casual dining restaurants, the reviewer's preferred primarily the Zomato app. Whereas Reviewers of South Goa premium casual dining restaurants mostly rely on the Tripadvisor app. This is because most tourists visit South Goa; in that case, the Tripadvisor app has vast options like searching for hotels and popular places to visit apart from restaurant recommendations. However, in the case of the Zomato app, it is only restricted to the restaurant industry. Even Restaurants namely Brittos, Thalassa, Martin's Corner, Fisherman's Wharf have high number of reviews and as they are very popular in Goa because of positive word of mouth. This clearly highlights that word of mouth is one the most important, effective and genuine publicities which can generate more number of customers and is considered most reliable by the users.

Findings of the Study

The present study found no significant difference between the reviews from Zomato and Tripadvisor regarding food, service, and overall rating. Whereas, with regards to the ambience there is a significant difference. It is proved that food is not the only criterion for the overall rating; even service and ambience play a substantial role in the overall satisfaction of the customers. Since it is a premium casual dining restaurant, the customers also pay for the service, ambience, and food that they order. Some customers visit premium casual dining restaurant to experience quality ambience and relax. According to the reviews of North Goa premium casual dining restaurant, the reviewers mostly preferred the Zomato app. According to reviews of South Goa premium casual dining restaurants, the reviewers mostly rely on Tripadvisor.

Authors' Insight on Electronic Word of Mouth

Word-of-mouth communication is unpaid and one of the most credible promotion activities. In order to enjoy the privilege of word of mouth, the retailer has to satisfy their customers, and delight them, if possible. As satisfied customers would sometimes not go for word of mouth, a delighted customer would surely spread a positive word of mouth. With the speeding use of the internet, review platforms and social media are becoming a great source of electronic word of mouth. The review platforms have become a great source of information for new customers with zero experience. Nowadays, a customer goes for online reviews before making a buying decision.

Similarly, restaurant reviews have become a huge influencer for customers planning to visit the restaurant for the first time. But at the same time, a negative review can harm the retailer's image which is why keeping customers happy is essential. Online restaurant review platforms not only give new customers information but also allow retailers to work on negative comments and improve their services accordingly.

Throughout the study, we noticed that there were customers, especially tourists, who were highly involved in posting reviews on premium casual dining restaurants. Through reviews, they rate the restaurants based on the food, service, and ambience. Goa is a tourist destination, and it is not just the locals but also the tourists who visit the restaurant. They keep up with the expectations of both sets of customers, which is very challenging for the restaurant service providers in Goa. Online review platforms, in this case, were more genuine as recommendations were from a different set of customers, and there was less chance of finding biased reviews. Through reviews, it was also found that the customers were very keen on observing the restaurant's food, service, and ambience. This is because the customers also consider the ambience and service along with the food quality which they pay for in a premium casual dining restaurant. The photos were an additional part of the review process uploaded by the reviewers on Zomato and Tripadvisor. This shows that people are also keen on clicking pictures of the food and the restaurant's ambience if it is found to be impressive. This creates a plus point for the restaurant service provider as the reviewers promote their restaurant through electronic word of mouth.

Conclusion

It was evident that most of the customers share their reviews online now a days and this provides a great source to the new customers who are hunting for new restaurants outlets. Reviews has made decision making process easy for the new customers especially in terms of taking decisions in any kind of service industry restaurant being one of them. Premium Casual Dining Restaurant is known for its good ambience and services apart from its authentic and good quality food. As per this research, it is proved that the ratings the consumers give are genuine enough for other customers to make future decisions on visiting premium casual dining restaurants. Customers visit premium casual dining restaurants not just to enjoy good food but also to enjoy the overall ambience and service of the restaurant. Customers have different opinions regarding ambience. For some, ambience plays a very significant role; for some ambience

sometimes does not really matter. But overall, when customers visit a premium casual dining restaurant, they look for good food, service, and ambience as the customers pay for all three attributes. Even the online review apps Zomato and Tripadvisor has taken food, service and ambience as the main three attributes to rate the restaurants.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the state of Goa, and the study's data collection was also limited to a specific period. Only the top 10 premium casual dining restaurants were taken from North Goa and South Goa, India. The restaurant variables analysed are limited to the variables offered by the restaurant apps. The data collected is limited to secondary data only. One can consider the overall restaurant industry for further research or study other branches of the restaurant industry like Quick Service Restaurants, Fine Dining Restaurants, Casual Dining Restaurants, and so on. One can also work with the primary data and take the customers' opinions of the customers to study the impact of electronic word of mouth on customers' decision-making process before visiting new restaurants.

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