

The use of dolphins at Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Lovina, Bali, Indonesia: a study of visitor experiences and ethical implications through netnographic research

Rodney Westerlaken 

Hotel Management School, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands

*Correspondence: rodney.westerlaken@nhlstenden.com

ABSTRACT: The closure of Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Lovina, Bali, in Indonesia was prompted by the confiscation of its dolphins and mounting pressure from animal welfare advocates, marking a pivotal moment in the discourse surrounding the use of dolphins in Indonesia's hospitality and tourism industry. To gain insights into visitor experiences and perceptions during the resort's operation, this netnographic study analyses 128 guest reviews from TripAdvisor. The findings underscore the significance of considering animal welfare and aligning with environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles. In the context of responsible wildlife tourism, the study emphasises the urgent need for an ethical approach to animal treatment in the tourism and hospitality sector. The analysis reveals varying guest experiences, with some expressing satisfaction and delight with the dolphin encounters, while others voice genuine concern and reservations about the animals' well-being, highlighting diverse perspectives on the use of dolphins. The study recommends prioritising animal welfare, raising awareness through education, supporting research and conservation initiatives, fostering stakeholder collaboration, and monitoring the impacts of tourism activities. By implementing these recommendations, the hospitality and tourism industry can cultivate a sustainable and responsible approach to dolphin-related tourism that prioritises the well-being of dolphins and advances conservation efforts, steering away from practices involving captivity.

KEYWORDS: animal welfare, conservation efforts, dolphins in hospitality and tourism, ESG principles, responsible hospitality and tourism

Introduction

In response to the closure of the Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Lovina, Bali, following concerns about captive dolphin welfare and mounting pressure from animal welfare advocates, this article investigates an essential gap in the discourse surrounding the use of dolphins in Indonesia's hospitality and tourism industry, using the now-closed Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Lovina, Bali as a case study. The article will delve into how this issue is addressed through netnographic research, analysing 128 guest reviews from TripAdvisor and shedding light on visitor experiences and ethical implications. By doing so, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the complexities associated with the use of dolphins, and advocates for an ethical framework that aligns with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles.

In 2020, the Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Bali closed in response to increased pressure from animal welfare advocates and growing concerns about the well-being of the captive dolphins and other animals kept on the premises. The

closure followed the confiscation of the resort's dolphins in 2019 by Indonesian authorities and animal welfare organisations (Dolphin Project, 2019). This incident highlights the potential legal and ethical consequences that accompany activities involving the use of dolphins in the tourism and hospitality industry. The resort's closure marks a significant turning point in the ongoing discourse surrounding the use of dolphins in Bali, a region that witnessed 6.3 million international tourist arrivals in 2019 (Bali Statistical Bureau [BPS], 2023), reflecting the changing societal attitudes towards wildlife tourism and the rising importance of responsible and sustainable practices. Additionally, it serves as a reminder of the influence that public opinion and advocacy groups hold in shaping the trajectory of tourism establishments engaged in activities that raise ethical concerns.

By analysing all 128 guest reviews from TripAdvisor, this research provides a retrospective examination of visitor experiences and perceptions during the period when the resort was operational. It allows for a nuanced understanding of the varied opinions and attitudes expressed by guests, shedding light on the complexities surrounding the use of dolphins and its implications for tourism. The findings of this netnographic

study contribute to the broader discussion on responsible wildlife tourism and highlight the importance of considering the ethical treatment of animals in tourism practices. By analysing guest reviews, the valuable insights obtained can be utilised to shape future policymaking and guide the tourism and hospitality management industry towards adopting more sustainable approaches that prioritise the welfare and conservation of marine wildlife.

It is essential to acknowledge that the closure of Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort represents both an endpoint and a starting point in the larger conversation about the use of dolphins. While the closure signifies a step towards addressing ethical concerns, it also serves as a reminder of the ongoing challenges faced by the tourism industry in balancing visitor experiences, economic viability and animal welfare.

Literature review

There is a scarcity of (neutral) recent research on the topic of dolphin captivity perspectives in the tourism and hospitality industry, though the relationship between humans and animals in animal-based tourist attractions has long been a subject of intensive ethical analysis. Throughout history, humans have engaged in multifaceted interactions with animals, encompassing their roles as pets, agricultural assets, subjects of scientific research and education and creatures of the wild (Gannon, 2002). This observation underscores the complex and sometimes conflicting ways in which humans have utilised animals for their diverse needs.

Dolphin-watching tourism, both in captivity and in the wild, has experienced significant popularity. The media's anthropomorphic representations of dolphins have influenced tourist perceptions, creating Disney-like portrayals of these creatures and shaping visitor behaviour during interactions (Herzog & Galvin, 1991). Tourists often derive strong positive emotions from dolphin encounters, fulfilling their desire for personal connections with these intelligent beings (Curtin, 2006).

Captive dolphin-watching practices have faced critical evaluation. While financially beneficial for the industry, concerns have been raised about the anthropogenic disturbance caused by such activities and their potential impact on the welfare and future of the dolphin population. Researchers emphasise the need for comprehensive welfare assessments to consider behavioural, physiological and cognitive indicators when evaluating dolphin welfare in captivity (Clegg & Delfour, 2018). Incorporating animal welfare into the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) framework is increasingly crucial for businesses. Recent research by Habib and Mourad (2023) links high ESG transparency to better financial performance. This connection highlights the need for ethical and sustainable practices. Businesses that prioritise animal welfare not only align with evolving ethical standards, but also reduce reputational risks and build stakeholder trust. By appealing to conscious consumers, companies can enhance brand loyalty and tap into a growing market segment. Thus, animal welfare is no longer just a moral consideration, but a strategic necessity in the ESG landscape. In this context, prioritising animal welfare becomes a crucial consideration for businesses seeking to align with ethical and sustainable practices. For example, renowned as a prominent provider of vital decision support services for the global

investment community, MSCI is dedicated to incorporating animal welfare considerations into its environmental, social, and governance (ESG) evaluation framework (Morgan Stanley Capital International [MSCI], 2020). In this context, MSCI ESG research undertakes meticulous investigations concerning animal welfare, among others, with a focus on enterprises engaged in activities involving the public exhibition of animals. Research conducted by MSCI's ESG investigation arm aims to identify companies participating in practices such as displaying animals to the public, which often encompasses activities in zoos, aquariums, theme parks and related facilities (MSCI, 2020). MSCI's inclusion of the public display of animals in its animal welfare research highlights the commitment to fostering a more comprehensive understanding of businesses' ethical, social and environmental impacts. This approach underscores the interconnectedness of responsible corporate practices and their effects on various stakeholders, including the animals involved in public exhibitions.

Ethical attitudes toward the use of animals

Conventional viewpoints have frequently asserted the human right to utilise animals in various ways. This rationale has historically been grounded in the perception of human superiority, with certain actions being deemed vital for human advancement (Machan, 2002). Nevertheless, over recent decades, alternative ethical standpoints have risen to challenge this stance. A perspective rooted in environmental ethics suggests that actions are morally defensible as long as they do not disrupt the overall integrity of the ecosystem (Herrera & Hoagland, 2006). This approach underscores the significance of accounting for broader ecological consequences when engaging with or even ending the lives of individual animals.

In the realm of tourism research, Tomassini and Bertella (2023) advocate for a paradigm shift towards integrating animals' viewpoints. This entails devising novel tourism experiences that enable visitors to perceive the world from the animals' vantage points. Additionally, Tomassini et al. (2022) present compelling arguments concerning interactions between humans and non-humans, striving to achieve justice for the latter. The animal welfare perspective seeks to balance human interests with animal well-being, accepting the use of animals while striving to minimise their suffering (Blandford et al., 2002). The animal rights perspective grants moral consideration to animals based on their sentience and capacity to experience pain, viewing any act adversely affecting the welfare of a single animal as morally wrong (Singer, 1975). Supporters of this viewpoint advocate for treating animals as equals to humans.

With growing concerns for animal rights in the hospitality and tourism industry, ethical guidelines for animal-based tourist attractions have gained prominence. Shani and Pizam (2008) propose the incorporation of education and welfare as fundamental principles for operating animal attractions. Aligning with ethical standards can foster long-term sustainability and appeal to conscious tourists. Organisations like World Animal Protection (WAP) advocate against marine mammal captivity for public display, drawing attention to significant ethical concerns about animal welfare (WAP, n.d.; WAP 2023). The stress and suffering experienced by captive cetaceans have led to calls for improved treatment and conservation efforts (WAP, n.d.; WAP 2023). While wildlife tourism, including cetacean watching, can raise awareness about conservation issues, ethical dilemmas

arise when such tourism exploits animals for entertainment purposes (Barbier & Swanson, 1992).

Recent developments, such as Thomas Cook's decision to exclude captive dolphin, orca and whale attractions from its offerings, reflect a growing shift towards responsible tourism practices (Whale and Dolphin Conservation [WDC], 2023). The economic impact of dolphin-watching tourism has been substantial, contributing to the local economy in places like Lovina (Mustika et al., 2012; Westerlaken et al., 2022). However, concerns about the distribution of profits and animal welfare remain vital considerations in the industry (Mustika et al., 2012).

The economic influence of community-based dolphin watching

Community-based dolphin watching, as an alternative to captivity in Lovina, emerged as a more sustainable alternative to captive dolphin tourism. Mustika et al. (2012) and Westerlaken et al. (2022) investigated the impacts of dolphin-watching tourism in Lovina. They found that this industry attracts a considerable number of overnight visitors, significantly contributing to the local economy and supporting a substantial number of tour boats. However, concerns over the impact of boat traffic on dolphin welfare and visitor satisfaction need to be addressed for the long-term sustainability of this practice, creating another dolphin-related ESG hazard, even after Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort closed down.

The dynamics of human-animal relationships and the ethical dimensions surrounding animal-based tourist attractions become evident upon examining historical perspectives, alternative ethical frameworks and their impact on the tourism sector. Emphasising ethical principles in dolphin captivity is essential for ensuring long-term sustainability and enhancing the appeal of the hospitality and tourism industry to conscientious tourists.

Methodology

This netnographic study focuses on analysing guest reviews of Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort obtained from the online travel platform TripAdvisor. The aim is to gain insights into the experiences and perceptions of visitors about the use of dolphins at the resort. A total of 128 guest reviews from TripAdvisor were selected for analysis. Netnography, as introduced by Kozinets (2002), is a qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic techniques to study cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications. In this article, netnography is employed to analyse and understand the behaviours, opinions, needs and decision-making influences of reviewers of Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort on TripAdvisor. It provides a means of gaining insights into the opinions of this online group, contributing to the study's focus on visitor experiences and ethical implications in the context of the use of dolphins at the Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis (Verhoeven, 2020) was employed to identify recurring themes, sentiments and patterns in the reviews. The reviews were carefully read and coded to capture relevant information related to dolphin encounters, including guests' experiences, opinions and ethical considerations. Initial codes were generated through an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data. These codes were

then grouped into broader themes and sub-themes, forming the basis for the analysis.

Ethical considerations

Throughout the study, ethical considerations were given utmost importance. The postings were on a publicly accessible internet site. No attempt was made to engage with or influence the authors of the posts. I ensured the confidentiality of the reviewers by removing any personally identifiable information from the collected data. All information was solely used for academic research purposes and treated in accordance with relevant data protection regulations.

Results

Here, I present an analysis of all 128 guest reviews (written between June 2009 and October 2019) obtained from TripAdvisor for Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Lovina on Bali in Indonesia. The reviews reflect a range of ratings assigned by guests, including "Excellent" ($n = 43$), "Very good" ($n = 23$), "Average" ($n = 25$), "Poor" ($n = 11$) and "Terrible" ($n = 26$) (Figure 1). These ratings provide an initial overview of the overall sentiment expressed in the reviews and set the stage for a deeper exploration of the themes and sentiments in each rating category. By examining the content of the reviews, I aimed to uncover the underlying factors influencing guest perceptions and to shed light on the implications of the use of dolphins at Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort.

Thematic analysis of "excellent" ($n = 43$)

Dolphin interaction and experience: Reviewers express excitement and enjoyment at swimming with dolphins. They describe it as a memorable, magical and dream-like experience. Specific dolphins are mentioned, and interactions include swimming, petting and playing games.

Accommodation and facilities: The hotel and facilities are mentioned as run-down or shabby. However, reviewers find

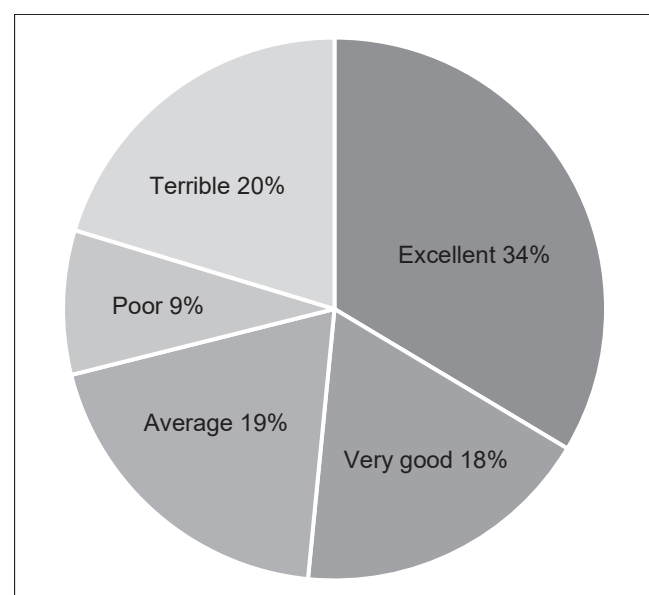


FIGURE 1: Range of ratings of reviews on TripAdvisor for Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort

them acceptable due to the affordable price. The hotel's zoo is noted, with some animals appearing neglected. Additional amenities like pools and a spa are mentioned.

Conservation and rehabilitation: Reviewers appreciate the rescue and rehabilitation efforts for the dolphins conveyed to them. The dolphins are described as rescued or born in captivity, unable to survive in the wild. Staff dedication and the release of rehabilitated dolphins are praised.

Dolphin therapy: Dolphin therapy for individuals with special needs, such as Down syndrome and autism, is mentioned positively. The therapy is seen as beneficial and has a positive impact on participants.

Price and value for money: The cost of the dolphin experience is discussed, with reviewers considering it good value for money. Suggestions for price reductions or longer interaction times are made.

Overall, the dolphin interaction experience generated positive emotions. The dolphins' behaviour and interactions with visitors were praised. While the hotel's condition was criticised, the focus of the reviews was on the dolphin experience. Conservation efforts, dolphin therapy and value for money were also discussed.

Thematic analysis of "very good" (n = 23)

Positive dolphin interaction: Reviewers expressed excitement about swimming with dolphins, taking pictures and having personal interactions. They found the experience unforgettable and enjoyable for both children and adults.

Concern for animal welfare: Some reviewers mentioned that the dolphins were rescued and praised the trainers for their care. However, others expressed concerns about animal cruelty, particularly regarding the conditions of the zoo and the confinement of animals.

Pricing and value: The cost of the dolphin experience was considered high but worth it due to the unique and interactive nature of the activity.

Mixed opinions on other zoo animals: Reviewers had mixed views on the presence of other animals, with some finding it interesting, while others felt it was depressing to see animals in concrete cells.

Mixed reviews on accommodations: Some reviewers found the rooms dilapidated, but enjoyed the various activities offered. Others appreciated the extensive resort and clean rooms.

Overall, the reviews were generally positive about the dolphin interaction experience, although concerns were raised about animal welfare and the conditions of the other animals. Pricing, accommodation and the booking process were also discussed.

Thematic analysis of "average" (n = 25)

Concern for dolphin welfare: Reviewers expressed sadness and concern over the small pool size and perceived overtaxing of the dolphins during shows, suggesting a preference for seeing dolphins in their natural habitat.

Mixed opinions on hotel and facilities: Some found the resort nice and enjoyable, while others described it as run-down and in need of maintenance. The small zoo and lack of cleanliness were mentioned.

Dolphin interaction experience: Reviewers generally enjoyed swimming with the dolphins, but had concerns about the organisation and duration of the experience.

Animal welfare in the zoo: Concerns were raised about the condition of other animals, including the small enclosures and neglect.

Pricing and value: Some felt the dolphin experience was worth the cost, while others found it expensive or lacking in value.

Booking process and communication: Issues were reported with confusion, changes in show times and incomplete information during the booking process.

Overall, the analysis reveals mixed opinions on the dolphin show experience and hotel facilities and concerns about animal welfare. Pricing and the booking process were also discussed.

Thematic analysis of "poor" (n = 11)

Concerns about the dolphin park: Guests expressed concerns about the conditions in the dolphin park, such as dirty water and potential impact on dolphin health.

Mixed reviews on the dolphin swim: Some guests enjoyed the dolphin swim experience, while others found it overpriced or regretted participating due to animal welfare concerns.

Need for renovation and maintenance: Reviewers emphasised the need for renovations and better maintenance of the facilities, citing the outdated appearance and lack of cleanliness.

Alternative recommendations: Guests mentioned considering other hotels or resorts in the area.

Animal cruelty concerns: Some guests expressed concerns about animal cruelty, specifically mentioning captive dolphins in chlorinated water and the suffering of other animals on the premises.

Overall, the analysis reveals disappointment with the hotel's condition, concerns about animal welfare in the dolphin park and the need for renovations and maintenance. Alternative recommendations and concerns about animal cruelty are also evident.

Thematic analysis of "terrible" (n = 26)

Animal welfare concerns: Guests expressed distress over the treatment and living conditions of the dolphins, including claims of abuse, blindness and signs of depression.

Calls for release and natural habitat: Recommendations were made to avoid captivity and instead observe dolphins in their natural environment.

Disappointing experiences: Guests described their experiences as sad, disheartening and disappointing due to small pools, repetitive shows and unprofessional staff.

Negative hotel experience: Additional grievances included misrepresented rooms, uncleanliness and poor customer service.

High prices and value: Criticisms were raised about the high prices for dolphin activities, which guests felt were not worth the cost.

Guilt and regret: Some guests expressed remorse and guilt for supporting the captive dolphin activities at the hotel.

Overall, the analysis highlights concern about animal welfare, dissatisfaction with the dolphin experiences, criticisms of the hotel and feelings of guilt for participating in captive dolphin activities.

Finally, the analysis of guest reviews for Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Lovina, Bali reveals a range of sentiments and themes related to the dolphin experiences and overall hotel stay. Positive reviews in the "Excellent" and "Very good" categories emphasise the excitement and enjoyment of the dolphin interactions, with some mentioning conservation

efforts and value for money. Average reviews express mixed opinions on the dolphin swim experience and concerns for animal welfare. Negative reviews in the "Poor" and "Terrible" categories highlight strong concerns about animal welfare, disappointment with the hotel's condition, high prices and feelings of guilt for participating in captive dolphin activities.

Discussion

In the realm of tourism research, Tomassini and Bertella (2023) advocate for a paradigm shift that involves embracing animals' viewpoints in their recent work. This transformative approach suggests a novel avenue for tourism experiences, enabling visitors to immerse themselves in the world from the animals' perspectives. In parallel, Tomassini et al. (2022) present compelling arguments that underline their dedication to advocating for justice in the realm of human-animal interactions. This paradigm shift gains significant relevance when considering the closure of the Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Bali in 2020, which represents a pivotal moment in the ongoing discourse surrounding dolphins' role in the hospitality and tourism industry in Indonesia. This crucial event was set in motion by the actions of Indonesian authorities and animal welfare organisations, who intervened to confiscate the dolphins held at the resort. As discussed earlier by Shani and Pizam (2008), this occurrence reveals the intricate ethical and legal considerations tied to activities involving dolphins. Importantly, the place's closure serves as a vivid illustration of the evolving societal attitudes towards wildlife tourism, further accentuating the burgeoning recognition of the urgency for ethical and sustainable practices, echoing the sentiments expressed by Curtin and Wilkes (2007). Moreover, this instance underscores the remarkable power held by public opinion and advocacy groups in influencing the trajectories of tourism establishments engaged in activities that raise ethical concerns, as emphasised by Shani and Pizam (2008). Thus, these events and research insights collectively emphasise the need for a more holistic and responsible approach to human-animal interactions in the tourism landscape. The proposed paradigm shift by Tomassini and Bertella aligns with the changing dynamics, urging us to create tourism experiences that not only entertain, but also respect and reflect the perspectives of the animals involved. This transformation reflects a broader trend towards a more ethically conscious and sustainable tourism industry.

By conducting a retrospective examination of guest experiences and perceptions during the operational period of Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort, this research analysed 128 guest reviews from TripAdvisor to gain a nuanced understanding of the diverse opinions and attitudes expressed by visitors, shedding light on the complexities surrounding the use of dolphins and its implications for tourism as also discussed by Shani and Pizam (2008). The closure of the resort presents a valuable opportunity to examine the developments in the reviews that ultimately precipitated the Indonesian authorities' decision to confiscate the dolphins. The findings of this netnographic study contribute to the broader discussion on responsible wildlife tourism and underscore the significance of considering the ethical treatment of animals in tourism practices. Insights derived from the analysis of guest reviews can inform future policymaking and guide resort management towards

more sustainable approaches that prioritise the welfare and conservation of marine wildlife.

The analysis of guest reviews for Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Lovina, Bali, presented a wide range of sentiments and opinions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding the use of dolphins. Positive reviews expressed excitement and enjoyment in swimming with dolphins, highlighting the magical and unforgettable nature of the experience, along with praise for the rescue and rehabilitation efforts for the dolphins and their therapeutic impact. However, mixed opinions were found in "Average" reviews, raising concerns about dolphin welfare, the organisation and duration of the dolphin experience and the condition of other animals in the resort's zoo, with some questioning the value for money. On the other hand, "Poor" and "Terrible" reviews raised significant concerns about animal welfare, with distressing claims of abuse, poor living conditions for dolphins and other animals and expressions of guilt for participating in activities that raised ethical concerns. The diverse perspectives reflected in the guest reviews underscore the ethical considerations and complexities surrounding the use of dolphins at Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort.

The closure of Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort marks both the conclusion and the beginning of a broader discussion about the use of dolphins in tourism and hospitality in Indonesia, particularly in Bali, where a single captive dolphin facility remains in operation. While it signifies progress in addressing ethical concerns, it also reminds the tourism and hospitality industry of the ongoing challenges in balancing visitor experiences, economic viability and animal welfare, as also discussed by Shani and Pizam (2008). The literature review emphasises integrating the ESG factors into responsible tourism, highlighting the practice of a prominent provider of ESG research (MSCI) who prioritises animal welfare in their research. World Animal Protection (WAP) raises ethical concerns about marine mammal captivity, stressing the need for improved treatment and conservation efforts (WAP, n.d.; WAP 2023). While responsible tourism trends are emerging, exemplified by Thomas Cook's exclusion of captive marine attractions (WDC, 2023), the industry still grapples with profit distribution and animal welfare concerns (Mustika et al., 2012).

In conclusion, the closure of Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort underscores the importance of responsible and sustainable approaches to wildlife tourism. The analysis of guest reviews provides valuable insights into the intricate relationship between visitor experiences, economic viability and ethical considerations. The literature review further highlights the significance of integrating ESG principles into tourism practices to ensure the well-being and conservation of marine wildlife. The ongoing dialogue and efforts to strike a balance between visitor satisfaction and ethical stewardship are crucial as ethical considerations surrounding the use of dolphins in tourism and hospitality continue to shape the future of wildlife tourism.

Conclusion

The closure of Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort in Lovina, Bali, due to the confiscation of its dolphins and increasing pressure from animal welfare advocates, highlights the shifting societal attitudes towards wildlife tourism and the need for responsible and sustainable practices. The netnographic study

of guest reviews from TripAdvisor contributes to the discussion on the ethical treatment of animals in tourism. The findings emphasise the importance of addressing animal welfare, providing satisfactory accommodations and maintaining transparency in pricing and communication.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussions presented, several recommendations can be made to promote responsible and sustainable practices in dolphin-related tourism and hospitality:

- Prioritise animal welfare: Place the well-being and conservation of dolphins at the forefront of all dolphin-related activities. Implement stringent ethical guidelines;
- Foster education and awareness: Shift the focus of dolphin-related tourism towards purely educational programmes that promote a deeper understanding of dolphins, their natural behaviour and the importance of conservation, steering away from captivity;
- Embrace stakeholder collaboration: Engage with animal welfare organisations, local communities and governmental bodies to develop collaborative approaches that promote responsible dolphin tourism. Foster dialogue and partnerships to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives and expertise; and
- Monitor and assess impacts in line with ESG principles: Regularly evaluate the environmental, social and economic impacts of dolphin-related tourism activities. Use the findings to adapt and refine practices, ensuring continuous improvement in sustainability and conservation efforts.

By adopting these recommendations, stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry can contribute to the responsible and sustainable management of dolphin-related tourism and hospitality, prioritising the well-being of dolphins and the conservation of marine ecosystems.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this netnographic study, as they could potentially impact the objectivity and representativeness of the findings. The analysis focused solely on guest reviews from TripAdvisor, which may not encompass the perspectives of all visitors to Melka Excelsior Dolphin and Wildlife Resort. It is possible that positive reviews could have been posted by the resort or individuals with vested interests, such as paid guests or influencers. Conversely, negative reviews may have been written by animal welfare advocates seeking to highlight concerns and undermine the reputation of the resort. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of the study.

ORCID iD

Rodney Westerlaken: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4581-836X>

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