



Analyzing Restaurant Owners' Responses to Online Negative Reviews in Arabic: Move Analysis and Rapport Management Theory

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Abstract

Given the growing importance of online reviews in shaping consumer purchasing decisions, it is increasingly important for restaurant owners to actively manage their online ratings and respond in a timely manner to negative reviews to gain the satisfaction and loyalty of dissatisfied customers. Much work has been conducted globally on this topic. However, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of how the owners respond to negative reviews in Arabic, especially in Saudi Arabia because of the new Saudi Vision 2030. This study aims to support the industry of tourism and hospitality in terms of inviting more tourists to support the economic growth. The goal of the study was to investigate the rhetorical moves and paralinguistic cues with their communicative functions employed by the owners when responding to the online negative reviews on Google reviews. Another goal was to interpret the functions from the perspective of Rapport Management Theory (RMT). The study used both qualitative and quantitative analysis to examine 250 responses to negative reviews posted on restaurants with ratings 4.5 'very good' and 5 'excellent,' out of 5. The results showed that the restaurant owners used 23 rhetorical moves to respond to the negative reviews. However, opening pleasantries/greetings, apologizing, and soliciting response were used more frequently than the other moves. In addition, most of the moves were used to enhance rapport than damaging rapport, alongside with emojis. Moreover, the owners used corporate identity 'we' more than personal identify 'I' to enhance rapport with the reviewers. That result was not expected because the restaurants are non-chain and the responses are informal. These findings highlight the implications in terms of preparing workshops for the restaurant owners in managing their online responses to the negative reviews of the dissatisfied customers, not only to enhance rapport and achieve the trust and loyalty of reviewers, but also to overhear audience on public. Finally, future studies should include more responses with emojis to explore new types of emojis and their functions.

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Introduction

With the rise of mobile and internet technology, restaurant service checking websites and applications have become popular for customers and restaurants to interact with each other (Archak, Ghose, & Ipeirotis, 2011; Gao et al., 2018). These platforms allow customers to provide instant feedback on various aspects of their dining experiences, such as food, taste, price, cleanliness, service quality, etc. This feedback can be used by other potential customers to make informed decisions before visiting a restaurant (O'Connor, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Google is one of the most widely used search engines for customers to read not only restaurant reviews, but also hotels, malls, clinics, etc. Positive reviews can help restaurants earn the trust of customers and attract new customers, while negative reviews can have the opposite effect. In this context, it is essential for the restaurant owners to actively manage their online ratings and respond appropriately to negative feedback to restore rapport with dissatisfied customers and maintain a positive reputation to attract more customers. Most of the studies investigated the restaurant owners' responses to negative reviews from the perspective of discourse analysis in different languages and countries, such as United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Ireland, Australia, Italy, and China, with less attention to the functions of paralinguistic cues that help to convey the specific meaning and feelings to support the relationship with dissatisfied customers (Guzzo & Gallo, 2019; Ho, 2018; Hopkinson, 2017; Napolitano, 2018; Yonghong, 2020). However, the responses of restaurant owners to negative reviews in Arabic have not been explored yet. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the rhetorical moves and paralinguistic cues alongside with their communicative functions that were interpreted in the light of RMT, especially in Saudi Arabia because of the new Saudi Vision 2030. It aims to support the sector of tourism and hospitality in terms of increasing the number tourists in the Kingdom which will be reflected on the economic growth in the future. According to the Saudi Retail (2023), people mostly spend their money on restaurants than other objects. Therefore, their negative reviews need to be analyzed from the perspective of discourse analysis to help the restaurant managers to be able to respond effectively to gain the loyalty of their dissatisfied customers. This study seeks to address the following research questions:

- 1- What are the rhetorical moves used by restaurant owners in response to online negative reviews and their communicative functions?
- 2- What are the paralinguistic cues used by restaurant owners in the responses to negative reviews and their pragmatic functions?
- 3- What are the interpretations for rhetorical moves and paralinguistic cues in the light of RMT in the restaurant owners' responses?

Theoretical Background

Online Consumer Reviews, Management Responses, and Google Reviews

With the growth of online consumer reviews, people tend to read those reviews to make a decision about booking a hotel, visiting a restaurant, and buying objects instead of marketing communications (Napolitano, 2018). It was found that about half of internet users write online reviews every month (Howarth, 2023). In the past, the recovery service occurs between the customer and manager/ owner of store. However, with the online reviews, there is a third party who can not only read reviews but also responded to reviews to make the decision (Zhang & Vásquez, 2014). According to Howarth (2023), 93% of users mentioned that online reviews had an influence on their purchasing decisions. Therefore, the negative reviews may damage the business, especially restaurants because they are one of the most businesses that people pay for in Saudi Arabia according to Saudi Retail's report (2023). The negative reviews need a professional way in how to make a response, not only to build a rapport with the customer but also to give a good impression to others about how you deal or treat the problems that customer faced during his/her experience. Therefore, the interest in understanding online consumer reviews have increased. Reviewers expect to receive a response, and it was found about 53 % of consumers look forward to receive a fast response to negative reviews (Bojkov, 2024). However, 75% do not respond to negative reviews (Howarth, 2023).

Google was used by 81 % of consumers to evaluate local business (Bojkov, 2024), which includes 73% of all online reviews and followed by the other top sites, such as Yelp (6%), Facebook (3%), and TripAdvisor (3%) in terms of the number of reviews. Also, Google is the most used website in Saudi Arabia according to Statista's report (2024). The website of Google review gives a chance for customers to review the restaurants based on their dining experience by leaving a text or text with photos and rate the restaurant on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 as the highest rating. The customer can update the review after receiving a notification about the reply of business owner. The manager/owner of the restaurant can respond to the review, but cannot delete the review. However, the owner can flag the review as inappropriate if it violates Google's policies. For responding to reviews, there are guidelines from google to business owners in how to respond, not only to positive but also to negative reviews, such as "do not share personal data of the reviewer or attack them personally", "investigate the reasons behind the reviewer's negative impression of the business", "be honest", "apologize when appropriate", "show that you are a real person by signing off with your name or initials", and

“respond in a timely manner”. Also, Google guidelines draw attention of business owners that negative reviews are not necessarily a bad sign about the business practices but can be point for future improvement for customer experiences. Reviews can help owners to identify weaknesses and strengths of their business (Napolitano, 2018). However, some managers do not follow those guidelines, and they are explained in details such as attacking the customer or not using either the real name or initials in the non-chain restaurants when they respond to negative reviews.

A review reader can find the following information about online consumer reviews on Google reviews about business, such as review scores, top reviews, and total number of reviews. The review score is the average of all ratings published on that business. Also, the reader can sort the reviews of a particular business by most relevant, newest, highest, and lowest. In addition, the reader can benefit from the customer review snippet and place topics that highlights the similar keywords, phrases, and information used in the reviewers' reviews about the main themes of business, which are results of an algorithm. Google is committed with the showing only authentic, relevant, and useful reviews; therefore, it has automated spam detection measures that is used to remove spammy reviews. Based on the previous percentages about the influence of reviews and expectation of reviewers in receiving a response, there is a need to better understand how restaurant owners respond to dissatisfied customers.

Genre and Move Analysis

Martin (1984) defined genre as “a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture”. The definition can be explained in terms of its characteristics that are emphasized in three parts (Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987). First, genre is a staged activity means that the genre producer goes through steps to reach the goal or purpose of the activity. Second, genre is a goal oriented or purposeful activity means that the genre producer has something to be achieved. Third, ‘speakers engage as members of our culture’ means that genre is a social process where the genre producer interacts with the members of a community. Like Martin’s ‘stages’, the term ‘moves’ was emphasized by Bhatia (1993) and Swales (1990) in which each genre encompasses a typical move structure and serves a communicative purpose. Blitvich & Lorenzo-Dus (2013) explained the relationship and interaction between genre, communicative purpose, and rhetorical moves as in the following “a given communicative purpose triggers a particular genre, which is realized by a specific move structure or functionally distinct stages along with the genre unfolds. The move structure, in turn, is realized by rhetorical strategies or formal choices of content and style”. Swales (2004) argues that one single genre or text belonging to the same genre with similar move structure may serve multiple or different communicative purposes depending on the producer and consumer of the genre. Move analysis has been used to analyze texts representative of a particular genre to understand the rhetorical structure of various genres. Thus, it has been described as a productive and a top down approach. According to Biber & Conrad (2009) “the text is described as a sequence of ‘moves,’ where each move represents a stretch of text serving a particular communicative function”.

In other words, the notion of genre has both text type and social action (Swales, 1990). The structure of restaurant owner’s response to the dissatisfied customer is the staged activity. The negative review of the dissatisfied customer needs a response from the owner reflects genre is a goal oriented and purposeful activity. The interaction between the dissatisfied customer and the owner reflects the engaging in the interaction. However, the traditional interaction in service recovery was in private in face-to-face communication. On websites, the response is online which can be read and seen by readers and visitors for the making decisions about the people’s dining experiences who are ‘third party’. This term is defined as “a ratified listener to whom an utterance is not addressed but who is fully entitled to listen to it and make inferences, according to the speaker’s communicative intention” (Dyner, 2014). The third party plays an important role because of the influence on the business based on reading the review and the response. Therefore, genre can be considered as a powerful marketing tool (Hopkinson, 2017). The genre of responses to negative reviews, especially the restaurant owners’ responses, needs more investigation because most of the contribution was on hotel responses (Cenni & Goethals, 2020; Ho, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Zhang & Vásquez, 2014). Few studies discussed the responses of restaurant owners which were on websites such as TripAdvisor and Dianping.com (Guzzo & Gallo, 2019; Ho, 2018; Hopkinson, 2017; Napolitano, 2018; Yonghong, 2020). Therefore, this study extends exploring this genre on the restaurant owners’ responses to negative reviews in Arabic on Google reviews, using move analysis and RMT.

Rapport Management Theory

The construct of rapport can be seen originally in Brown and Levinson’s (1987) notion of face that is a base for the theory of politeness. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) divided the notion of face into two types: positive and negative face. The positive face was defined as “the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants”. The negative face was defined as “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction- i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition”. They claim that their notion of face was built based on Goffman’s (1967) definition of face which is interpreted as interaction and relation because of the two

expressions: ‘others’ and ‘during a particular contact’ in the following definition. Goffman (1967) defined face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”. However, Brown & Levinson (1987) emphasized the individuality of face and overlooked its interactional and relational components (Arundale, 2006; Ho, 2018), which mainly differs from Goffman’s (1967) notion. Other scholars contributed more understanding and interpretations to the nature of face, highlighting the interactional and relational component of it such as Arundale (2006). Arundale (2006), emphasizes that “face is an emergent property of relationships, and therefore a relational phenomenon . . . framing face as relational rests directly on framing it as interactional . . . face is a meaning or action, or more generally an interpreting, ...”. Therefore, Locher & Watts (2005) and Spencer-Oatey (2008) proposed alternative frameworks to take into account the phenomena of politeness in daily life interaction in both social and professional contexts.

Locher and Watts’ (2005) relational work framework classifies the interpersonal behavior into four broad categories along a continuum. That is from impolite and non-politic through non-polite and politic, polite and politic, to over-polite and non-politic. A number of contextual factors can decide the category that is related a particular behavior, such as the relationship between the interlocutors, their roles they take during the interaction, and the nature of the interaction. It was argued that Locher and Watts’ (2005) relational work framework better than Brown and Levinson’s theory because it takes into account not only polite and impolite behaviors but also those that are not polite nor impolite, but only politic or appropriate.

Spencer-Oatey’s (2008) framework of rapport and its management relies on Goffman’s (1967) notion of face. However, in comparison to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, it has a stronger relational and interactional orientation. It was adapted for this study because of its higher objectivity where judging a behavior requires an individual to evaluate a number of contextual factors (Ho, 2017b). According to Spencer-Oatey (2008), rapport refers to the (dis)harmony between interactants and has three bases: face sensitivities, sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals. Rapport management refers to “the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). It entails three dimensions: the management of face, sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals. In this rapport construct, the dimension of face is considered to be “closely related to a person’s sense of identity or self-concept” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) and it involves the acknowledgement of the positive or negative attributes of one’s interlocutors and those attributes are “affectively sensitive” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). The dimension of sociality rights is divided into equity rights and association rights whereas the dimension of obligations concerns the rights and obligations that individuals believe they should have and are entitled to in a given interaction. Based on the perceived rights and obligations, this dimension involves the fulfilment of individual’s expectations. Finally, the dimension of interactional goals is related to the specific goals that individuals have when they interact with others. Achieving the goals are the results of managing that dimension in this rapport.

Literature Review

This section comprises three sub-section to elaborate on the studies that are related to the current topic. The first one discusses the studies about the restaurant owners’ responses to negative reviews. The second one elaborates on studies about the functions of emojis either on online reviews or the responses. The third one discusses the studies about the functions of emojis explored from discourse analytic perspective in different platforms of social media.

Studies About Restaurant Owners’ Responses to Negative Reviews

Most of the studies about investigating the responses of restaurant owners to the negative reviews have been conducted from non-linguistics/Applied Linguistics departments such as Marketing, Business Administration/Management, and Hotel and Tourism/Restaurant Administration (Bradley, Sparks, & Weber, 2016; Dens, De Pelsmacker, & Purnawirawan, 2015; Evans et al., 2012; Farias, Simão, & Reis, 2022; Kumar, Qiu, & Kumar, 2018; Naing, 2020; Rafiee, 2021; Song & Kim, 2016). They tend to explore restaurant owners/managers’ strategies when responding to criticism and their impact from the perspective of researchers or dissatisfied customers, using questionnaires, surveys, scenarios, or authentic online reviews.

However, few studies have explored this topic from the perspective of discourse analysis (Guzzo & Gallo, 2019; Ho, 2018; Hopkinson, 2017; Napolitano, 2018; Yonghong, 2020), unlike the wide contribution to investigate the hotel responses to negative reviews from discourse analysis point of view (Cenni & Goethals, 2020; Ho, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Zhang & Vásquez, 2014). The latter extended the analysis from identifying the moves and their linguistic realizations to their communicative functions based on the RMT that explains the moves that support or damage rapport. Regarding the restaurant owners’ responses, Hopkinson (2017) explored the differences in the restaurant-owners’ public online responses to negative customer reviews between L1 English (from United Kingdom) and lingua franca English (ELF) speakers (from Czech Republic) on TripAdvisor. The study focused on the occurrence and linguistic realizations of apologies in terms of illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) and accounts of the incident. The study revealed some

differences between L1 and EFL responses. For example, the IFIDs were used more frequently in an ambiguous way in their illocution by EFL responses. Also, the L1 responses employed facework resources in a more professional way, such as downgrading and upgrading. In contrast, the EFL responses were more face-neutral which can be a result of limited linguistic and pragmatic competence. Regarding the linguistic realizations of the IFID, the L1 responses preferred using the performative verb 'apologize' and the nominal form 'apology/apologies' more than 'sorry' which was preferred by the EFL responses.

Hopkinson (2018) conducted a socio-pragmatic study that is a theory of facework and relational work to identify the owners' responses to negative reviews from Ireland, United Kingdom, and Australia posted on TripAdvisor. Although responses to customer criticism are considered apologetic that takes a deferential stance towards the customer, the study focused on the responses that have a shift from the default position to the oppositional stance. The study found that the oppositional stance was less frequent than the default position and the opposition is mitigated. This represents a reframing of the discourse and emphasizes that the genre of discourse is dynamic and fluid, not fixed and stable. Napolitano (2018) investigated the owners' responses to negative reviews in the UK and Italy on TripAdvisor to explore the differences in the context of two different cultures. The study found divergent rhetorical styles in terms of responding to criticism because of culture, politeness, and management in the two different contexts. For example, British restaurants tend to employ impersonal, polite, and professional responses to negative reviews. In contrast, Italian restaurants frequently showed an improvised, direct, and emotional management of criticism. They indicated difficulties in accepting negative reviews because of using additional moves, such as 'criticism towards review' and 'declaring the review untrue' more than the British restaurants. Regarding the main moves, it was observed that the British restaurants used 'express gratitude', 'apologies for sources of trouble', and 'acknowledge complaints/feedback' more frequently than the other moves. On the other hand, the Italian restaurants used 'apologies for sources of trouble', 'invitation for a second visit', and 'refer to customer reviews' more than the other moves.

Guzzo & Gallo (2019) investigated apologizing and denial of apologies in the managers' replies to negative reviews in the Loughborough Italian Community, considering cross cultural communication and identity in migration contexts in online discourse. Both regret and apology were used equally in the English group; however, they were used doubling in the group of Loughborough Italians and the group of Italians. Regarding the use of strategies for denial of apologies, Italians tended to deny an apology more than the group of Loughborough Italians and English business owners, such as 'being offended', 'blaming the reviewer', and 'accusing of lying'. Yonghong (2020) adapted Spencer-Oatey's (2008) Rapport Management framework and the method of Rhetorical Move Analysis to study the responses of restaurants' apologies to customers in Chinese on Dianping.com. The study found that various moves, such as thanks, explanations, repairs, openings, closings, etc. accompany apologies to serve as remedial responses to restore rapport or harmony. Also, the linguistic domain of apology, such as apology expressions, intensification, repetition, honorifics, etc. and the content of apology either accepting or not accepting responsibility were used to repair the relationship with the unsatisfied individual customer and to maintain and protect the restaurants' good reputation with the overbearing audience in the online mode. Previous studies explored the rhetorical moves and how culture influenced the use of responses to restaurant negative reviews across languages. Arabic responses to restaurant negative reviews have not explored yet according to the best of our knowledge. Therefore, this study extends that approach to identify the restaurant owners' responses and explore the use of non-linguistic cues such as emojis and punctuations beside their functions in the context to be interpreted from the perspective of RMT. The following section discusses the studies about paralinguistic cues in online reviews and responses to those reviews.

Studies About the Impact of Emoticons and Emojis in Online Reviews and Responses

Most of the studies examined the influence of emoticons and emojis on perceptions and attitudes in customer's reviews or company responses from the department of Marketing, Hospitality, and Information management/Technology. Manganari & Dimara (2017) examined the customers' perceptions and attitudes when they read positive and negative hotel reviews with or without emoticons to explore the impact of those paralinguistic cues on the them. The findings found that positive reviews support the positive attitudes which are reflected on the increase of booking intention. However, the negative reviews that contain on emoticons, affected not only the customers' attitudes towards the hotel and their booking intentions but also increases the usefulness and credibility of the reviews. Li, Chan, & Kim (2018) examined how customers interpret emoticons in terms of warmth and competence when they are used by employees in online service encounters. The results showed that customers consider employees of customer service who use emoticons have more warmth but with less competence in comparison to those who do not use the emoticons in their responses.

Örnek (2019) investigated the impact of emoji usage in positive and negative messages in consumer reviews and company responses on booking.com for the influence of emoji on the following categories: positive word of mouth, purchase intention, and expected service quality. Although there was a greater impact on all the categories, the expected service quality was influenced by whether the review and response include emojis.

The study suggested that company responses should use emojis in their responses when it is used by customers, in their reviews, to increase the expectation for service quality. Smith & Rose (2020) applied the theories of emotion to provide evidence towards the impact of positive emotion for smiling emojis in the electronic customer service messages. They found that smiling emojis have positive affect on consumers and strengthen the marketing relationship with them. Prada et al. (2022) examined the use of emoji in response to a customer request at restaurant reservation (study 1) and experience hotel reviews (study 2). Although the results found that using emoji had a positive impact on the customer's perception and reservation intentions, it influenced different perceptions about how customers relate to brands and services. Wang, Chih, & Honora (2023) investigated the influence of pleading face emoji on customer forgiveness when sending apology messages in handling complaints on social media. Customer forgiveness is a result of the use of service providers for emoji which contributes in increasing the perceived firm sincerity and empathy in informal communication, but not the formal one. Almost all the previous studies were quantitative and they affirmed the importance of using emojis in the company responses to deliver the subtle meaning that can strengthen the marketing relationship with consumers. However, they showed the positive impact for the usage of emojis in the responses in general without investigating deeply the types of emojis and their functions in specific responses or even with specific expressions as have been achieved by researchers from the perspective of discourse analysis. The following section displays the different functions for using emojis in different social media platforms, but not about online reviews or responses.

Studies About the Functions of Paralinguistic Cues from the Discourse Analytic Perspective

Emojis are multifunctional because social media users in different context and platforms interpret the functions of emojis differently (Dainas & Herring, 2021; Herring & Dainas, 2017). Therefore, various studies examined the functions of emojis in different platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Telegram, which explored various functions because the relationship between emoji and text and the role of context in determining the specific function, alongside other reasons to be discussed later. On Facebook, Herring & Dainas (2020) examined gender and age differences in terms of how they interpret the functions of emojis in a public group. Gender showed no impact on interpretation the function of emoji. However, the younger users interpreted the emoji as softening or tone. In contrast, older users interpreted the emoji as action. Dolot & Opina (2021) collected data from Facebook groups to analyze the functions of graphicons in Filipino based on Herring and Dainas' taxonomy (2017). They found the following functions: response, replacement, sharing, complement, and attention, besides those of Herring and Dainas's taxonomy were explored. Alshboul & Rababah (2021) explored the functions of emojis used by Jordanians on Facebook. Emojis were used for different functions, such as indicating emotive functions, conative functions, phatic functions, poetic functions, referential functions, and metalingual functions.

On Twitter, Tantawi & Rosson (2019) analyzed the functions of emojis on Twitter messages in the US, and identified paralinguistic feature of attitudes for emojis, such as playfulness, praise, and confusion. Al-Rawi et al. (2020) examined gender differences in emoji usage in hashtags related to COVID-19 on Twitter. They found that the folded hand emoji and global emoji were used by men as a positive way to show solidarity whereas the emoji of broken heart was negatively used by women. Etman & Elkareh (2021) investigated Arabic tweets that include emojis from facial expressions and hand gestures from Arabic dialects, such as Saudi, Egyptian, Kuwaiti, Emirati, Iraqi, and Lebanese. It was found that the most common used emoji was face with tears of joy across the dialects to show laughing and then the loudly crying. Yüce, Aydoğdu, & Katırcı (2021) explored the functions of emojis in Turkish tweets related to sport clubs. The findings showed that the emojis were used to indicate to colors and symbols related to their clubs.

On WhatsApp, Al Rashdi (2018) examined the functions of emojis in Omani messages. Seven functions were identified, such as to signal emoticons, celebrities, approval, the opening and closing of conversation, to serve as linking devices and as contextualization cues, and as a response to compliments on WhatsApp. Muzakky, Hidayat, & Alek (2021) focused on analyzing the pragmatic function of folded hand emoji in Indonesian WhatsApp groups and screenshots of the messages. The findings showed that the folded hand emoji was used to express emotions, thanking, apology, and request. On Telegram, Ubeid & Abdul (2021) identified the functions of emojis in chat groups by Iraqi students. They found that the emojis were used to indicate parallel emotions, attitudes, and humor. Also, the emojis were used enhance emotion intensity and express irony. Finally, they were used to modify illocutionary force and enhance attitude intensity. The previous studies illustrated how the pragmatic functions of emojis are complex and influenced platforms, relationship, culture, surrounding messages, languages, topics, informal situation, social variables, etc. However, the results showed the functions of emojis in non-business context.

Methodology

Data Collection

In order to identify the rhetorical moves and paralinguistic cues and explain their functions, a dataset of

responses from restaurant owners to the dissatisfied customers' reviews on Google reviews was collected and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. 250 Arabic responses were collected from 20 restaurants in Riyadh which include 5222 words in all the responses and with an average of word count 20.88 words in each response. Riyadh has been chosen because it is the capital city of Saudi Arabia and because it is ranked first in terms of public expenditures in restaurants and coffee shops, according to the report of [Saudi Retail \(2023\)](#). Only restaurants with ratings 4.5 'very good' and 5 'excellent' bullets out of 5 were selected which were the first 20 restaurants on Google reviews in the city. The reviews can be sorted by 'most relevant', 'newest', 'highest', and 'lowest'. For each restaurant, the reviews were sorted by 'the lowest' to reach the negative reviews to find the responses that received from the restaurant owner. Not every negative review received a response from the restaurant owner; therefore, the number of collected responses differed from one restaurant to another. The repeated or identical responses were avoided because they can affect the final results. The responses were collected manually by copying and pasting them in the excel sheet in April and May 2023. Only Arabic responses were collected, so translated responses and English responses were excluded from the data collection. These responses are presented in the results section with their original spellings and the transliteration according to their standard English equivalent. Finally, the names of restaurants or owners/managers, phone numbers, and emails were also anonymized for reasons of anonymity.

Data Analysis

The restaurant owners' responses were analyzed using the rhetorical move method developed by [Swales \(1990\)](#) based on segmenting each text to identify the move or communicate function. This approach was adapted by researchers for analyzing either hotel responses to the negative reviews on TripAdvisor ([Cenni & Goethals, 2020](#); [Ho, 2017a, 2017b, 2018](#); [Zhang & Vásquez, 2014](#)) or the responses of restaurant owners ([Napolitano, 2018](#); [Yonghong, 2020](#)). In this study, we did not follow a specific one from the previous studies about analyzing owner responses to negative reviews. Instead, we identified the types of moves from the previous studies to benefit from the names of moves and conduct the modification where is needed based on the nature of Arabic responses in the non-chain restaurant negative reviews. Similarly, the pragmatic functions of the paralinguistic cues were identified based on the best interpretation for them in their contextual meanings. Therefore, no specific taxonomy of functions was adopted because of the complexity and internal and external factors in specifying the functions of paralinguistic cues as discussed broadly in the last section. Additionally, almost all the studies about the functions of emojis were conducted on non-business contexts.

Using an Excel sheet for manual coding, the researchers followed two steps and several rounds to ensure coding consistency and to establish reliability in the first phase of move codification. The first researcher independently coded the moves and pragmatic functions of paralinguistic cues in the first 50 restaurant owners' responses based on their functional units or moves and pragmatic functions for emojis, emoticons, and punctuations. The second researcher revised those functions to assure the coding. The discrepancy was resolved by modifying the names of moves and pragmatic functions of paralinguistic cues or adding new ones in discussion because of the Arabic context for the data besides the comparison with the previous studies mentioned in the literature review. The identical procedure was followed with the remaining 200 responses to build our analysis as precise as possible until identifying 23 types of move (e.g., opening pleasantries/greetings, apologizing, soliciting response, expressing gratitude, etc.) and 12 functions for the paralinguistic cues (e.g., to express rapport, to soften, to intensify, to show respect, decoration, etc.). They are discussed in detail in the following section. In the second phase of move codification, some moves were analyzed to identify their linguistic realizations, such as the ways of opening and closing pleasantries, the form of apology and gratitude besides their position in the response, and the use of I and we to reflect the personal and corporate identity.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study in two sub-sections. The first one shows the moves used in restaurant owners' responses to negative reviews that were left by dissatisfied customers on Google reviews after their dining experiences. In addition, it shows the functions of these moves with the customers from the perspective of RMT. The second one presents the paralinguistic cues and their pragmatic functions, alongside with interpretation in the light of RMT.

The Moves in Restaurant Owners' Responses to the Negative Reviews

The restaurant owners used 23 moves in their responses to the negative reviews on Google reviews, which were used in a total of 889 (see [Figure 1](#)). However, those moves differed in frequency with various linguistic realizations as explained below in detail.

Move 1: Opening Pleasantries/Greetings

The move of opening pleasantries/greetings was the most frequent one in the responses (151:17%). This

involves starting the response by addressing the reviewer with his/her name or with/without address term and greeting him/her to be closer to the owner. This move contributes not only to restore rapport or harmony but also enhances the rapport with the unsatisfied customer because of his/her association rights and face needs (Yonghong, 2020). The frequent use of opening pleasantries in the Arabic responses to restaurant negative reviews is in alignment with Chinese responses on Dianping.com (Yonghong, 2020). However, it contradicts with the responses in the UK and Italy (Napolitano, 2018). The first employed 'apologies' as the most frequent moves whereas the later employed 'referring to customer reviews'. However, the owners used a variety of ways in this move to initiate their responses to their reviewers in terms of using greeting expressions and address terms (see Figure 2).

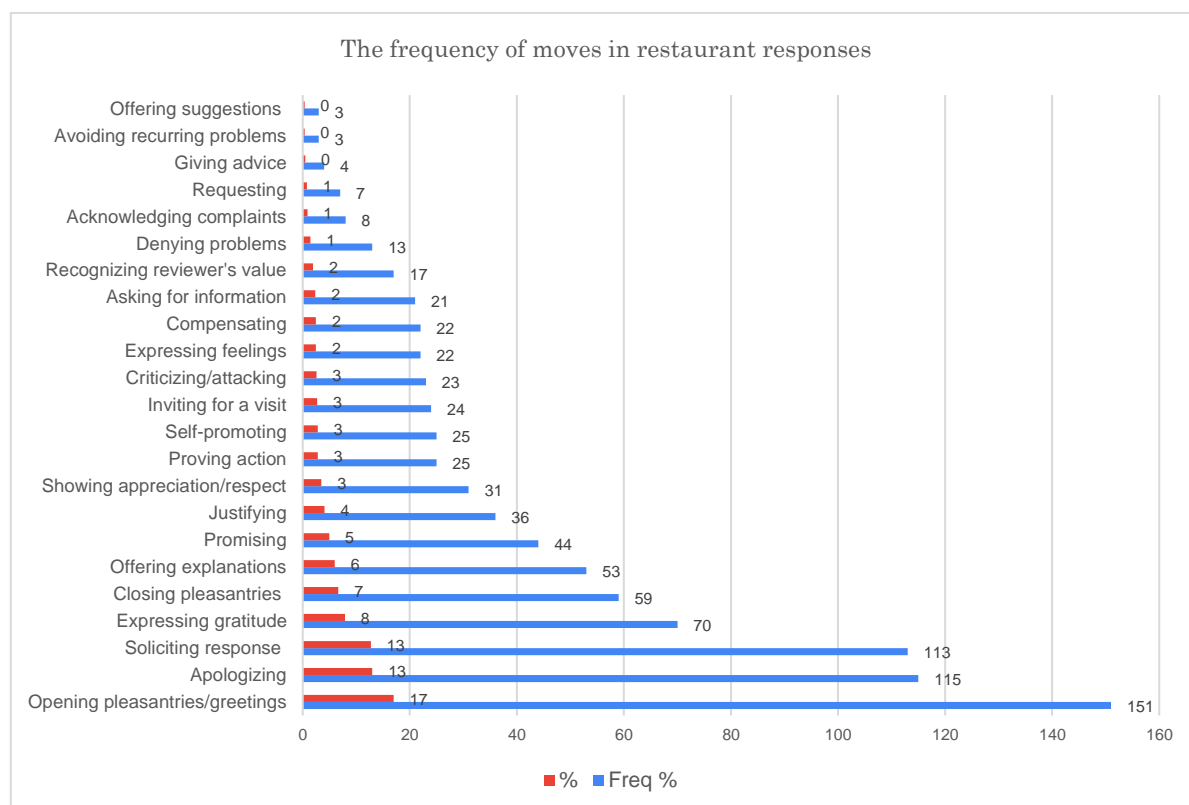


Figure 1: The Frequency of Moves in Restaurant Owners' Responses to the Negative Reviews.

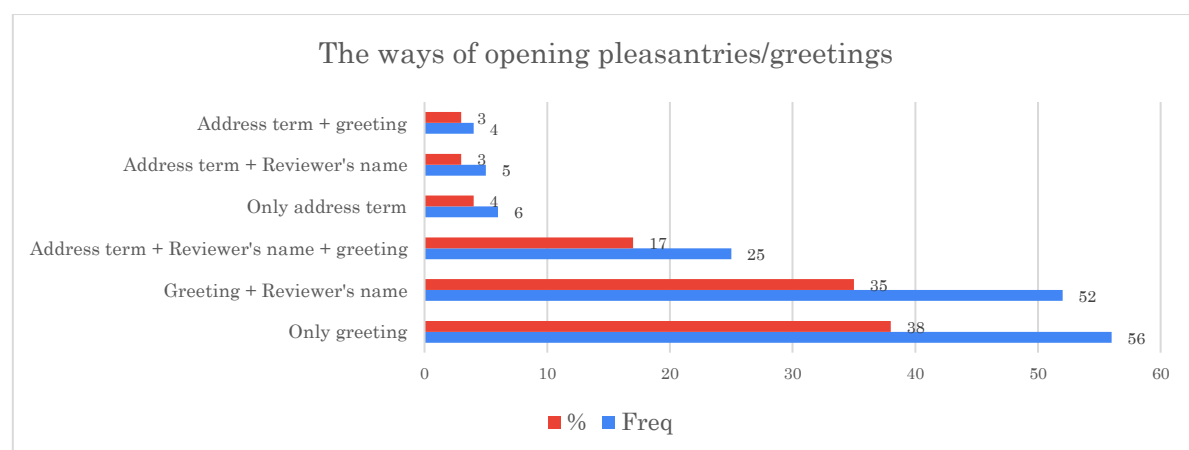


Figure 2: The Frequency of Ways of Opening Pleasantries/Greetings in Restaurant Owners' Responses.

Six ways of opening responses were used by the owners. However, using only greeting (56:38) was the most frequent one, followed by using greeting with reviewer's name (52:35%) and using address term with reviewer's name and greeting (25:17%). Other ways were used but with frequency less than 10%. For greeting expressions, it was used various expressions, such as *مرحبا marhaba* 'welcome', *تشرفنا بخدمتك/بزيارتك tasharrafnā bikhidmatik/biziyāratik* 'we were honored to serve you/have you visiting', *السلام عليكم assalamu 'alaykum* 'peace be upon you', *صباح الخير/مساء الخير sabāh alkhayr/masā' alkhayr* 'good morning/good evening', *اهلا وسهلا*

ahlan/ahlan wasahlan 'welcome', and *تحية طيبة tahiyah tayybah* 'a lovely greeting'. The first two expressions (e.g. welcome and honored to serve you/for your visit) were used more than the other expressions mentioned previously. Also, the latter was used in few responses at the end of response. Some greeting expressions were used with the first person plural pronoun such as 'we were honored to...' to refer to the corporate identity as it is discussed later in some moves, such as apologizing, expressing gratitude, and expressing appreciation/respect. Using corporate identity can show more concern for the reviewer because of his/her sociality rights.

For addressing the customer, it was used the following address terms *أستاذ/أستاذة 'ustādh/'ustādhah* and *السيد/السيدة assayyid/assayyidah* 'Mr./Ms.', *أخ/أخت 'akh/'ukht* 'brother/sister', *عزيزي/عزيزتي 'azīzi/'azīzati* 'my dear (masculine/feminine)', *ضيفنا/ضيفتنا dayfanā/dayfatnā* 'our guest (masculine/feminine)', *عميلنا 'amīlanā* 'our customer', *دكتور duktawr* 'doctor/faculty member', and *صديقنا sadīqanā* 'our friend'. In few responses, the first name with or without the last name and nickname were used. However, the first two address terms Mr. and Ms. were the most frequent ones. Few address terms were preceded with adjectives, such as *الأخ الكريم al'akh alkarīm* 'gracious brother,' and *ضيفنا الغالي dayfanā alghālī* 'our precious guest'. The owners used various forms of greetings and address terms to establish a polite and respectful relationship with the reviewer to enhance rapport.

Move 2: Apologizing

This move was used to express regret for issues faced by the reviewers during their visits, acknowledging their problems and expressing a desire to make things right. It was used 115 times (13%) that serves to enhance rapport. Also, it was utilized to repair the relationship with the reviewer and to maintain and protect the reputation of restaurant with the third party, the overhearing audience (Yonghong, 2020). This move was the second most frequent move which differs from Chinese that prefers the move of thanking (Yonghong, 2020) and expressing gratitude in English in the UK and invitation in Italy (Napolitano, 2018). However, the way of apology differed in the focus of apology (see Examples 1-9).

#	Focus	Examples
1 General		وتقبلوا / اعتذرنا <i>wataqabbalū i'tidharanā</i> Accept our apologies.
2 Experience		اعتذر لهذه التجربة السيئة <i>na'tadhir lihādhihi attajribah assayy'ah</i> we apologize for this bad experience.
3 Noise		اعتذر عن انزعاجك <i>na'tadhir 'an inzi'ājik</i> we apologize for the inconvenience.
4 Specific problem		اعتذر لكم على طول الانتظار <i>na'tadhir lakum 'alā tūl alintizār</i> We apologize for the long wait.
5 For what happened		اعتذر لكم ونأسف لما حصل <i>na'tadhir lakum wana'saf limā hasal</i> We apologize to you, and we are sorry for what happened.
6 For dissatisfaction		اعتذر عن عدم رضاكم <i>na'tadhir 'an 'adam ridākum</i> We apologize for your dissatisfaction.
7 For negative review		يؤسفنا أن نرى تقييمك السلبي <i>yu'sifunā an narā taqyyimuk assalbi</i> We are sorry to see your negative review.
8 For misunderstanding		أسف لسوء الفهم <i>na'saf lisū' alfihim</i> Sorry for the misunderstanding.
9 For visit		اعتذر ان الزيارة لم تكن حسب المستوى المتوقع <i>na'tadhir anna azziyārah lam takun hasab almustawā almutawaqqā'</i> We apologize for the visit that was not as expected.

Not all apologies were about the source of problem, instead of that, there was a shift to apologize in general or apologize for experience, noise, for what happened without specifying the problem, for dissatisfaction, etc. Specifying problems were found in the focus of apology, such as apologize for long waiting, delay in order, crowding, etc. One of the interesting ways in apology was using a conditional apology, such as *ناأسف إذا بدر منا أي تقصير na'saf 'idhā badar minnā 'ai taqsīr* 'we apologize if we had any failure'. The same condition was used in Chinese to indicate that was not serious or specific to apologize for (Yonghong, 2020). Shifting in apology can protect the online reputation of restaurant and apologize for any negative experience in general that a customer may have had during his/her visit. The owners employed different forms of apology, such as verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs (see Figure 3).

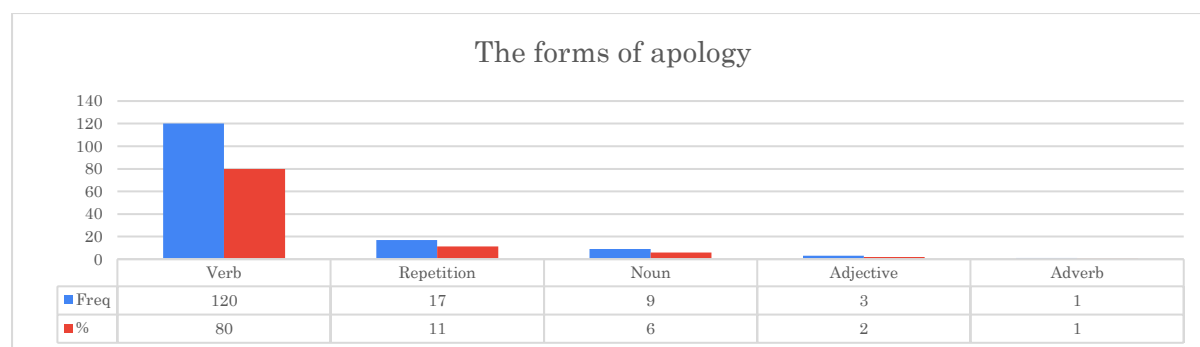


Figure 3: The Frequency of Forms of Apology in The Restaurant Owners' Responses.

However, using verbs were the most frequent form followed by nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, respectively. In few responses, the apology was repeated more than once (17:11%) to intensify apology. The preference in the use of performative verb 'apologize' and the nominal form 'apology' is similar to the English in the responses of owners to negative reviews on TripAdvisor in the UK (Napolitano, 2018). There was a tendency to use not only 'apology' but also 'regret' in Italian (Guzzo & Gallo, 2019).

Repeating the verb *apologize* was used to intensify the apology, which is similar to Napolitano's results (2018). Also using adverbs, adjectives, and verbs were used as an intensification. For adverbs, it was used deeply and very (e.g. *نعذر منك جدا* *naʿtadhir mink jiddan* 'we deeply apologize' or *مأسفين جدا* *muta'assifin jiddan* 'we are very sorry'), again (e.g. *نعذر لكم مرة أخرى* *naʿtadhir lakum marrah 'ukhrā* 'we apologize to you again', and sincerely (e.g. *نعذر بشدة* *naʿtadhir bishiddah* 'We sincerely apologize'). For adjectives, it was used deepest (e.g. *أشد الاعتذار* *'ashad alitidhār* 'the deepest apology'). For verbs, it was used 'repeat' (e.g. *نكرر الاعتذار* *nukarrir alitidhār* 'we repeat the apology'). It was observed that first person singular pronoun and first person plural pronoun were used to express apology (see Figure 4).

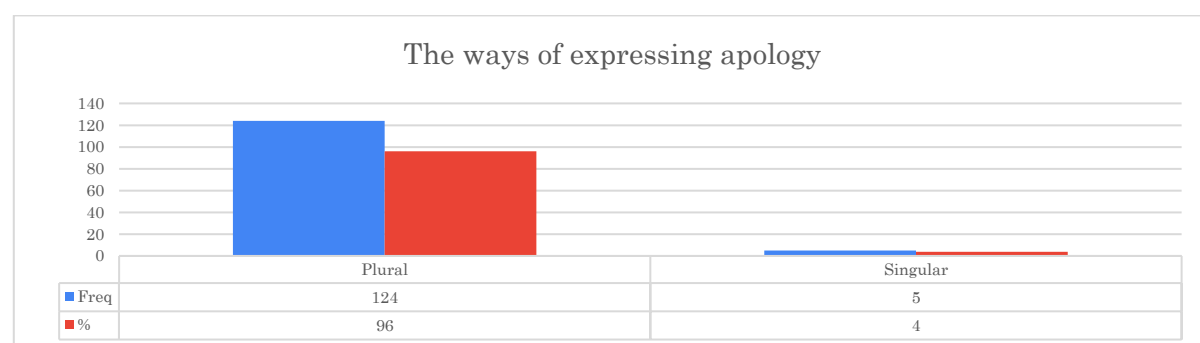


Figure 4: The Frequency of Ways of Expressing Apology in The Restaurant Owners' Responses.

Obviously, the use of first person plural pronoun was used more frequently than the use of first person singular pronoun. This emphasizes the tendency of owners' responses towards reflecting corporate identity over the personal identity, such as *نحن نعتذر/نأسف* *nahnu naʿtadhir/na'saf* 'we apologize/regret', *انا أعتذر* *'ana 'aʿtadhir* 'I apologize'. In addition, there was one response where the owner apologized using *باسمي وباسم الفريق* *bismi wabism alfarīq naʿtadhir* 'on my behalf and on behalf of the team, we apologize' instead of using only *we* to indicate the corporate identity. The apology was used in different positions in the responses (see Figure 5).

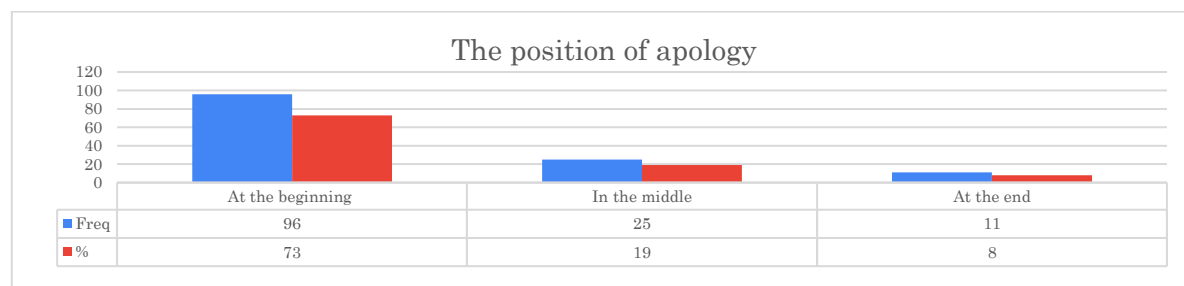


Figure 5: The Frequency of The Position of Apology in The Restaurant Owners' Responses.

In responding to negative reviews, apology was employed in different positions in the response as shown in Figure 5. However, it was used mostly at the beginning of the responses (96:73%) either after opening

pleasantries/greetings move directly or when initiating the response that has no opening move. In addition, it was used in the middle of responses (25:19%). Finally, using apology at the end was used only 11 times (8%), either before the move of closing pleasantries or the soliciting response or at the end of response when it has no closing pleasantries or soliciting response. Apologies were positioned at the beginning of the response to emphasize the sincerity or reiterated at the end to leave a lasting impression.

Move 3: Soliciting Response

This move was used 113 times (13%), highlighting its importance in effectively addressing negative feedback to provide the customer with a direct means of communication (see Example 10).

#	Example
10	و نرجو من شخصكم الكريم التواصل على ارقام المطعم او الرقم الخاص بالشكاوى (رقم الجوال) <i>wanarjū min shakhsikum alkarīm attawasul ‘alā arqām almat‘am aw arraqam alkhās bi ashshakāwa</i> (the mobile number) We ask your gracious person to contact the restaurant numbers or the number for complaints (the mobile number).

In this move, it was found that the restaurants either ask the customer to provide his/her contact information or the restaurants provide their contact information for contact. The latter was the most frequent one in various ways, such as providing a specific mobile phone number to call or WhatsApp message for complaints. Few responses included emails and Instagram account for contact to provide the bill number, but they were rarely used. Providing a mobile phone was the most frequent one because of the immediate response/answer. This move demonstrates the restaurant's commitment to addressing negative feedback, rectifying mistakes, and building trust with the customer. It does not only address the customer's concerns but also demonstrates the restaurant's willingness to take concrete steps to improve the customer's experience. According to [Yonghong \(2020\)](#), this move provides a chance for the reviewer to discuss the service failure from public to private and to restore rapport (harmony) by attending to face needs. Also, for the restaurant, it functions as a face-saving from the criticizing on online by moving the discussion in private. This move was the third most frequent move in the dataset whereas it was apologies in Chinese ([Yonghong, 2020](#)) and acknowledging complaints in English in the UK, and apologies in Italy ([Napolitano, 2018](#)).

Move 4: Expressing Gratitude

This move was used 70 times (8%), and it was employed to thank reviewers for various actions related to their dining experiences ([Zhang & Vásquez, 2014](#)). This move enhances the rapport with the reviewer by acknowledging his/her contribution to the negative review. It contributes to the reviewers' face needs and the association rights ([Yonghong, 2020](#)). Expressing gratitude was used for thanking the reviewer for sharing feedback which is in consistent with Napolitano's (2018) and Yonghong's (2020) results. However, expressing gratitude was used for various purposes, such as thanking generally without specifying what was the thanking for, thanking for visit, rating, review, etc., respectively (see Examples 11-18).

#	Focus	Examples
11 General		شكرا لك <i>shukran lak</i> Thank you.
12 Visit		شكرا لزيارتك <i>shukran liziyyāratik</i> Thank you for your visit.
13 Rating		شكرا لكم تقييمكم <i>nashkur lakum taqyyimikum</i> We thank you for your rating.
14 Review		شكرا لك تعليقك <i>nashkur lak ta‘liquk</i> We thank you for your review.
15 Feedback		شكرا لملاحظتك <i>nashkur mulāhāzatak</i> We thank you for your feedback.
16 Opinion		شكرك على رأيكم الكريم <i>nashkuruk ‘alā ra‘yyikum alkarīm</i> We thank you for your kind opinion.
17 Experience		شكرا لك على تجربتك <i>shukran lak ‘alā tajribatik</i> Thank you for your experience.
18 Exchanging experience		شكرا لتبادلك خبراتك معنا <i>shukran litabādulik khibratik ma‘anā</i> Thank you for sharing your experiences with us.

Also, the way to express gratitude differed in terms of initiating thanking, such as using the first person singular pronoun, first person plural pronoun, and none specified with the pronoun (see Figure 6). The latter was the most frequent one (e.g. thank you), followed by the first person plural pronoun (e.g. we thank you) and the first person singular pronoun (e.g. I thank you), respectively. Although the first person plural pronoun was used more than the singular pronoun to reflect the corporate identity, there was a preference in using the neutral one, that is *thank you* in most of the responses.

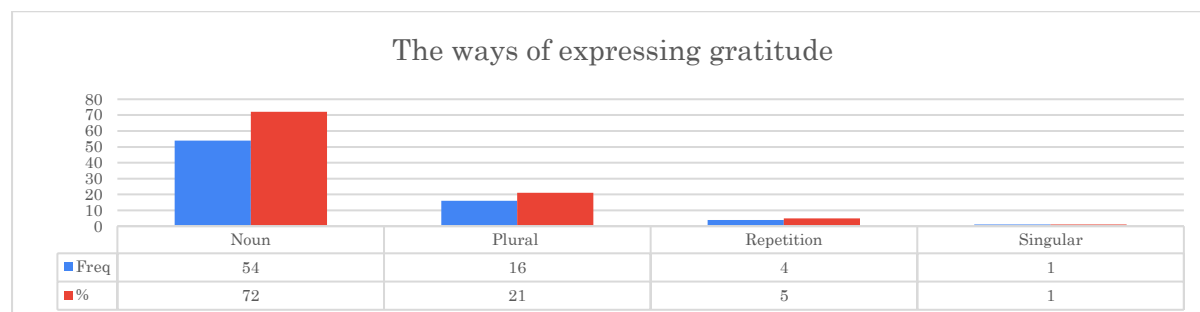


Figure 6: The Frequency of Ways of Expressing Gratitude in The Restaurant Owners' Responses.

Expressing gratitude was intensified using various intensifiers. For instance, it was intensified by using adverbs as in *شكرا لك مرة أخرى* *shukran lak marratan 'ukhrā* 'thank you again' and *شكرا جزيلا* *shukran jazīlan* 'thank you very much'. Also, it was intensified using an adjective as in *كل الشكر والاحترام* *kul ashshukur walihitirām* 'all thanks and respect' and using a number as in *ألف شكر* *alf shukur* 'a thousand thanks.' In addition, it was intensified using repetition that is using thanking more than one time in the same response (4:5%) (see Figure 6). The move of thanking appeared in different positions in the responses (see Figure 7).

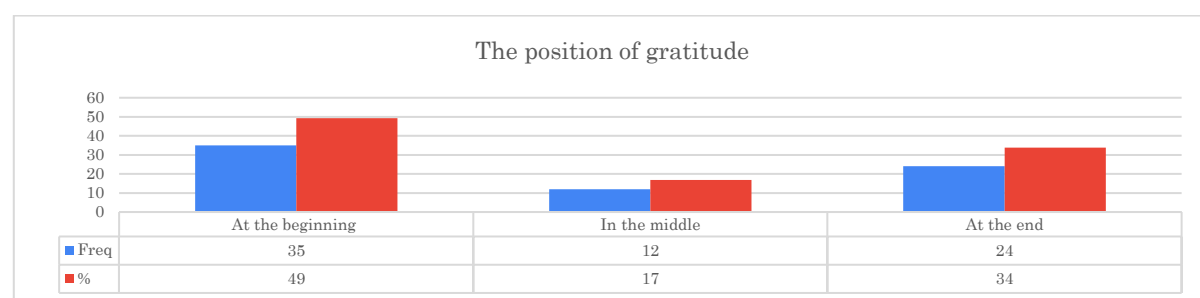


Figure 7: The Frequency of The Position of Gratitude in The Restaurant Owners' Responses.

Gratitude was used at the beginning of responses more than the middle and the end (35:49%), either as a first move in the absence of the move of opening pleasantries/greetings or after that move directly. Expressing gratitude was used (24:34%) at the end more than in the middle (12:17%), either it was used as the last move in the response in the absence of closing pleasantries or before that move directly.

Move 5: Closing Pleasantries

This move was used 59 times (7%) that served as a polite conclusion to the communication between the owner and the reviewer. It contributes to the rapport management by attending to the reviewer's association rights and functions as a remedial response to restore rapport or harmony (Yonghong, 2020). It includes a farewell expression and/or signature that signal the end of the management's response (see Figure 8).

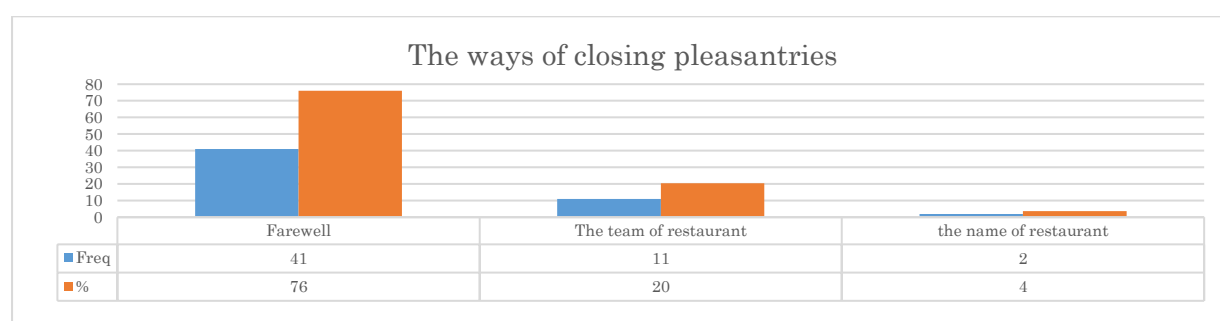


Figure 8: The Frequency of Ways of Closing Pleasantries in Restaurant Owners' Responses.

The owner used three ways to end the response in the move of closing pleasantries. Using farewell was

the most frequent one (41:76%), such as *نتمنى لك يوماً سعيداً natamanā lak yawman saʿīdan* 'have a nice day', *تحياتنا tahiyyātunā* 'our greetings', *شرفتنا sharraftanā* 'we are honored to have you visiting', *دمتكم بدمتم dimtum biwid* 'yours faithfully', *كل الاحترام kul alihtirām* 'all respect', *كل التوفيق kul attawfiq* 'all the best', etc. Most of the farewell expressions were used with the first person plural pronoun than the first person singular pronoun to reflect the corporate identity than personal identity. Another way was used to end the response that is mentioning the following, the team of restaurant (11:20%), such as *فريق المحل farīq almahal* 'the team of restaurant' without using the farewell expression. The last one was used only 2 times (4%) that is the name of restaurant, such as *مع تحيات مطعم (اسم المطعم) maʿa tahiyyāt matʿam* (best regards, the name of restaurant). This move appeared less frequently than the opening pleasantries/greetings.

Move 6: Offering Explanations

This move occurs when the owners provide an explanation for a service failure, and it was used 53 times (6%). This move functions as a remedial response to restore rapport or harmony because it shows more sincerity and more concern to repair relationship with their customer in the constructed attitude in offering explanations (Yonghong, 2020) (see Example 19).

#	Example
19	صباح الخير... شكرا على تقييمك، لا يوجد لدينا توصيل خاص للمطعم يتم التوصيل عن طريق تطبيقات التوصيل وهم مسؤولين عنها <i>sabāh alkhayr ... shukran ʿalā taqyīmīk, lā yūjad ladaynā tawsīl khās lilmatʿam yatim attawsīl ʿan tarīq tatbiqāt attawsīl wahum almasʿūl ʿanhā</i> Good morning... thank you for your rating. We do not have a special delivery for the restaurant. Delivery is done through delivery applications, and they are responsible for it.

Move 7: Promising

Promising is a common move used by the owners in response to address customer concerns, demonstrate their commitment to improving services that can support customer loyalty. It was used 44 times (5%) in the dataset. This move occurred in the middle or towards the end of each response. It was used by using the first person plural pronoun in all promising verbs, such as *نعلمكم* 'we promise you' to reflect the corporate identity than personal identity. Also, it was used to convey a sense of collective responsibility among the restaurant staff. One example was used using an expression from the Saudi Arabic which means promising but without using the verb 'promise' (see Example 25). Various focuses for promising were used to emphasize the restaurant's commitment to improving their services and creating a positive customer experience in the future, such as promising with the best, to solve the problem, to review the procedures, etc. (see Examples 20-24).

#	Focus	Examples
20	With the best	<i>نعلمكم بالأفضل إن شاء الله</i> <i>naʿidukum bi alʾafdal ʾin shāʾallāh</i> We promise you the best, God willing.
21	To solve the problem	<i>نعلمكم بمعالجة الأمر فوراً</i> <i>naʿidukum bimuwʾalajat alʾamr fawran</i> We promise you to solve the problem immediately.
22	To review the procedures	<i>نعلمكم بمراجعة الإجراءات</i> <i>naʿidukum bimurājaʿat alʾijrāʾāt</i> We promise you to review the procedures.
23	To report it to the administration	<i>نعلمكم برفعها للإدارة</i> <i>naʿidukum biraʿfihā lilʾidārah</i> We promise you to report it to the administration.
24	To investigate	<i>نعلمكم بدراستها</i> <i>naʿidukum bidirāsatiha</i> We promise you to investigate it.
25	To see what makes you happy/satisfied	<i>بإذن الله تشوف معنا اللي يسرك</i> <i>biʾidhn allah tshūf minnanā illi yasurruk</i> You will find what pleases you from us, God willing.

Promising with the best rather than not specifying a particular object was used mostly in the responses. This can provide an opportunity for the restaurant regarding their commitment to promise than specifying what was promised for. This move was not used in the previous studies about the owners' responses to negative reviews, except Guzzo and Gallo's (2019). They found that promising was used as an invitation to a second try, and they focused only on apology in their study.

Move 8: Justifying

Justification was used by the owners to explain the reasons behind a problem or issue in order to minimize critiques (Napolitano, 2018). It was used 36 times (4%) in the responses, and it fulfils the interactional goals of the dissatisfied customer (Ho, 2017b). The detailed explanation of the causes of a problem include factors, such as something outside of the restaurant's control caused delaying orders, closing time, delivery, etc. It is an attempt to shift the blame away from the restaurant towards the external factors for the failure to reduce their

dissatisfaction. In other words, the goal of this move is to provide the context that can help customers understand why the problem occurred (see Example 26). Finally, the red rose emoji was used at the end of response to soften the justification which is explained in detail later about the emojis used and their pragmatic functions.

#	Example
26	ولكن يحصل هذا أحيانا في حال كثرة الطلبات عن قدرة طاقم الفريق عن تقديم المزيد في وقت الذروة وحرصا على جودة الخدمة للمتواجدين داخل المطعم حياتنا لك 🌹 <i>walakin yahsul hadhā 'ahyānan fi hāl kathrat attalabāt 'an qudrat tāqam alfarīq 'an taqdīm almazīd fi waqt adhdharwah wahirsan 'ala jawdat alkhidmah lilmutawājidīn dākhil almat'am tahiyyātuna lak</i> This sometimes happens in the event of a large number of requests where the team's ability to provide more is not possible at peak time. However, we need to ensure the quality of service for those inside the restaurant. Our greetings to you 🌹

Move 9: Showing appreciation/respect

This move was used to appreciate customer's review and show respect to his/her. It enhances rapport by indicating that the review is appreciated and valued. It was used 31 times (3%) but for different goals, such as appreciation for rating, opinion, feedback, etc. (see Examples 27-32).

#	Focus	Examples
27	Rating	<i>nuqaddir lak taqyyimikum</i> We appreciate your rating. قدر لك تقييمكم
28	Opinion	<i>nuqaddir wanahtarim ra'yuk wataqyyimikum</i> We appreciate and respect your opinion and rating. قدر ونحترم رأيك وتقييمكم
29	Feedback	<i>nuqaddir lak mulāhazatuk</i> We appreciate your feedback. قدر لك ملاحظتك
30	Your concern	<i>nuqaddir ihtimāmikum</i> We appreciate your concern. قدر اهتمامكم
31	For your understanding	<i>nuqaddir lak tafahhumik</i> We appreciate your understanding. قدر لك تفهمك
32	For coming	<i>nuqaddir lak hudūrak</i> We appreciate your presence. قدر لك حضورك

Although this move overlaps with expressing gratitude in its function, it was decided to discuss it separately because of the different verbs employed here, unlike [Hopkinson \(2018\)](#) who categorized it under the move of expressing gratitude. In the current study, it was found that the verb *appreciate* was used more than *respect* or even using both of them in one response. The latter was rare (i.e. using the two verbs), and it can function as an intensifier for appreciation. Also, the verb *appreciate* was used with the verb of *thank* in only three responses, where the latter precedes the first one, but not vice versa. The verb of appreciation can intensify thanking for the reviewer's comment. This move was used mostly at the beginning of response, which is similar to the position of thanking, more than in the middle and at the end of response. Also, it was observed that it was used by using the first person plural pronoun in all the responses to reflect the corporate identity than personal one. However, the overall purpose of these responses is to demonstrate respect and appreciation for the customers' feedback, enhance their perception of the restaurant's commitment to their satisfaction, and encourage them to return to the restaurant.

Move 10: Proving action

This move was used by the owner when responding to reviewers to show that they have taken steps to address the issues mentioned in the review. It had a frequency of 25 times (3%), and it was employed to provide evidence to customers that the restaurant is actively working on the issue. This move enhances rapport because it fulfils the interactional goals of the reviewer ([Napolitano, 2018](#)) (see example 33).

#	Example
33	ونعلمك انه تم الرفع بملاحظاتك للإدارة لمعالجة أسباب انزعاجك <i>wanu'limuk anahu tamma arraf' bimulāhazātik lil'idārah limu'ālahajāt 'asbab inzi'ājik</i> We inform you that your feedback has been reported to the administration to address the reasons of your inconvenience.

The owners used this move in different ways to demonstrate their commitment to addressing customer concerns. One form was providing detailed explanations of the specific actions taken to redress the issues mentioned in the negative reviews. For example, a restaurant might explain that they have improved training, changed a dish's recipe, or replaced equipment. Another form was providing general accounts of action being taken by the department or management team when reporting the issue.

Move 11: Self-Promoting

In this move, the owners used a combination of positive language and specific details to position their restaurant as a high-quality and reliable dining option when the customer criticized the quality. It ignores the interactional goal by ignoring the reviewer's negative review to focus on the management and marketing (Ho, 2018). This move is similar to the previous move in terms of frequency, that is 25 times (3%) (see Example 34).

#	Example
34	نحن نفخر بمطبخنا ، ونحصل على مكوناتنا من أفضل الموردين. ونسعى دائما الى الابتكار و الاستمرارية ونتطلع الى تقديم تجربة استثنائية لضيوفنا <i>nahnu nafkhar bimatbakhina , wanahsul ʿala mukawwinatina min ʿafdal almuarridīn. wanasʿa dāʿiman ila alʿibtikār wa alistimrāriyyah wanatatallaʿ ʿila taqdīm tajribah istithnāʾyyah liduyūfina</i> We take pride in our cuisine, and we get our ingredients from the best suppliers. We always strive for innovation and continuity and look forward to providing an exceptional experience for our guests.

By highlighting their commitment to hygiene, quality, innovation, and professionalism, they seek to differentiate themselves from other restaurants and create a positive impression on potential customers. Such self-promoting can be effective in attracting new customers and retaining existing ones because it is a public response to the negative review. This move was used in English and Italian responses equally in terms of frequency, that is 62 times, on TripAdvisor (Napolitano, 2018). However, it was categorized under a different move that is 'make a point' which aims to highlight the good practices, such as restaurant's policies and mission.

Move 12: Inviting For a Visit

This move involves requesting reviewers to return for a better experience. It was used with a frequency of 24 (3%). It was used to manage rapport in terms of restoring rapport (harmony) by attending to the reviewers' face needs (Yonghong, 2020). This move was employed at the end of response or before the closing pleasantries. The invitation was also used in Chinese (Yonghong, 2020) and English in the UK and Italian (Napolitano, 2018). It is worth noting that there are various ways to express inviting for a second visit, using the first person plural pronoun to reflect the corporate identity (see Examples 35-37).

#	Example
35	تطلع لزيارتكم <i>natatallaʿ liziyyāratikum.</i> We are look forward to your visit.
36	تمنى أن نراكم مرة أخرى <i>natamannā ʿan narākum marrah ʿukhrā</i> we hope to see you again.
37	تمنى لكم تجربة أفضل في الزيارة القادمة <i>natamannā lakum tajribah ʿafdal fī azziyārah alqādimah</i> we wish you a better experience on your next visit.

Move 13: Criticizing/Attacking

This move involves expressing disapproval or condemnation towards the customer's opinion or decision to post the negative review. The goal of this move was to criticize or attack the reviewers to protect the restaurant's reputation because it is public (see examples 38-39, respectively). It was found that this move was used 23 times (3%).

# Classification	Example
38Criticizing	تعليقكم غريب <i>taʿlīqukum gharīb</i> Your review is weird.
39Attacking	الاخ الكريم، كلامك غير صحيح، و تقييماتك السلبية لجميع الانشطة دليل على ذلك شكرا <i>alakh alkarīm, kalamak ghayr saḥīḥ, wataqyyimatuk assalbiyah lijamīʿ alanshitah dalīl ʿala dhalik, shukran</i> Dear gracious brother, your review is not true, and your previous negative ratings of all the activities are evidence of that. Thank you.

This move was used when there was something wrong in the negative review from the perspective of owner. It damages the rapport with the reviewer because of criticizing/attacking the reviewer about his/her negative review. It indicates the difficulty in accepting the review which is in alignment with the Italian responses (Guzzo & Gallo, 2019; Napolitano, 2018). However, it was found that the owners sometimes use an emoji to soften the criticism that is discussed later.

Move 14: Expressing Feelings

This move was used to convey feelings towards the reviewer's negative review, and it was used 22 times (2%). It enhances rapport and manages sociality rights by constructing the affective association with the reviewer (Ho, 2018). Two types of expressing feelings were used: positive and negative feelings (see Examples 40-41).

# Classification	Examples
40 Positive feelings	يسعدنا أنك استغرقت بعض الوقت لمشاركتنا رأيك <i>yus'iduna 'annak istaghraqt ba'd alwaqt limushāraḳatīna ra'yak</i> We're glad you took the time to share your opinion with us.
41 Negative feelings	نحن مستأين لسماع ذلك <i>nahnu mustā'in lisamā' dhālik</i> We are upset to hear that.

For the first one, it was used the following *yus'idunā* 'it makes us happy', *naḳḳhar bikum* 'we are proud of you', and *naḳḳtar bikum* 'we cherish you' were used more than the negative feelings towards the reviewer's comment. For the second one, it was used *mustā'in* 'we are upset' and *taḳāja'nā* 'we are shocked' towards hearing the unsatisfied experience. Both of them were used with the first person plural pronoun to reflect the corporate identity than personal one. All the adjectives used to express feelings were positive, except two responses used negative feelings. However, both of them were used to enhance rapport. This move is unique because it was not used in the previous studies about the owners' responses to negative reviews, except Guzzo and Gallo's (2019) study. They found the use of expressing pride, but they mentioned that their focus was on investigating apology, not the other moves as mentioned above.

Move 15: Compensating

This move was to compensate the unsatisfied reviewer about the bad experience. It is similar to the move of expressing feelings in terms of frequency that is 22 (2%) times. However, it was observed that there were two ways mentioned in this move. The first one mentioned the compensation in an indirect way as 'in you will be covered or you will be pleased' (see Example 42). It is from the Arabic dialect, not only about Saudi Arabia, and it can provide more distance for the owner about the type of compensating without restricting themselves to something in particular. The second one was mentioned the compensation directly such as 'we will compensate you' (see Example 43). However, the latter was less frequent than the first one.

# Classification	Compensation
42 General	نواصلوا واتساب على رقم (رقم الجوال) و ما يصير خاطركم الا طيب <i>tuasalū watsāb 'ala raqam (mobile number) wa ma yisīr khatirkum illa tayyib</i> Contact us on WhatsApp on (mobile number), and you will be covered (or you will be pleased).
43 Specified	وتشرفنا ان شاء الله المحل ونعوضك عن الطلب شكرا لك <i>watsharriḳna 'in shā'allāh almahal wan'awwidk 'an attalab shukran lak</i> Visit us, and we will compensate you for the order, thank you.

This move is considered as an effective strategy for dissatisfied customer satisfaction because of compensation (Levy, Duan, & Boo, 2013). However, it was not used frequently because other reviewers will ask for the same treatment (Cenni & Goethals, 2020). Therefore, it was observed that it was used without specifying the type of compensation as mentioned above. This move was used in the Italian responses, but it was categorized under 'offer of repair' without drawing on that move because of the focus of study on apology (Guzzo & Gallo, 2019).

Move 16: Asking for Information

This move was used to request additional details or clarification related to the negative review. It was used with a frequency of 21 (2%). The function of this move was to gather more information in order to make a decision to better understand the unsatisfied experience to improve the service either related to the order or the way of rating (see Examples 44-45).

# Classification	Examples
44 The order	وهل من الممكن ان تطلعنا على الاصناف التي سعرها لم يناسب حضرتك <i>wahal min al mumkin 'an tutli'na 'ala alasnāf allati si'raha lam yunasib hadratuk</i> Could you please inform us of the items whose price did not suit you?
45 The rating	مرحبا ، ماهي المعايير المتبعة للتقييم <i>marhaba , ma hiya alma'aayir almuttaba'ah littaqyīm</i> Welcome, what are the criteria you follow for rating?

This move is unique because it differs from the move of soliciting response in terms of the way of continuing interaction. The first one asks the dissatisfied reviewer to provide the requested information without providing him/her a phone number. In other words, the interaction would continue in public rather than in private. However, the second one, soliciting response, asks the reviewer to contact on a specific number in private, not only to save face of the owner of the restaurant, but also it enhances the rapport with reviewer.

Move 17: Recognizing Reviewer's Value

This move is acknowledging and appreciating the importance of customer's review that was used 17 times (2%). The function of this move is to emphasize that the restaurant values the feedback and opinions of its customers, and it is committed to providing a positive customer experience (see Example 46).

- #
46 **Example** تقييمكم اكبر داعم لنا لمواصلة التطوير جودة الاكل ومستوى الخدمة
taqyyimukum akbar dā'im lana limuāsalat attatwīr jawdat alakil wamustawa alkhidmah
Your rating is the greatest support for us to continue developing the quality of food and the level of service.

This move enhances the rapport by acknowledging the importance of the reviewer's opinion, and it fulfils the reviewer's face wants (Ho, 2018). It was not used in the previous studies about the owners' responses to negative review as in this move. However, it was included in the move of expressing gratitude in terms of thanking for the valued opinion, that was considered as mock thanking (Hopkinson, 2018).

Move 18: Denying Problems

This move indicates that the review is not true in somehow (Yonghong, 2020). It was used 13 times (1%) (see Example 47). It does not only ignore the reviewer's interactional goals but also threaten his/her face that leads to damaging the rapport (Ho, 2017a, 2018). Although this move damages the rapport, it clarifies the response to avoid misunderstanding (Ho, 2018).

- #
47 **Example** بعد مراجعة الكاميرات . لا يوجد أي تأخير حدث معك نهائياً
ba'da murāja'at alkamirat . la yūjad 'ay ta'khīr hadath ma'ak nihā'yyan.
After reviewing the cameras, there is no delay happened with you at all.

There was a wide range of ways that restaurants used to deny a problem or issue, such as *أظن لا 'azun* 'I do not think', *لا يوجد la yūjad* 'there is no', and *كلامك غير صحيح kalāmak ghayr sahīh* 'your review is not true'. This move can be seen as defensive strategies aimed at protecting the reputation of restaurant.

Move 19: Acknowledging Complaints

This move is opposite of the previous move, i.e. denying problems. It occurred 8 times (1%) (see Example 48). Acknowledging complaints means that there is a willingness to accept the review (Napolitano, 2018). This move enhances the rapport because it fulfils the interactional goals of the reviewer (Ho, 2017b, 2018).

- #
48 **Example** نعلأ حدث معك تأخير في تقديم المشروبات
fi'lan hadath ma'ak ta'khīr fi taqdīm almashrūbāt
There was actually a delay happened with you in serving drinks.

Move 20: Requesting

In this move, the owner asks the dissatisfied reviewer to do something related to the negative review. It was used 7 times (1%). It was used to ask the customer to change the stars because it is not fare whereas in the second example, the request was asking the customer to try other products that can help in better experience (see Examples 49-50, respectively).

- #
49 **Examples** شرفنا بخدمتكم و نرجوا من حضرتكم تعديل النجوم او التواصل مع الاداره (رقم الجوال) لمعرفة سبب التقييم بنجمتين
tasharrafna bikhidmatikum wa narjū min hadratikum ta'dīl annujūm aw attawāsul ma' al'idarah
(mobile number) limarifat sabab attaqqyim binajmatayn
We are honored to serve you, **and we ask you to modify the stars please** or contact the administration (mobile number) to find out the reason for the two-star rating.
50 نتمنى منكم تجربة باقي المنتجات
natamannā minkum tajribat bāqi almuntajāt
We hope you try the rest of the products.

Example 49 can damage rapport because of the unsatisfied review that is requested to be changed. It is considered unfair from the owner's opinion. In contrast, Example 50 can enhance rapport because it is an invitation for trying other products.

Move 21: Giving Advice

This move was used to advise the reviewer about rating when the owner observes that the review was not fare (see Example 51).

- #
51 **Example** اتق الله ولا تكتب تقييم الا من التقييم أمأته تحاسب عليها الغريب انك مرشد محلي يقترض انك تفقه باصول التقييم فكيف تقيم مكان انت لم تزروه بنفسك؟
واقع تجربتك الشخصية و اكتب ما شئت بأمانه
algharīb innak murshid mahalli yuftarah innak tafqah bi'usūl attaqqyim fakayf tuqayyim makan ant lam tazurahu binafsik? attaqqyim 'amanah tuhāsab 'alayhā ittaqi allah wala taktub taqyyim illa min wāqi' tajribatik ashshakhsyah waktub ma shi't bi'amanah

What is weird is that you are a local guide who is supposed to understand the principles of rating, so how do you rate a place that you have not visited yourself? **Rating is a trust for which you are held accountable. Fear Allah and do not write a rating except from the reality of your personal experience. Write whatever you want with honesty.**

In that review, the owner initiated the response with criticizing the reviewer as in ‘what is weird is that you are a local guide...’ and then followed by advising him/her to write a review based on personal experience and with honesty as in ‘...from the reality of your personal experience... with honesty’. However, this move was used only 4 times (1%). It damages rapport than supporting rapport, and it overlaps with the move of criticizing/attacking as explained above. Finally, this move was used by the owner for thanking the reviewer for his/her advice in Chinese (Yonghong, 2020).

Move 22: Avoiding Recurring Problems

This move was used by the owners to address customer dissatisfaction by indicating that issue will be avoided and not happen again (Zhang & Vásquez, 2014) (see Example 52). It was used only three times in the data (1%). This move was used in Chinese, English, and Italian responses, but under the move of repair (Napolitano, 2018; Yonghong, 2020).

#	Example
52	<p>ونعتذر لكم على تجربتكم السيئة ونعدكم بمعالجة الأسباب واتخاذ الإجراء التي تضمن عدم تكرارها ماحصل</p> <p>wanaʿtadhir lakum ʿalā tajribatikum assayyiʿah wanaʿidukum bimūʿalajat alʿasbab waʿittikhādh alʿijrāʾ allati tadman ʿadam tikrār mā hasal</p> <p>We apologize to you for your bad experience, and we promise to address the reasons to take action to ensure that what happened does not happen again.</p>

Move 23: Offering Suggestions

This move refers to providing reviewers with a suggestion to improve their experience or rating. It is similar to the previous move in terms of the frequency, that is only 3 times (1%) (see Example 53).

#	Example
53	<p>نحن نقترح عليك تطوير مستوى الإنصاف في التقييم ويكون تقسيم عدد النجوم بحسب معايير التقييم مثلا الطعم الجودة الديكور الخدمة السعر حتى يكون ردك أكثر مصداقية وجاذبية ❤️</p> <p>lakin naqtarih ʿalayk tatwīr mustawa alʿinsaf fī attaqyīm wayakūn taqsīm ʿadad annujūm bihasab maʿāyir attaqyīm mathalan attaʿam aljawdah addaykūr alkhidmah assiʿir hattā yakūn radduk ʾakthar misdāqiyyah wajādhibiyyah ❤️</p> <p>We suggest that you develop the level of fairness in the rating and divide the number of stars according to the rating criteria, for example, taste, quality, decoration, service, and price, so that your response can be more credible and attractive ❤️</p>

In example 53, it was used the verb ‘suggest’ with the reviewer to improve the level of fairing in rating which overlaps with the move of giving advice in the communicative meaning. This move does not acknowledge the problem; instead of that, it makes suggestions to the reviewer. The move threatens the reviewer’s face and ignores the interactional goals of the reviewer that damages rapport (Ho, 2017a). The emoji of red heart was used to soften the criticism that appeared as a suggestion as it is discussed later. This move was used in English responses on TripAdvisor (Hopkinson, 2018). The following section discusses the pragmatic functions of paralinguistic cues.

The Use of Paralinguistic Cues and Their Functions

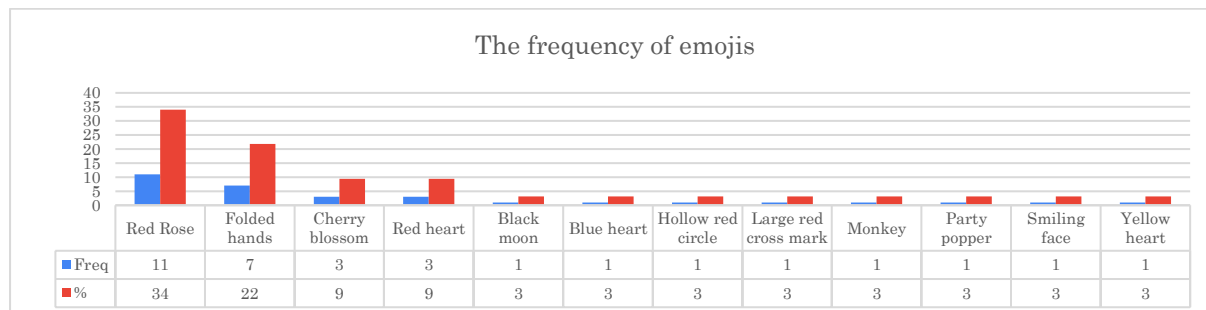


Figure 9: The Frequency of Emojis in The Restaurant Owners’ Responses to Negative Reviews.

The owners did not use only the moves that explained previously with their communicative functions, but also employed paralinguistic cues, such as emojis, emoticons, and punctuations. They have pragmatic functions based on a specific context where they are used to add another meaning to the moves, such as expressing rapport, prayer, greeting, disapproval, etc. Also, that pragmatic functions can influence the functions of moves positively or negatively in terms of enhancing or damaging rapport. It was found that 12

different emojis were used in 18 owners' responses with a total number of frequency 32, but with different pragmatic functions as it is explained in the coming examples (see Figure 9).

Using the red rose emoji was the most frequent one (11:34%). Also, it had different functions; however, it was mostly used to express rapport at the end of the response (see Example 54).

- # Example
54 أهلاً وسهلاً بك، نعتذر لما حصل معك ونؤكد عدم رضانا عن ذلك،، لتزويدنا بتفاصيل أكثر ولخدمتك بشكل افضل، نأمل منك التواصل معنا على الرقم (رقم الجوال) دمت بخير 🌹
- 'ahlan wasahlan bik, na'tadhir limā hasal ma'ak wanu'akkid 'adam ridhānā 'an dhālik, litazwīdina bitafāsīl 'akthar walikhidmatik bishakl afdhal, na'mal mink attawāsul ma'anā 'ala arraqm (mobile number) dumta bikhayr 🌹*
- Welcome, we apologize for what happened to you, and we confirm that we are not satisfied with that. To provide us with more details and to serve you better, we hope that you contact us on the number (mobile number). Kind Regards 🌹

The red rose emoji was used in another response, but with a different function. It was used to soften the justification that was mentioned in the response about delaying orders, alongside with the emoji of smiling face (see Example 55). Also, the two previous emojis were used to intensify the softening of accepting the justification.

- # Example
55 أهلاً وسهلاً فيك طبعاً تاخير الطلبات اشي مؤكد اثناء موعد الافطار ولكن اذا حضرت قبل الاذان ب نص ساعة رح ينزل طلبك مباشرة وحضرتك شاهد ع الازمة الي صارت كل الاحترام 😊🌹
- ahlan wasahlan fik taba'an ta'khīr attalabāt ishy mu'akkad athna' maw'id aliftār walākin idhā hadart qabl aladhān binus sā'ah rāh yinzil talabak mubāsharah wahadratk shāhid 'ala alazmah illi sārāt kul alihtirām 🌹😊*
- Welcome, of course, the delay in orders is a certain thing during breakfast time (in Ramadan), but if you come half an hour before the call to prayer, your order will be placed immediately. You are a witness to the crisis that has become, With All Due Respect 🌹😊

In example 56, the red rose emoji has two possible functions. It was used to soften the indirect request to adjust the number of stars in rating. Also, it was used to soften the suggestion for the customer in terms of advising the reviewer to clarify the problem in the review to be beneficial for the restaurant and visitor.

- # Example
56 أهلاً (اسم المعلقة) أعتقد نستحق 3 نجوم من 5 على الأقل ولو حصل خطأ يمكن طلب استبدال المواعين وتنبيه الإدارة ويفضل في المستقبل توضيح الإشكال بالأكل ليصبح التعليق مفيداً للمطعم والزوار تحياتنا 🌹
- 'ahlan (name of reviewer) 'a'taqid nastahiq 3 nujūm min 5 'ala al'aqal walaw hasal khata' yumkin talab istibdāl almawā'in watanbīh al'idārah wayufaddal fī almustaqbal tawdīh al'ishkāl bi al'akl liyusbih atta'liq mu'fīdan lilmat'am walizzuwwār tahiyyatinā 🌹*
- Welcome (name of reviewer), I think we deserve at least 3 stars out of 5. If a mistake occurred, you can ask to replace the dishes and alert the administration. In the future, it is preferable to clarify the problem with the food so that the review will be useful to the restaurant and the visitors. Our regards 🌹

In example 57, the red rose emoji was used to soften the response to be more acceptable. The owner used criticism as mentioned 'but mayonnaise and soup are not enough reasons to judge our restaurant that was followed by justification.

- # Example
57 رنیک بهمانا اکید واک المایونیز والشوریة لیس سبب کافی لتحکم عل مطعمنا .. والطلب فی شهر رمضان عادة بصیر تاخیر بسبب الاوردر الی بنطیع قبل موعد الاذان بدقائق کل الشکر والاحترام 🌹
- ra'yak yuhimmunā akīd walak almāyunayz wa ashshawrbah laysa sabab kāfi litahkum 'ala mat'aminā .. wattalab fī shahr Ramadan 'ādatan yisīr t'akhīr bisabab alawrdar illi yantabi' qabl maw'id aladhān bidaqā'iq kul ashshukr walihtirām 🌹*
- Your opinion is definitely important to us, but mayonnaise and soup are not enough reasons to judge our restaurant. Orders during the month of Ramadan are usually delayed due to the order being printed minutes before the call to prayer. All thanks and respect 🌹

In example 58, the owner used the emoji of red rose in the following response. It was used after the greeting 'good morning' for decoration.

- # Example
58 صباح الخير ... 🌹 شکرا علی تقيیمک ، وملاحظتک محط اهتمامنا
- sabāh alkhayr ... 🌹 shukran 'ala taqyīmīk, wamulāhazatik mahat ihtimāmina*
- Good morning... 🌹 Thank you for your rating, and your review is our concern.

In Example 59, three emojis were used, such as the emoji of party popper, folded hands, and the red

rose. The emoji of party popper was used as a decoration after the greeting. The emoji of folded hands and the red rose were used to soften the explanation that has an impolite justification as mentioned in 'but if you are interested in a low price without considering other things, then we are not the right choice for you 🧡🌹'. Also, the last two emojis were used to intensify softening of accepting the justification in the response.

#

Example

59 مساء الخير 🌙 شكرا على تقييمك لكن نحن اقل سعر مقارنةً بالجودة والخدمة التي نقدمها... أما إذا مهتم بسعر منخفض دون النظر للأمور الأخرى فنحن لسنا الاختيار المناسب لك 🙏🌹

masā' alkhayr 🌙 shukran ʿala taqyyimik lakin nahnu 'aqal si'ir muqāranatan biljawdah walkhidmah illi nuqadimha... 'ammā 'idhā muhtam bisi'ir munkhafid dūn annazar lil'umūr al'ukhrā fanahnu lasnā alaikhthiyār almunāsib lak 🙏🌹

Good evening 🌙 Thank you for your rating, but our price is the lowest compared to the quality and service that we provide... But if you are interested in a low price without considering other things, then we are not the right choice for you 🙏🌹

The emoji of folded hands was used 7 times (22%). It was used to soften the explanation as mentioned in example 59. Also, it was used mostly to show respect and express gratitude (see Example, 60).

#

Example

60 نُسرتي (اسم المعلقة) بزيارتك وسعيدين بخدمتك 🙏
sharrafti (name of reviewer) bizi'yāratik wasa'idīn bikhidmatik 🙏

It is an honor to have you visiting, (name of reviewer), and we are happy to serve you 🙏

In example 61, the emoji of folded hands was used to show politeness and respect with the customer. In addition, it was preceded by the emoji of cherry blossom for decoration which was also used for the same purpose in the responses.

#

Example

61 مرحبا (اسم المعلق).. لو امكن تتواصل معنا على الواتساب على الرقم التالي :
(رقم الجوال) ومالك الا اللي يرضيك 🌸🙏

marhaba (name of reviewer). law amkan tatawāsal ma'anā ʿala alwātsāb ʿala arraqm attālī: (mobile number) wamālak illā illi yurdīk 🌸🙏

Welcome (asm almuealiq). If possible, contact us on WhatsApp on the following number: (mobile number). You will have what pleases you 🌸🙏

In example 62, the emoji of folded hands has multiple functions. It was used after greeting to express and intensify greeting. Also, it was used to express prayer in terms of wishing and to show more politeness or respect with the reviewer.

#

Example

62 نشرقنا بخدمتكم (اسم المعلقة) ونقدر لكم مشاركتكم بالتقييم ونتمنى ذكر تفاصيل طلبكم ونشر الصورة إن وجدت لنتمكن من معالجة الخطأ أيضا مهم جدا لنا تحديد التاريخ والوقت ليسهل عملية المراجعة ونعدكم بالأفضل إن شاء الله نتمنى لكم يوما سعيدا ودمتم بخير 🙏

tasharrafnā bikhidmatikum (name of reviewer) wanuqaddir lakum mushārakatikum bi attaqyīm wanatamanna dhikr tafāsīl talabikum wanashr assūwrah 'in wujudat linatamakkan min mu'ālaajat alkhatā' aydan muhim jiddan lanā tahdīd attārīkh walwaqt liyashul ʿamaliyyat almurājāʿah wana'idakum bi al'afdal 'in sha'allāh natamanā lakum yawman sa'idan wadumtum bikhayr 🙏

We are honored to serve you, (name of reviewer), and we appreciate your participation at the rating. We hope that you mention the details of your request and post the photo, if any, so that we can address the mistake. It is also very important to specify the date and time to facilitate the review process. We promise you the best, God willing. We wish you a happy day. Kind Regards 🙏

The emoji of red heart was used 3 times (9%), but with different functions. For instance, it was mostly used to express rapport and strengthen the following statement 'we strive to develop for you ❤️' (see Example 63).

#

Example

63 حياك الله نرحب بتقييمك ونسعى جاهدين لارضائكم , نتقبل جميع الملاحظات بصدر رحب وراح نأخذها بعين الاعتبار , نسعى للتطوير من اجلكم ❤️
hayyāk Allah nrahb biṭṭayimik wansayy jahhadin lارضائكم , ntaqbal jamīʿ almalāḥazāt bṣadr raḥb wārah nākhḍahā biʿayn alʿaṭbār, nasayy llatṭawīr min ajlakum ❤️

God bless you. We welcome your rating and strive to satisfy you. We accept all reviews with open arms and will take them into consideration. We strive to develop for you ❤️

Another function was used in example 64. The red heart emoji was used to soften the suggestion for the reviewer to improve her ability in terms of rating to be more credible and attractive.

#

Example

64 أهلا (اسم المعلقة)، شاكر لك ملاحظتك ورأيك لكن نقترح عليك تطوير مستوى الإنصاف في التقييم ويكون تقسيم عدد النجوم بحسب معايير التقييم مثلا الطعم الجودة الديكور الخدمة السعر حتى يكون ردك أكثر مصداقية وجاذبية ❤️

'ahlan (name of reviewer), shakir lak mulahazatak warayuk lakn naqtarih ealayk tatwir mustawaa al'iinsaf fi altaqyim wayakun taqsim eadad alnujum bihasab maeayir altaqyim mathalan altaem aljawdat aldiykur alkhidmat alsier hataa yakun raduk 'akthar misdaqiatan wajadhibiatan ❤️

Welcome (name of reviewer), I thank you for your feedback and opinion, but we suggest that you develop the level of fairness in the rating and divide the number of stars according to the rating criteria, for example taste, quality, decoration, service, price, so that your response can be more credible and attractive ❤️

The emoji of black moon was used only one time in the owners' responses. It was used to express disapproval about the reviewer's negative review (see Example 65).

#

Example

65

أهلا وسهلا ليه الدنيا سودا عندك 🌑

'ahlan wasahlan lih aldunya sudan eindak 🌑

Welcome, why is the world so dark to you? 🌑

The emoji of blue heart was also used, but only one time in the responses. Possibly, it was used to express rapport (see Example 66).

#

Example

66

نشكركم لك على تعليقك، نحن نأسف بسماع ذلك، و سنبدل قصارى جهننا لتأمين تجربة أفضل في المرة القادمة 🤝

shukran lak ala ta'liqik, nahnu na'saf bisamā dhālik, wasanabdhul qusāra juhūdina lita'min tajribah 'afdal fi almarrāt alqādimah 🤝

Thank you for your review, we are sorry to hear that, and we will do our best to provide a better experience next time 🤝

Similarly, the emoji of yellow heart was used only one time. It was used to emphasize welcoming as it was used after greeting and to express happiness (see Example 67).

#

Example

67

أهلا بك عميلنا العزيز 🍌 العرض متوفر فقط عبر (اسم التطبيق) وأيضا فروعا من الساعة ١١ ص حتى الساعة ٦ م (دجاج - لحم) من اختيارك (توصيل - إستلام من الفرع)

'ahlan bik amiluna al'aziz 🍌 al'ard mutawaffir faqat 'abr (the name of application) wa'aydan furū'unā min assā'ah 11 s (a.m.) hattā assā'ah 6m (p.m.) (dajāj - laham) min 'ikhtiyārik (tawsil-'istilām min alfar)

Welcome, our dear customer 🍌 The offer is only available through (the name of application) and also our branches from 11 am to 6 pm (chicken - meat) of your choice (delivery - pickup from the branch).

The emoji of monkey was used only one time in the responses. It was used to soften altering the reviewer about the unintentional mistake in the number of stars chosen in rating and ask him/her indirectly to adjust the stars (see Example 68).

#

Example

68

سعداء بتعليقك الراقى ويبدو ان هناك خطأ غير مقصود بعدد النجوم المختارة 🐒 شكرا لك ونتمنى تكرار الزيارة

su'ada' bita'liqik arrāqi wayabdū anna hunāk khata' ghayr maqsūd bi'adad annujūm almukhtārah 🐒 shukran lak wanatamannā tiktār azziyārah

We are happy with your kind review. It seems that there was an unintended mistake in the number of stars selected 🐒. Thank you, and we hope that you visit again.

The emoji of hollow red circle and large red cross mark were used in only one response. Possibly, they were used to emphasize what happen is not acceptable, and the reviewer will be pleased/covered (see Example 69).

#

Example

69

مرحبا (اسم المعلق) شكرا على زيارتك و تقييمك ممكن تشاركنا الاشكاليه اللي واجهتك ومايصير خاطرك الا طيب XXXO

marhaba (name of reviewer) shukran ala ziyaratik wataqyyimuk mumkin tushārikuna alishkāliyyah illi wājahatuk wamāysir khātiruk illā tayyib OXXX

Welcome (name of reviewer), thank you for your visit and your rating. Can you share with us the problem you faced?, and you will be pleased OXXX

Finally, emoticon was used in one response that is :). It was used either to represent a smiley face to soften the criticism in Example 70 or to express sarcasm based on the meaning in the context of response that says "none could reach your satisfaction based on your previous ratings".

#

Example

70

عتذر لعدم رضائك بالعشاء، وفقاً لتقييماتك السابقة لم يستطع احد للوصول لرضائك :) شكرا لزيارتك

naʿtadhir liʿadam ridāuk bilʿashāʾ, wifqan litaqyyimatik alssābiqah lam yastatiʿ ahad lilwusūl liriḍāʾk :) shukran liziyyāratik.

We apologize for your dissatisfaction with the dinner. According to your previous ratings, no one was able to reach your satisfaction :) Thank you for your visit.

With regard to using punctuations, it was found that only 17 responses out of 250 had punctuations, such as question mark and exclamation mark. The question mark was used in 12 responses to mean a question that needs an answer, except one response where it was used not only as a question but also to express condemning and disapproving to the review (see Example 71).

#

Example

71

كيف تقيم مكان انت لم تزروه بنفسك؟

fakayf tuqayyim makān ʿant lam tazurhu binafsik?

how do you rate a place that you have not visited yourself?

Finally, the exclamation mark was used in 5 responses. They were used to express surprising (see Example 72).

#

Example

72

مرحباً، تقيمتك لا غلب إلا ماكن اللي تزوره سليبيه!

marhaba, taqyyimātik liaghlab alʿamakin illi tzūruh silbiyyah!

Welcome, your reviews of most of the places you visit are negative!

To sum up, the owners used 23 moves which have similarities and differences with the previous studies about the owners' responses, especially the ones that focused on the moves, such as [Yonghong \(2020\)](#) and [Napolitano \(2018\)](#). In Arabic, the most frequent moves were opening pleasantries/greetings, apologizing, and soliciting response. Most of those results is similar to Chinese responses that used openings, thanks, and apologize as the most frequent moves on Dianping.com ([Yonghong, 2020](#)). Also, apologizing was used as the most frequent moves, alongside with other moves, in English and Italian responses on TripAdvisor, but differed in its frequency. For example, English responses used apologies, gratitude, and acknowledging complaints, respectively ([Napolitano, 2018](#)). The Italian responses used referring to customer reviews, invitation, and apologies, respectively. Most of the moves were employed to enhance rapport than damaging rapport. Similarly, different emojis were employed to enhance rapport than damaging it. Unlike the punctuation marks, such as the question and exclamation mark, that can convey damaging rapport. The functions of emojis were to express rapport, to soften, to intensify, to show respect/politeness, decoration, to show disapproval, to gratitude, to greet, to show happiness, to express prayer, to show sarcasm, to show surprise, respectively.

Conclusion

This study explored the rhetorical moves and paralinguistic cues that used by restaurant owners in their responses to the negative reviews in Arabic. Also, their communicative functions were identified and interpreted by using the RMT. It was found that the owners used 23 moves; however, opening pleasantries/greetings, apologizing, and soliciting response were the most frequent moves in their responses. All of them were used to enhance rapport, except justifying, self-promoting, criticizing/attacking, denying problems, requesting, giving advice, offering suggestions. The move of requesting and giving advice can enhance the rapport, but they depend on the contextual meaning for request and advice. Some moves were used in the previous studies, but they were under different names of moves, such as promising, showing appreciation, self-promoting, expressing feelings, compensating, and avoiding recurring problems. Almost all the emojis and punctuations were used to enhance rapport, except the emoji of black moon and the question and exclamation marks. Most of the moves were used in Chinese, English, and Italian restaurant owners' responses to the negative reviews, except asking for information, recognizing the reviewers' value, requesting, and giving advice. Although the responses were collected from non-chain restaurants, the owners tended to use the corporate identify over the personal identity in their responses. As a small business, the owners or managers, who are responsible in responding to the dissatisfied reviewers, need to be trained about how to handle the complaints by preparing workshops and training courses for them. They need to identify what are the moves that can enhance rapport or what can be considered as damaging rapport. This can fulfil the expectations of their customers and the overhearing audience to achieve their trust and loyalty to support the economic growth. In other words, they should avoid using criticism/attacking the reviewer or his/her comment. Some emojis and punctuations should be avoided that have negative meanings although others had positive meanings. The reason is that the negative influence is extended, not only to the reviewer but also to the overhearing audience. The implications can be extended in designing materials for Arabic for specific purposes to nonnative speakers of Arabic, who work in the sector or tourism and hospitality. One of the limitations is the limited number of emojis in the responses. Therefore, the future studies should include more responses with emojis and compare them with other languages in terms of similarities and differences in using emojis and functions. Finally, the responses of chain restaurants should be investigated as a formal

context to compare it with the current results that can be considered as an informal context.

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