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The role of guest loyalty between satisfaction with service recovery and guest behavior in mountain hotels

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the study is to investigate the role of guest loyalty in the relationship between satisfaction with service recovery (SSR) and consumer citizenship behavior (CCB), as well as dysfunctional customer behavior (DCB) of hotel guests. **Methodology** – The study was conducted on a sample of 1,324 guests from hotels operating in the Republic of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia in mountain tourism. The obtained data were analyzed using an SEM approach. **Findings** – Loyalty has a mediating role in the relationship between SSR and CCB. On the other hand, loyalty does not have a mediating role in the relationship between SSR and DCB of hotel guests during their stay. **Implications** – The study has theoretical and practical implications. The theoretical implication is that loyalty forms the foundation for guests’ cognitive and affective responses when they are satisfied with a service recovery; this means that loyalty is a driver of hotel guests’ CCB. In the opposite situation, loyalty does not act as a shock absorber that will mitigate the impact of dissatisfaction with service recovery on the manifestation of DCB. The practical implications are that hotels must prioritize effective service recovery strategies to enhance guest loyalty and encourage CCB while simultaneously reducing the risk of DCB.

Keywords: loyalty, satisfaction, service recovery, customer citizenship behavior, dysfunctional customer behaviour, hotel industry

JEL classification: L80

Uloga lojalnosti gostiju između zadovoljstva oporavkom usluge i ponašanja gostiju u planinskim hotelima

Sažetak

Svrha – Svrha studije je da se ispita uloga lojalnosti gostiju u odnosu između zadovoljstva oporavkom usluge i građanskog potrošačkog ponašanja, kao i disfunkcionalnog ponašanja gostiju hotela. **Metodologija** – Istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 1.324 gosta iz hotela koji posluju u planinskom turizmu u Republici Srbiji, Hrvatskoj i Sloveniji. Dobijeni podaci su analizirani primenom SEM pristupa. **Rezultati** – Lojalnost ima posredničku ulogu u odnosu između zadovoljstva oporavkom usluge i građanskog potrošačkog ponašanja. S druge strane, lojalnost nema posredničku ulogu u odnosu zadovoljstva oporavkom usluge i

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disfunkcionalnog ponašanja gostiju hotela tokom njihovog boravka. **Implikacije** – Studija ima teorijske i praktične implikacije. Teorijska implikacija je da lojalnost čini osnovu za kognitivne i afektivne odgovore gostiju kada su zadovoljni oporavkom usluge; to znači da je lojalnost pokretač građanskog potrošačkog ponašanja. U suprotnoj situaciji, lojalnost ne deluje kao amortizer koji će ublažiti uticaj nezadovoljstva povratkom usluge na ispoljavanje disfunkcionalnog ponašanja. Praktične implikacije su da hoteli moraju dati prioritet efikasnim strategijama oporavka usluga kako bi povećali lojalnost gostiju, podstakli građansko potrošačko ponašanje i istovremeno redukovali rizik od pojave disfunkcionalnog ponašanja.

Ključne reči: lojalnost, zadovoljstvo, oporavak usluge, građansko ponašanje potrošača, disfunkcionalno ponašanje potrošača, hotelijerstvo

JEL klasifikacija: L80

1. Introduction

The absence of a standardized hotel evaluation process affects how hotels around the world are evaluated based on the quality of the content and services they offer (Hung, 2017; Tsao, 2018). However, the intangible nature of the service means that service failures in the hotel industry are common and unavoidable occurrences (Hwang & Mattila, 2020; Koc, 2019), even for top-rated hotels, which can lead to negative guest experiences and erosion of hotel competitiveness (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020). Even the most successful companies in the world cannot guarantee completely failure-free service. A service failure refers to a situation where a service provider fails to deliver what is necessary to meet the consumer's expectations (Harrison-Walker, 2019; Shams et al., 2020a). The importance of providing failure-free service is illustrated by the results of Glasly's 2018 Customer Service Expectations Survey, which indicated that 26% of respondents would give up repeat purchases after the first negative experience with the service (Forbes, 2018). However, the fact that effective service recovery can turn frustrated consumers into satisfied customers underscores the importance of service recovery. In this context, Migacz et al. (2018) and Luo et al. (2019) emphasize that service recovery is a critical tool in service quality management, underscoring its significance in retaining loyal customers, as effective recovery can lead dissatisfied customers to regain their satisfaction. This is particularly significant given that the costs of attracting new customers are three to five times higher compared to serving the existing ones (Zeithaml, 2000).

Considering the above, it is not surprising that satisfaction with service recovery (SSR) is the subject of numerous studies in marketing and an indispensable topic in the hotel industry. However, there are a few studies that have gone a step further in examining the impact of SSR on consumer citizenship behavior (CCB) that is not related to repeat purchases and sharing positive experiences with others (Odoom et al., 2020; Zoghbi-Manrique-De-Lara et al., 2014). In other words, there are a few studies that focus on consumer citizenship behavior of hotel guests, which, by definition, represents voluntary and discretionary behavior that is not necessarily required for establishing quality relationships with the environment (Groth, 2005), but which leads to the improvement of relations and can have a significant impact on hotel operational outcomes.

The necessity to investigate this form of consumer behavior arises from the fact that guests' (dis)satisfaction with the hotel's attempts to correct service failures is an important driver of their behavior (Betts et al., 2011; Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011). Positive and negative emotions that guests feel during the process of service recovery, in response to their criticisms and complaints, affect their satisfaction. In this context, the satisfaction they feel as a result of the

actions taken by the hotels belongs to the domain of affective feeling, and as such affects their ethics, where ethics refers to reasoning about what is good and what is bad behavior. Depending on whether these emotions are positive or negative, they can lead to CCB (discretionary), or dysfunctional customer behavior (DCB).

The question that arises is: what is the role of loyalty in this relationship? Loyalty is expected to act as a shock absorber that reduces negative emotions that lead to DCB (Turillo et al., 2002), because loyalty should influence dissatisfied guests to find cognitive reasons to justify the hotel's failure to recover service. The result would be the absence of their intention to manifest dysfunctional behavior. This means that it should have a negative mediating role between SSR and DCB of hotel guests. Following the same logic, loyalty is expected to play a positive mediating role between SSR and the CCB of the hotel.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of hotel guests' loyalty in the relationship between SSR and guest behavior, as a form of behavior that significantly impacts business costs and revenues. Confirming or refuting either theoretical postulates or empirical findings carries a series of significant implications, both in terms of hotel management and the development of new theoretical perspectives.

2. Literature review

It has long been known that guests' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the hotel's efforts to rectify service failures is a significant factor influencing their subsequent behavior. This is evidenced by numerous studies (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020; Guchait et al., 2019; Harrison-Walker, 2019; Hollebeek & Rather, 2019; Odoom, 2020; Rather & Sharma, 2019). On the one hand, Shams et al. (2020a) provide evidence that there is a positive correlation between SSR and loyalty, while Bagherzadeh et al. (2020) found that there is a positive correlation between SSR and word-of-mouth. Gelbrich and Roschk (2011) emphasize that SSR has a greater impact on word-of-mouth communication compared to overall satisfaction, but it has a lesser impact on repeat purchases compared to overall satisfaction. Jin et al. (2019) found that the level of SSR depends on the guest's involvement in this process. Similar findings were presented by Haze et al. (2017). The authors point out that guest involvement in service recovery has a positive effect on their intentions to visit the hotel again. A common to these studies is the finding that subsequent behavior can be reflected in increased loyalty to the hotel. The latter is particularly important in the context of the fact that the impact of a dissatisfied customer is significantly greater than the positive impact of a satisfied customer (Kim et al., 2017), which is especially pronounced in the hotel industry. The absence of a standardized hotel rating process, on the one hand, and the growing importance of social networks and the increase in online bookings on the other means that the comments and criticisms of hotel guests have a strong influence on the choice of a hotel by potential guests.

Guchait et al. (2019) point out that effective service recovery can generate repeat visits with improved satisfaction levels. This finding is in accordance with the so-called service recovery paradox according to which effective recovery can turn angry, frustrated customers into loyal customers. The paradox is related to secondary satisfaction when customers compare their service recovery expectations with their perceptions of the actual service recovery performance. If there is positive confirmation, that is, if perceptions of service recovery performance are greater than expectations, a paradox may emerge. However, the findings of De Mantos et al. (2008) indicate that this paradox has a positive effect on consumer satisfaction, but not on loyalty. Study by Jackson (2019) indicate that the level of satisfaction consumers feel due to service recovery depends on their attribution. In other words, the likelihood of forgiving service failures and consequent behavioral intentions and loyalty depend on the sense of perceived control. Since hospitality services are designed to

require the active participation of service recipients in value creation (Rather et al., 2021) hotel guests believe that their personal actions control the outcomes. This leads to guests feeling that their actions and behaviors influence the outcomes or results of their experience. In this way, the service recovery process is accelerated, and guests experience a higher level of satisfaction. The hotel's response to discretionary behaviors also impacts the level of guest satisfaction (Tung et al., 2017). When the hotel responds positively to the guests' discretionary behaviors, it increases their level of satisfaction (Qiu et al., 2018). Numerous authors have proposed different approaches to promote this process including expressions of empathy (Luo et al., 2019), expressions of genuine apology (Radu et al., 2019), compassion, kindness and other positive emotions, offering compensation (Hwang & Mattila, 2020) etc. Although each of these actions can have a different impact on satisfaction (overall satisfaction and satisfaction with service recovery) and loyalty of hotel guests, Yao et al. (2019) have determined that front-line employees play a crucial role in this process. Similar findings were presented by Hewagama et al. (2019). However, if the reactions are negative or indifferent, it may have a negative impact on satisfaction and loyalty. Essentially, the way the hotel staff handles and appreciates the guest's reactions can influence how satisfied those guests are and how likely they are to remain loyal to the hotel.

From a theoretical perspective depending on the degree of SSR, the reaction of hotel guests is either CCB or DCB. However, Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al. (2014) point out that SSR does not directly influence guest behavior but rather that loyalty mediates that relationship. The study by Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al. (2014) indicates that loyalty acts as a precondition only for CCB. Moreover, the factors that influence such behavior may be independent of those that influence guests to pass on their positive experiences after staying in the hotel to others. When hotel guests are satisfied with the service, loyalty has a positive mediating role. Otherwise, loyalty does not have a significant mediating role. The difference between what theory predicts and what actual research shows highlights the importance of further investigating this topic and understanding the conditions under which this mismatch occurs.

Although some efforts have been made to discover why hotel guests exhibit CCB when SSR, the precise mechanism by which this occurs has not yet been identified. The finding that DCB is manifested in cases of dissatisfaction with service recovery implies that hotel guests' reactions are actually consequences of affective emotions, which motivate certain behaviors. Hence, the representation of loyalty as the result of both cognitive and affective processes (Oliver, 1997) represents a good starting point in researching this issue. According to Oliver (1997), loyalty develops as a consequence of previous experience and knowledge that the guest has about the hotel. It is the result of a cognitive process. Hence, when a hotel responds positively to a service failure, guests will perceive it positively based on their knowledge. As a result, it is possible that they will become loyal. The affective component connects personal perception with cognitive and represents an emotional response to various attributes and external stimuli. With continued service recovery, guests will experience positive emotions, which will further result in an increase in favorability towards the hotel or service brand. This means that loyalty is also formed on the basis of an affective reaction. Therefore, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 1: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on hotel guest loyalty.

According to The Social Exchange Theory, people establish certain relationships in order to realize and protect their interests, but with a set of certain expectations about what each party contributes with and what they can expect from the other party. The theory predicts that people will respond to positive reactions with positive behavior. This kind of behavior represents results and cognitive reactions because a set of expectations is formed on the basis

of the knowledge that people have about what they can get from the relationship, but also affective reactions (which represent the result of lived experience). Since loyalty is the result of a positive experience (experienced satisfaction), it mediates between satisfaction and reaction as a positive response to experienced satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Loyalty plays a positive mediating role in the relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and customer citizenship behavior among hotel guests

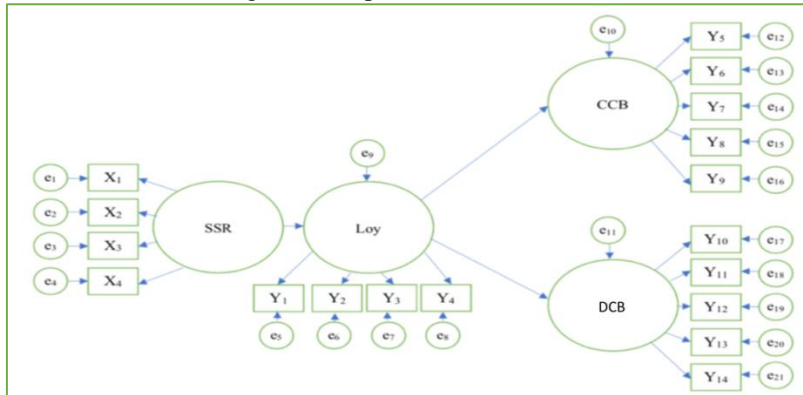
Additional justification for the hypothesis defined in this way can be found in The Social Identity Theory, according to which individuals undertake the activities that match their identity and support institutions that embody that identity. Consequently, depending on whether guests perceive the service recovery as valid or not, they will identify or feel alienated from the hotel. If the service recovery is evaluated as valid, it means that the service recovery was performed in accordance with their value system. Furthermore, it implies that they share common values, which is the basis for feeling a common identity. According to the theory, when people share the same identity, it results in a stronger sense of connection and belonging, which leads to stronger loyalty, solidarity and mutual support. Hence, high identification affects the guests' motivation and willingness to support the hotel in a way that will manifest positive customer behavior, whereby loyalty appears as a result of high identification (Rather et al., 2021). When people feel that they are a part of something, they are more likely to remain loyal to it. Furthermore, this suggests that guest loyalty has a mediating role in a positive CCB when satisfied with service recovery.

If a hotel does not implement adequate service recovery measures, guests will feel frustrated. When guests perceive that the hotel's efforts to resolve the issue are ineffective or inadequate, their frustration can intensify. This expectation is strongly supported by the Frustration-Aggression Theory. According to this theory, heightened frustration tends to lead to Dysfunctional Customer Behavior (DCB) – activities and actions that guests intentionally engage in, resulting in damage to the hotel's value (Kang & Gong, 2019). An additional explanation for this guest behavior can be found in Folger's (2001) theory. According to this theory, people behave the way they do because they believe it is the only correct way. In this context, if they judge that the hotel's activities to recover the service were inadequate, they will interpret it as poor service, which may lead to dysfunctional behavior. However, they can also interpret inadequate service recovery as the hotel's only possible response. In such cases, due to their emotional connection with the service and hotel brand, through loyalty, they may justify such actions and minimize their dissatisfaction, feeling a moral obligation to help the hotel, even at the expense of their personal benefit (Turillo et al., 2002). The affective, or emotional, component that stems from loyalty to the hotel will suppress their cognitive arguments in justifying the hotel's inadequate actions. The above suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Loyalty plays a negative mediating role in the relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and the dysfunctional behavior of hotel guests during their hotel stay.

The conceptualization of the previously performed analysis of the theoretical foundations of SSR, loyalty, and CCB and DCB, as well as empirical studies, can be graphically represented by the following research model:

Figure 1: Proposed research model



Note: SSR – Satisfaction with service recovery, Loy – Guest loyalty, CCB – Customer citizenship behavior, DCB - Dysfunctional customer behavior
Source: Authors’ research

3. Research methodology

The study was conducted on a sample of 1324 hotel guests, who stayed in one of the 94 hotels operating in the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Croatia, and the Republic of Slovenia in the field of mountain tourism. The Republic of Slovenia is a well-known Alpine destination. The share of tourism in GDP was around 12%, before the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic. The Republic of Croatia is also a well-known tourist destination whose share of tourism in the total GDP, before the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic, was around 10.3%. The share of tourism in the Republic of Serbia is significantly lower and before the outbreak of the pandemic, it was around 1.3%. The Republic of Serbia is included in the study because over 70% of all tourism in the Republic of Serbia is mountain tourism.

The sampling method used for this research was stratified sampling. Participants were grouped into categories of tourists (leisure travelers, business travelers, and digital nomads) to ensure that each category was adequately represented in the sample. The differentiation between digital nomads and business travelers was based on the study conducted by Reichenberger (2018). Subsequently, within each category, participants were selected through random sampling. This approach enabled a balance between the different categories of tourists and their proportional representation in the research, according to their share in the total number of tourists. A more detailed structure of hotel guests who participated in the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Structure of hotel guests – respondents

Country	Serbia	Cro.	Slo.	Serbia	Cro.	Slo.	Serbia	Cro.	Slo.
Hotel category	3*			4*			5*		
Leisure travelers	72	46	125	27	33	28	17	21	26
Business travelers	33	28	28	76	113	62	47	52	35
Digital nomads	34	138	64	21	47	34	18	63	36
Men	117	135	125	43	66	75	68	74	85
Women	136	119	78	51	50	51	13	22	17
Average length of stay in the hotel	3.8	6.7	4.1	3.3	5.9	6.2	1.8	2.9	3.7

Source: Authors’ research

The data was collected in 2022 using a structured questionnaire, which was developed based on relevant claims proposed in the literature. More specifically, the items in the questionnaire were defined by taking into account theoretical and empirical studies related to organizational behavior, CCB and DCB (Kang & Gong, 2019; Odoom et al., 2020; Shams et al., 2020a; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2014). The questionnaire can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: The questionnaire

Item	Mark	Source
I am satisfied with the behavior of the employees in solving the problem	X ₁	Odoom et al., 2020
I am satisfied with the procedure and resources used to solve the problem	X ₂	
I am satisfied with the compensation offered by the company (service restoration, refund, etc.)	X ₃	
I am satisfied because the steps taken by the hotel to solve the problem were quick and efficient	X ₄	
I will say positive things about this hotel to other people	Y ₁	Shams et al., 2020a
I will recommend this hotel to my friends or relatives	Y ₂	
I consider this hotel as my first choice for accommodation	Y ₃	
I would not switch to another hotel the next time if the price of the stay increased by 10%	Y ₄	
I take measures to protect the hotel from potential problems	Y ₅	Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2014
I am taking action to reduce hotel costs	Y ₆	
I show concern for the efficient functioning of the hotel	Y ₇	
I write a positive review about the hotel	Y ₈	
I defend the hotel when others criticize it	Y ₉	Kang & Gong, 2019
I acknowledge that I took advantage of some hotel services	Y ₁₀	
I refused to follow the instructions of the hotel staff	Y ₁₁	
I write a negative review about the hotel	Y ₁₂	
I acknowledge that I use more resources than acceptable at this hotel	Y ₁₄	
I tend to make the hotel dirtier than I should	Y ₁₄	

Source: Authors' research

The first four items on the questionnaire pertain to guests' SSR, while the next four focus on guests' loyalty. The remaining items address CCB and DCB. Respondents rated the statements on the questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from (1) "I completely disagree" to (5) "I completely agree".

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model analysis

Data were analyzed using the statistical package JASP. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to assess the validity of the measures and test the hypothesized relationships. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the measurement model, as CFA is a fundamental method for evaluating the internal structural validity of measurement instruments. In addition to χ^2 , which is sensitive to sample size and model complexity (Alavi et al., 2020), various goodness-of-fit indices were used, as suggested by Chen (2007). Results for the overall model are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Results for the overall model fit

Goodness Fit Index name	p-value
$\chi^2(29) = 1066.921$	0.0
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.9
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.9
Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	0.6
Bollen's Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.9
Relative Noncentrality Index (RNI)	0.9
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMS)	0.04

Source: Authors' research

Except for χ^2 , which is known to be sensitive to sample size, all other indices indicated satisfactory values for a good model, as suggested by the literature. The quality of the survey instruments was examined through reliability and validity analyses (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hollebeek & Rather, 2019). Convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs were assessed, and reliability was evaluated using composite reliability, which is a more robust measure than Cronbach's alpha, as it accounts for error variances and factor loadings (Hayes & Coutts, 2020; Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016). The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: The results of CFA

Factor	Item	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval		Std. Estimate	CR	AVE
						Lower	Upper			
SSR	X1	0.805	0.019	41.535	< .001	0.767	0.843	0.894	0.901	0.704
	X2	0.890	0.018	49.373	< .001	0.855	0.925	0.987		
	X3	0.528	0.025	20.712	< .001	0.478	0.577	0.532		
	X4	0.825	0.021	39.767	< .001	0.784	0.865	0.872		
Loy	Y2	0.797	0.045	17.532	< .001	0.708	0.886	0.908	0.931	0.870
	Y3	0.814	0.046	17.785	< .001	0.724	0.903	0.957		
CCB	Y5	0.779	0.021	37.638	< .001	0.738	0.819	0.916	0.935	0.878
	Y8	0.902	0.023	39.872	< .001	0.858	0.947	0.958		
DCB	Y12	0.589	0.069	8.572	< .001	0.454	0.724	0.69	0.833	0.720
	Y13	0.712	0.081	8.836	< .001	0.554	0.87	0.982		

Source: Authors' research

As can be seen from Table 4, all items with factor loadings greater than 0.5 were retained for further analysis (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2014). The AVE values also indicate good convergent validity of the measurement instrument, as each subscale has a value greater than 0.5 (Parrey et al., 2019). Additionally, the instrument demonstrates good reliability, with the composite reliability (CR) for each subscale exceeding the standard of 0.7 (Parrey et al., 2019). According to Eising et al. (2013), when subscales contain two items, the best indicator of reliability is the Spearman-Brown coefficient (SBC). Since the three subscales each contain two items, the Spearman-Brown coefficient was calculated. The SBC values are presented in Table 5, confirming the previous conclusions regarding reliability.

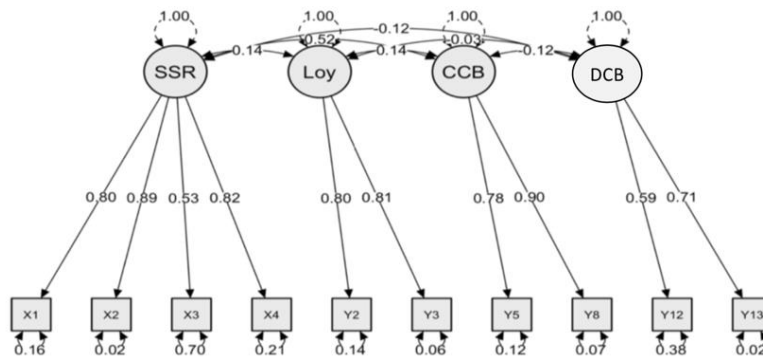
Table 5: Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient (SBR)

	Y ₂ and Y ₃	Y ₅ and Y ₈	Y ₁₂ and Y ₁₃
Coefficient correlation	0.907	0.872	0.7
P value	< .001	< .001	< .001
SBR	0.951	0.931	0.820

Source: Authors' research

The graphic representation of the measuring part of the model is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Graphic representation of CFA results



Source: Authors' research

The discriminant validity of the scales was tested based on the [Fornell-Larcker \(1981\)](#) criterion. The square root of the AVE for each construct was compared with the correlations between the constructs. The results supported the discriminant validity, as the correlations between each construct and the others were lower than the square root of their AVE (see Table 6).

Table 6: Results of the discriminant validity

	Type travers	gender	Educ.	SSR	Loy	CCB	DCB
Type travers	-						
Gender	0.234	-					
Educ.	0.154	0.578	-				
SSR	0.251	0.564	0.671	0.839			
Loy	0.182	0.573	0.445	0.141	0.933		
CCB	0.405	0.536	0.521	0.516	0.110	0.937	
DCB	0.268	0.418	0.476	-0.101	-0.017*	-0.114	0.849

Note: Educ. – Level of education of hotel guests – respondents; SSR – Satisfaction with service recovery; Loy – Guest loyalty; CCB – Customer citizenship behavior; DCB – Dysfunctional customer behavior. On the main diagonal is the square root of AVE of construct. All correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$, except *. * marked that the coefficient was not statistically significant.

Source: Authors' research

The results suggest that CCB exhibits significant intercorrelations in the expected directions, as shown in Table 6, while DCB was not correlated with loyalty. These findings

provide a good starting point to support the mediating role of loyalty in the relationship between SSR and CCB, but not for DCB, as the correlation coefficient between loyalty and DCB is statistically insignificant.

4.2. Structural model analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the structural relationships between the variables. The results are presented in Table 7. The various goodness-of-fit indices indicate an acceptable fit for the model.

Table 7: The results of the proposed structural model

Factor	Factor	Label	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	Std. (all)
Loy	SSR	alpha	0.141	0.030	4.733	< .001	0.142
CCB	SSR	direct	0.496	0.027	18.526	< .001	0.513
CCB	Loy	beta	0.063	0.025	2.529	0.011	0.065
DCB	SSR	delta	-0.087	0.028	-3.148	0.002	-0.119
DCB	Loy	omega	-0.008	0.021	-0.394	0.694	-0.011
indirect	alpha*beta	indirect	0.009	0.004	2.263	0.024	0.009
total	direct+indirect	total	0.505	0.027	18.926	< .001	0.522
proportion	direct/total	proportion	0.982	0.008	126.10	< .001	0.982
indirect ₁	delta*omega	indirect ₁	-0.001	0.003	-0.393	0.695	-0.002
total ₁	delta+indirect ₁	total ₁	-0.088	0.028	-3.192	0.001	-0.121
proportion ₁	delta/total ₁	proportion ₁	0.987	0.034	28.688	< .001	0.987
Goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2(29) = 1066.921$, CFI = 0.9, TLI = 0.9, PNFI = 0.6, IFI = 0.9, RNI = 0.9; SRMS = 0.04							

Source: Authors' research

The value of the coefficient (alpha) (0.141), which describes the relationship between SSR and guests' loyalty, indicates that there is a significant path between SSR and loyalty, supporting Hypothesis 1. This finding is consistent with numerous studies (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020; Harrison-Walker, 2019; Odoom, 2020; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2014). To test Hypotheses H2 and H3, the bootstrap method was employed. The coefficient describing the direct relationship between SSR and CCB indicates that there is a significant path between SSR and CCB. Additionally, this coefficient shows that the impact is less than the correlation coefficient between SSR and CCB, which equals the regression coefficient in the model where only SSR is the predictor variable (Repišti, 2017). This suggests that the second condition for the existence of a mediation effect is met (Repišti, 2017). Furthermore, since both the alpha coefficient and the beta coefficient - describing the relationship between loyalty and CCB—are statistically significant, this indicates a significant indirect effect, thereby confirming Hypothesis H2, which posits that loyalty has a positive mediating role in the relationship between SSR and CCB. Therefore, partial mediation is identified, as the direct effect coefficient is also statistically significant. An analysis of the relationships among direct, indirect, and total effects shows that the direct effect is dominant, which has several implications that will be discussed further.

The failure to meet the first condition for mediation - significant correlation between the variables of interest - implies that loyalty does not have a mediating role in the relationship

between SSR and DCB. The results presented in Table 7 support this indication, as the omega coefficient, which describes the relationship between loyalty and DCB, is not statistically significant. Consequently, there is no indirect effect. This finding suggests that Hypothesis H3 is not confirmed, which has several implications, primarily highlighting the significance of SSR in preventing DCB. This conclusion is supported by the sign and statistical significance of the delta coefficient that describes the direct effect of SSR on DCB. One possible explanation for why loyalty does not influence the DCB of hotel guests is that, despite their emotional connection with the hotel, current dissatisfaction overrides the cognitive reasons that justify maintaining a long-term positive relationship between the hotel and the guest.

5. Discussion

The results obtained underscore the significance of SSR for guest loyalty and CCB. Specifically, the findings suggest that when guests are satisfied with service recovery, SSR fosters their loyalty. Consequently, SSR as a transaction-specific satisfaction has a positive impact on loyalty. The extent of this influence in relation to other factors of loyalty, remains to be examined. Also, the influence of SSR on the type of loyalty remains to be investigated.

Furthermore, the obtained results indicate that SSR has a strong direct influence on the CCB of hotel guests and helps prevent the occurrence of DCB. According to the Social Exchange Theory (SET), this occurs because when guests feel that the hotel has invested in meeting their needs and rectifying the situation, they feel an obligation of reciprocity. As a result, guests are likely to exhibit CCB, thereby maintaining the dynamics of social exchange. In this mechanism, loyalty influences hotel guests, prompting them to find cognitive reasons to justify viewing the hotel as a victim and feeling obliged to support it in order to sustain the dynamics of social exchange. In other words, loyalty mediates the influence of SSR on CCB.

Loyalty does not act as a buffer in the relationship between SSR and DCB. This indicates that loyal guests do not feel a moral obligation to assist the hotel when service recovery is unsatisfactory. According to the dominant theoretical framework, the moral obligation to help arises from an emotional connection to the hotel. This connection complicates their ability to find cognitive reasons to reject the hotel as a victim, resulting in a decision not to exhibit dysfunctional behavior. To preserve the benefits of their relationship with the hotel, even amid dissatisfaction with the recovery process, guests should not exhibit DCB. Therefore, the emotions stemming from loyalty should ideally mitigate their current dissatisfaction. However, the acknowledgment that loyalty does not mediate this relationship implies that loyal guests, like disloyal ones, can harm the hotel with the same moral imperative and intensity, even when they are aware of their actions. For loyal guests, there is little to prevent them from finding valid reasons to reject the hotel as a victim. In fact, it may be easier for them to “deny the hotel as a victim” and exhibit DCB. This further suggests that current dissatisfaction generated by ineffective service recovery outweighs the cognitive reasons that justify maintaining a long-term positive relationship between the hotel and the guest. In other words, negative emotions stemming from dissatisfaction with service recovery can surpass the positive emotions arising from loyalty. The consequence is the manifestation of DCB, rather than behaviors that would justify the hotel as a victim. This suggests that the emotions triggered by ineffective service recovery have a stronger impact on immediate behavior compared to the loyalty that develops from long-term affective and cognitive responses in the guest-hotel relationship.

The above findings have two significant implications. First, any effective service recovery will lead to enhanced loyalty and the manifestation of CCB. Conversely, any failure to implement effective service recovery increases the risk of DCB and fails to promote further

loyalty. Second, relying on loyalty as a buffer in this context is a risky strategy, as its mediating role in the relationship between SSR and DCB has not been confirmed. Therefore, it is crucial to cultivate an organizational climate and culture among employees that emphasizes the importance of adequately addressing service delivery failures. Such failures will only impact the hotel's performance in the short term if they are effectively managed and swiftly resolved. When handled properly, they should not affect guests' future repeat visits. Employees must understand that repeat visits will only occur if guests believe they have made genuine efforts to correct any failures.

The theoretical implications of the study position loyalty not merely as an outcome or result of SSR but as a driver of positive behavior among hotel guests. This perspective suggests that loyalty is fundamental to the cognitive and affective experiences of guests, influencing their behavior. However, adopting this view necessitates consideration of the factors that shape tourists' cognitive and affective perceptions. Unfortunately, this study does not account for such factors, even though multiple authors (such as [Dhir & Chakraborty, 2023](#)) indicate that social context significantly impacts the dynamics of social interactions and that cultural differences affect complaint expression. In some cultures, individuals may be more inclined to publicly express satisfaction or dissatisfaction, while in others, doing so may be less common. This suggests that national culture plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' attitudes. For instance, in many Asian cultures, hotel guests might be more reserved in voicing dissatisfaction to maintain harmonious relationships, potentially leading to lower service dissatisfaction ratings, even if guests feel unsatisfied. Additionally, cultural differences can influence how guests perceive and value various aspects of service. In certain cultures, attributes like staff friendliness and attention to detail may be prioritized, while others might emphasize service efficiency and functionality. Such differences can lead to varying satisfaction ratings under similar circumstances. Moreover, differing value systems and behavioral norms shape guests' expectations regarding service quality; some may prioritize personalization and customization, while others focus on economy and efficiency. Consequently, cultural background significantly impacts guest attitudes and expectations. Recognizing these differences is essential for designing complaint management strategies that accommodate diverse cultural expectations. Within this context, the question of whether and how guests' perceptions of hotel ratings influence the role of loyalty in this relationship is particularly intriguing.

6. Conclusion

Since failures in service delivery within the hotel industry are inevitable, creating loyal customers involves more than just ensuring stable cash flows and strengthening the current competitive position. It also entails shaping customer behavior, specifically increasing the likelihood that customers will engage in CCB. This approach not only achieves short-term benefits from the CCB of guests - impacting the hotel's ongoing performance ([Makuljevic & Knezevic, 2023](#)) - but also contributes to the preservation of the hotel's position and the strengthening of its competitiveness in the long term.

Unfortunately, there is an insignificant correlation between loyalty and DCB, indicating that relying on loyalty is a risky strategy in mitigating service delivery errors, and emphasizing the importance of an effective service recovery process. Only an efficient service recovery will affect the SSR of the hotel's guests and thus prevent the occurrence of DCB. This further implies that all activities designed to encourage satisfaction due to service recovery should have a prominent place in business strategies and hotel business improvement plans.

However, the fact that loyalty does not mediate the relationship between SSR and DCB suggests that hotel guests do not operate through the same mechanism, implying that actions

and the same managerial tools for eliciting reactions to CCB do not have the same effect on discouraging hotel guests from exhibiting DCB. This further implies that they must create other measures in case dissatisfaction with the recovery of the service occurs.

Considering the various types of loyalty, future research should take this into account gaining a deeper understanding of the role of loyalty as a mediator between SSR and CCB. Understanding how each type of loyalty influences customer citizenship behavior is crucial, as it will facilitate better personalization of marketing efforts for each group of loyal guests.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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