The impact on hotels customer’s satisfaction with hospitality and sustainable practices

O impacto de práticas sustentáveis e hospitalidade na satisfação dos clientes de hotéis

El impacto de las prácticas sostenibles y la hospitalidad en la satisfacción de clientes hoteleros

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ABSTRACT
The adoption of hospitality practices as sustainable development seeks to limit the negative impacts of hotels’ business activities on natural and social environments and to increase the benefits to tourism as a whole and the surrounding population. The objective of this research is to identify the antecedents of customer satisfaction for different types of hotels. To meet this goal, the following research questions were addressed. What are the antecedents of customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry for hotel practices as sustainable development? Does customer satisfaction with these practices vary by the kind of hotel? Through a survey of 344 customers staying in seven hotels located in the province of Santos and Ubatuba (Sao Paulo State), it was found that customer satisfaction is positively influenced by hotels’ adoption of sustainable hospitality practices and that the level of customer satisfaction varies according to hotel size.

Keywords: hotel customer satisfaction, hospitality, sustainable practices, stakeholders.

RESUMO
A adoção de práticas de hospitalidade como desenvolvimento sustentável procura limitar os impactos negativos das atividades empresariais dos hotéis nos ambientes naturais e sociais, e aumentar os benefícios para o turismo como um todo e para a sociedade envolvida. O objetivo desta pesquisa é identificar os antecedentes da satisfação dos clientes para diferentes tipos de hotéis. Para atingir esse objetivo, foram abordadas as seguintes questões de pesquisa: Quais são os antecedentes da satisfação do cliente na indústria hoteleira para práticas de desenvolvimento sustentável? A satisfação do cliente com essas práticas varia de acordo com o tipo de hotel? Por meio de uma pesquisa realizada com 344 clientes hospedados em sete hotéis localizados nas cidades de Santos e Ubatuba (estado de São Paulo). Constatou-se que a satisfação do cliente é influenciada positivamente pela adoção de práticas de hospitalidade sustentável pelos hotéis e que o nível de satisfação do cliente varia de acordo com ao tamanho do hotel.

Palavras-chave: satisfação do cliente hoteleiro, hospitalidade, práticas sustentáveis, stakeholders.

RESUMEN
La adopción de prácticas hoteleras como desarrollo sostenible busca limitar los impactos negativos de las actividades comerciales de los hoteles en los entornos naturales y sociales, y aumentar los beneficios para el turismo en su conjunto y para la sociedad local. El objetivo de esta investigación es identificar los antecedentes de la satisfacción del cliente para diferentes tipos de hoteles. Para lograr este objetivo se abordaron las siguientes preguntas de investigación: ¿Cuáles son los antecedentes de la satisfacción del cliente para diferentes tipos de hoteles? A través de una encuesta realizada con 344 clientes hospedados en sete hoteles ubicados en las ciudades de Santos y Ubatuba (estado de São Paulo). Se constató que la satisfacción del cliente se ve influenciada positivamente por la adopción de prácticas de hospitalidad sostenible por los hoteles y que el nivel de satisfacción del cliente varía de acuerdo con el tamaño del hotel.

Palabras-clave: satisfacción del cliente hoteleiro, hospitalidad, prácticas sustentables, stakeholders.
cliente en la industria hotelera para las prácticas de desarrollo sustentable? ¿La satisfacción del cliente con estas prácticas varía según el tipo de hotel? A través de una encuesta realizada a 344 clientes alojados en siete hoteles ubicados en las ciudades de Santos y Ubatuba (estado de São Paulo). Se encontró que la satisfacción del cliente está influenciada positivamente por la adopción de prácticas hoteleras sustentables por parte de los hoteles y que el nivel de satisfacción del cliente varía según el tamaño del hotel.

**Palabras clave:** satisfacción del cliente hotelero, hotelería, prácticas sustentables, stakeholders.

1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important revenue-generating sectors for most countries, in addition to being a significant job generator. Tourism also catalyzes development. Where development and growth issues are concerned, this sector has achieved great importance primarily because, unlike other sectors, tourism can create prosperity and economic development opportunities even for places that would not normally be considered and used as economic resources. In other words, what makes the tourism sector special is its highly fragmented and diverse structure, which requires coordinated initiatives to ensure success.

The tourism industry in Brazil has grown almost constantly since the 1980s (WTO, 2015). They estimated this industry’s share of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP) at 7% and up to 14% in some countries’ GDP. Satisfying the growing needs of tourists, however, can have many negative impacts such as the degradation of forests and coastal areas by the construction of new villages, hotels, and entertainment facilities (Tachizawa, Contador & Farah, 2018).

Therefore, a sustainable plan of development is an important strategy for tourism organizations – mainly in terms of hospitality practices – to minimize the negative impacts of these organizations’ activities on social environments, (Tachizawa, Contador & Farah, 2018), and this is very important to counter this industry’s self-harming activities.

Many hotel and entertainment managers who are concerned about the environment have undertaken various initiatives in this regard (Hobson & Essex, 2001).
However, the level of adoption of these practices remains modest. For example, in 2015, less than 9.9% of hotels in Brazil possessed an environmental certification (Sebrae, 2018), and, in the Brazilian hospitality industry, only 14% of establishments have a Green Certified, a program offered by the Brazilian Association of Hotels (ABH, 2018).

The eco-labels mentioned above and certification programmers emphasize energy and water conservation (the sustainable environmental dimension) to promote the adoption of these practices. Thus, few enterprises in the tourism sector, including the hospitality industry, have adopted a sustainable development orientation that also integrates economic and social dimensions. In comparison to what has been learned about environmental management systems in the hospitality industry, there is still little information available about the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable attitudes (economic, environmental, and social) into hotels’ business strategies and the impact of such practices on hotel customer satisfaction.

In the hospitality sector, the mean schooling years is much lower than in other private service sectors. Notably, cities on the beach, which are mature destinations for sun and beach tourism, present the lowest mean schooling years of all the regions under consideration. Therefore, it appears to be more relevant to evaluate those aspects of hotel customer satisfaction more directly linked to financial performance, for instance, customers’ intention to return and to recommend a hotel following a satisfactory experience (Yarimoglu, 2014).

The tourism and hospitality industry are made up of a wide range of segments, from restaurants and clubs to attractions and tours, with 80 to 90% of businesses being small business operators, which Sebrae (2018) defines as employing less than 19 staff. These businesses are scattered over a wide range of urban and rural environments. The importance of external training in the hospitality industry, which is traditionally serviced by on-the-job traineeships and apprenticeships, is recognized by many senior industry personnel. Prominence is given to this aspect in numerous industry reports, including regional tourism plans, such as those developed by the Brazilian Association of Hotels, which also recognize the need for continued training and development in the tourism and hospitality industry.
The present study was designed to overcome this lack of knowledge and the fact that no conservation of natural and social resources can be done without the consumers’ consent or that this conservation must be done in such a way that they do not perceive any reduction in service quality (Sivakumar, Li & Dong, 2014). The present study explored hotel customers’ satisfaction and behavioral intentions concerning sustainable development practices in all three dimensions (economic, environmental, and social) to answer the following research question:

In the hospitality industry, what are the antecedents, including those related to sustainable development, of customer satisfaction and customers’ intentions to return and recommend?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Tremblay, (2007), the adoption of a universal definition of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility is still unclear to many individuals. The first definition refers to the macro social-economic plans for the individual welfare of the global population of the world. Firms to grow sustainably. The second definitions correspond to the social strategies of businesses to grow globally sustainably.

According to the World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainable development is defined as any kind of development that meets the needs of the present population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 2015) Sustainable development is based on the principles of intergenerational solidarity, equity, ethics, and precaution, with actions to avoid risks for the communities (Capron & Quairel-Lanoizéléé, 2016).

In this context, corporate hospitality, in the wake of corporate disasters in many organizations, is gaining importance as a management tool to avoid the risks of environmental damage claims and economic scandals. Until recently, the concept of corporate hospitality was summed up in what companies can offer to communities through campaigns and community grants. Currently, this concept is expanding and becoming more comprehensive, incorporating other important factors such as
environmental preservation and appreciation of developers as a part of companies, as well as a concern for creating measures to ensure the quality of life within organizations.

From a social perspective, corporate social responsibility is a social contract between organizations and the society in which they operate, to integrate the interests of all stakeholders. According to Moretti & Toledo (2015), the commitment of companies to environmental issues, from the 1990s onwards, was a strong incentive for business engagement, mainly because it incorporates new consumers who are ecologically conscious in their purchases. For this reason, organizations involved in these changes have had to adjust to a new reality (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2011; Lopes & Pacagnan, 2014; Rather & Hollebeek, 2019). In recent years, researchers have found a positive relationship between sustainability approaches and the resilience of companies in times of economic crisis (Claro & Claro, 2014).

Customers in this new business environment expect to interact with ethical organizations have a good corporate image in the market and act in an environmentally responsible manner. In this environment, hospitality practices have emerged that emphasize a commitment to sustainability with all stakeholders (customers, suppliers, customers, internal employees, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the general community) as a management tool for the optimization of economic organization. Montadon (2003) describes this duty in hospitality as give, receive, and reciprocate.

This threefold duty (Mauss, 2003) first appeared within the sociality (the core of social patterns) of archaic societies as a response to two questions. What is the rule of law and organizations’ interests (backward or archaic values) that make reciprocation a requirement? What importance does the thing give to have that requires the gift to be repaid? Mauss (2003) observations focused on a notion of hospitality that begins as a gift and that is not limited to the dynamics of archaic societies (Montadon, 2003).

In the stakeholder approach to strategic management, stakeholders are defined as individuals or group of individuals who can affect or be affected by the achievement of organizational objectives. The emphasis placed on stakeholders comes from their different and sometimes conflicting interests and the power they can exert on organizations. To prevent any negative impacts of stakeholders on any given organization
and to encourage their cooperation, managers must identify and acknowledge the
concerns that drive stakeholders.

To render actionable, the two concepts of sustainable development and corporate
social responsibility in the tourism industry, principles of sustainable development are
conceptualized as underlying the operationalization of corporate social responsibility.
These are grouped under four main principles:

a) demonstrate effective sustainable management,
b) maximize social and economic benefits to local communities and minimize nega-
tive impacts,
c) maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts and
d) maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.

Sustainable development is normally thought of in terms of responsible tourism,
ecotourism, and best practices in the tourism industry, whereas corporate social
responsibility is thought of more in terms of sponsorship or philanthropy (Tachizawa,
Contador & Farah, 2018). More specifically, since the hospitality industry is energy-
intensive it consumes natural resources and generates waste in great quantities, certain
environmentally friendly initiatives have been adopted under pressure from
environmentalists and the general public (Bohdanowicz, 2005). Recent business studies
have led to the development of social enterprises associated with the concept of corporate
hospitality, with the basic premise that business and society are interlinked and
interdependent.

Moreover, the trend towards saving energy has stimulated the adoption of
practices meant to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and water (Ayuso, 2007). In this
way, hotel certification programs have appeared, spurred by travelers, environmental
organizations, and the hospitality industry itself, as well as by developing countries wary
of losing tourist-generated revenues (Honey & Rome, 2001). These programs outline the
environmentally responsible practices to be adopted by hotel management and provide
ways of diffusing these practices (Tachizawa, 2014).
2.1 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Customer satisfaction is essential to organizations seeking to keep customers’ attention and preferences. Customers make purchasing decisions based on perceived value and their expectations of quality and value. Therefore, a marketing concept satisfying customers’ needs and desires is vital to any firm’s success (Han, Kim & Hyun, 2011). Earlier researchers, such as Bagozzi (1992), Cronin & Taylor (1992), recognized that when expectations and experiences match outcomes, customer satisfaction results. According to Dominici & Palumbo (2013), guest’s overall satisfaction levels result in higher probabilities of their return to the same hotel. Thus, meeting consumer expectations not only leads to satisfaction but also to repurchase.

There is a pyramid of consciousness about corporate hospitality (Carrol, 1999) that people within this area of business must accept. This needs to be made clear so that the entire basis of corporate hospitality is clear. Four types of hospitality can be said to make up corporate hospitality – economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic – and these can be described as a pyramid. As mentioned previously, in the hospitality sector, mean schooling years are much lower than in other private service sectors (García Pozo, Ollero, Lara & Chicón, 2012; Lashley & Morrisson, 2001). To improve the services offered continuously and, thus, respond to the needs and changing expectations of current and emerging customers marketing orientation is an approach that has become essential in a service-based economy (Smith, Ferrari & Puczkó, 2016).

The hospitality industry arises from a paradoxical mix of generosity, socio-cultural rules, and market demand. The offer of commercial hospitality, according to Lashley (2008), ‘depends on reciprocity based on monetary exchange and guest satisfaction concession boundaries’, which have an impact on guests/customers and service providers’ perception of hospitality. Reciprocity appears in minor features in hospitality services since, in this context, the result of such exchanges manifests itself in satisfaction with the services purchased.

In the latter variant of hospitality, financial exchanges exempt guests from mutual obligation. Commercial activity necessarily focuses on the products required by the market, indoctrinating actors to accept the appropriate conditions – but at the risk of non-
permanence in the market segment. Although specific commercial objectives are targeted to meet guests’ and customers’ needs, commercial activities do not promote employee assimilation of this concept of hospitality, according to Telfer (2010). This means that this concern with exchanges may not exist, but marketing assumptions governing customer-product interactions determine certain patterns that tend to obliterate the perception of hospitality as an exchange.

The integration of the characteristics of hospitality in various areas is a challenge to researchers. The inherent conflicts are ontological so that the emerging relationships focus on attitudes and behaviors that are the basis of human survival, that is, it is necessary to form cohesive groups with capable behaviors who intend to cooperate for mutual benefit. This cooperation is a source of hospitality, which brings to light the difficulty in connecting a business model with this baseline assumption. Moreover, the present study sought to discover what would be the advantage of making the considerable effort needed to achieve agglutination between the desires to receive and to be with people and the provision of services.

Notably, in the last decade, hospitality principles applied to commercial activities are gradually being considered a genuine process, not in the sense of employees being trained and then acquiring knowledge transferred from procedure manuals, but instead, as skills brought in by individuals acting as hosts, which can make organizations providing more competitive services. A passage from Baptista (2008) underlines the issue of flesh and bone people, recalling that, even with the adoption of all available technology and endless hours of training, the moment of service provision still depends on ‘people dealing with people. In both urban and rural environments, it is important to invest in inhabited places with anthropological density, making them stages for the lives of flesh and bone people, thereby giving these actors genuine identities under these conditions. Places of urban citizenship are places in which the universal human condition is recognizable in the splendid uniqueness of each face – examples of subjectivity and characteristics that transcend the physical limits imposed by history or geography, as mentioned previously (Baptista, 2008).

Gotman (2009) describes, in numerous passages reflecting on the hospitality trade, the plus that is expected in service provision, which seeks to create customer loyalty.
Developing the capacity to offer hospitality and not simply to serve – thus assuming the role of host – sheds light on one of two possible paths for organizations to incorporate hospitality strategically as a differentiating factor. First, this means the exchanges that take place between protagonists have not been forced but instead developed in the form of obligations. That take of the latter term is extremely ambiguous in the work of Mauss (2003) because he gives it the status of pre-law, of a contractual predecessor. However, it is an exchange freely agreed upon by actors but still socially determined, within codified norms that are socially sanctioned. The assimilation of the local populations within the hosts’ statute, therefore, assumes that they can offer hospitality, not merely to provide a service, and that they show initiative and comply with norms. Reciprocally, the assimilation of tourists to the status of guests requires that they show respect to their hosts, particularly in terms of staying in the place allocated to them and only there.

In the tourism sector, several researchers have recently attempted to identify segments of tourists concerned with environmental and social causes. The traditional segmentation criteria used, such as tourists of demographic and hotel stay characteristics according to Dolnicar, 2003), were found not to be useful in identifying segments of tourists concerned about sustainable development. As a result, Lasheley (2008) argues that hospitality and ethical behavior include the quality of relationships that companies establish with all their stakeholders. This behavior is a continuous process of learning that must be incorporated into businesses ongoing management.

Hospitality companies progressively expanded their management of leisure venues to include hospitality. The range of nature-related activities managed by hospitality companies extends beyond the minimal level of renting rooms and selling meals and drinks, as these companies seek to identify and supply facilities to meet the growing diversity of customer demand. Therefore, hospitality is an integral part of leisure venues, and it devalues them if companies attempt to strip out hospitality services.

Within the hospitality industry, all hospitality events occur in specific venues, while the diverse supply profile of the venues creates the conditions for a diversity of hospitality experiences. Several features constrain businesses’ dominant understanding of hospitality venues. The first of which is the insistence that hospitality is about providing accommodation, food, and drink. This locks these businesses into a minimalist
conception of hospitality based on subsistence and entails that customers are primarily motivated by tiredness, hunger, and thirst.

Some authors, such as Fairweather, Maslin & Simmons (2005), have used segmentation criteria based on tourists’ values, while Miller (2003) used fluctuations in tourists’ levels of environmental awareness and awareness of social responsibility. The cited author defined the role of marketing as a key factor in identifying customers’ unmet needs to market products or services while meeting the needs of consumers who are still unsatisfied. Social and environmental awareness also can be demonstrated by responsible behaviors, such as reducing energy and water consumption, using public transportation (Cleveland, Kalamas & Laroche, 2005), and buying local products and products made by companies that do not use child labor (Mohr & Webb, 2005).

2.2 STAKEHOLDERS

The idea that organizations have stakeholders or interested parties has been used by many researchers in different vectors of analysis in the organizational field. The term ‘stakeholder’ was defined, in 1963, by the Stanford Research Institute to be applied to organizational interest groups that need to be included in corporate strategies (Clarkson, 1995). Since then, academic interest in the influence of business strategies has grown, as has the number of definitions, with little consensus among academics in terms of systematically covering this topic (Friedman & Miles, 2006).

Donaldson & Preston (1995) believe it is possible to observe that the concepts of stakeholder, stakeholder model, stakeholder management, and stakeholder theory are explained and used by several authors with different meanings. Subsequently, these authors’ taxonomy was used to group numerous studies before 1995 into three types of widely accepted theories. These categories are descriptive theories, which focus on extending executive action to cover interested parties; normative theories, which explore the depth and quality of executive decisions in handling various interested parties and instrumental theories, which define the financial benefits obtained through actions covering interested parties (Freeman & McVea, 2001).
To the present day, the tendency to accept that these groups can affect or be affected by business actions persists. Accordingly, interested party theory is generally related to stakeholder theory but adds the differentiating factor of emphasizing the importance of relationships (Frooman, 1999). These groups represent support for, and interest or stake in, organizations, which cannot be fully realized without the proper sharing of common values (Freeman & Philips, 2002), including these groups’ influence on organizational image (Moyses Filho, Rodrigues & Moretti, 2011; Puncheva, 2008). The literature indicates that researchers’ main objectives have been to identify stakeholders and their influence organizational them according to power and legitimacy and mapping them by degrees of influence (Bourne & Walker, 2005) and involvement in management (Freeman, Harrisson & Wicks, 2007).

There is a consensus that the stakeholder approach seeks to integrate an economic view of resources with the economic market view, adding a sociological and political perspective to businesses’ analytical standards when making strategic decisions. A one-dimensional, market-focused vision has been replaced by a multi-focus vision with numerous requirements, which seeks to resolve inequalities. Its main contribution is to put forward the argument that market actions are interdependent through their interactions with different agents. Market movements are the result of interactions between interested parties and agents and vice versa. Within this perspective, the focus of organizations’ attention needs to be readjusted to include environmental parties, which have traditionally been neglected (Ackermann & Eden, 2011).

For the reasons set forth above – due to the important position, they hold in the system described – organizations are particularly affected by changes in environments, in terms of the origin, traffic, or destination of all kinds of activities. Companies are influenced by these forces in a kind of institutional matrix, which functions as input for creating organizational structures adapted to contexts and helps in the creation of more adjusted networks (Souza Leão, Gaião, Souza & Mello, 2013).

Freeman (2003) suggests considering two levels of action for target audiences: first, those directly involved in companies’ activities, including stakeholders, employees, suppliers, clients, neighbors, communities, and natural environments, and second, those represented by pressure groups and the media. Each group expects companies’ strategic
decisions to meet their objectives frequently differ from one group to another, placing administrators in the position of having to choose between different groups. This conceptualization leads to numerous conflicts with other organizational theories, such as differences in relationship objectives (Friedman & Miles, 2006), the ideological nature of the roles played by interested parties (small suppliers) with highly asymmetric positions concerning large companies (Blattberg, 2004) and objective-based organization (Silveira, Yoshinaga & Borba, 2005).

At the peak of interest in the stakeholder field, Donaldson and Preston (1995) counted more than 100 articles and 12 books published between 1984 and 1995. Wolfe & Putler (2002) listed 76 articles in six newspapers during the 1990s, highlighting the great interest within the North American academic community in transposing a model with intuitive features into a functional model.

In Brazil, several studies on the stakeholder approach have emphasized different lines of research. Szabo & Costa (2013) analyzed domestic and international publications on stakeholders linked to sustainability from 1998 onwards and found 113 with the following lines of approach: business ethics (5), ecological citizenship (1), governance (3), corporate social responsibility (43) and sustainability (61). Harrison, Freeman & Abreu (2015) surveyed the publications on stakeholders in Brazil, theses, and dissertations and found more than one hundred articles between 1995 and 2014, with 53 of these focusing directly on stakeholder theory.

The comprehensive scope of the publications analyzed reveals that the stakeholder approach can serve numerous goals and lines of research in organizational studies. In this sense, hospitality recently attracted the attention of numerous Brazilian researchers. This approach offers the possibility of understanding a relationship perspective on organizations with an assessment of shared responsibility that indicates new paths of competitive action (Oliveira & Wada, 2012). Consequently, the option arises of considering the co-creation of value in interactions between hosts and clients because the co-creation process ‘explores the perceptions, the knowledge, the skills and the creativity of all participants in a mutually beneficial manner’ (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010; Chathoth, Altinay, Harrington, Okumus & Chan, 2013).

Organizations must deal with not only the needs of their shareholders but also various other groups, including employees, suppliers, public interest groups (environmental organizations), customers, strategic partners, the media, public monitoring bodies, financial institutions, governmental bodies, competitors, intermediaries, and labor unions. Tourism is a labor-intensive service sector that produces and sells mostly intangible products. Tourism enterprises carry out their businesses based mostly on relationships. As in other service industries, stakeholders are of great importance to the tourism sector. Therefore, the first step in strategic stakeholder management is to determine an organization’s most important stakeholders, that is, who can influence and be influenced by the organization.

Currently, due to the complexity of business environments, most organizations’ efforts in this area are directed at establishing the trust of key stakeholders. Stakeholders have a great influence on organizations, and, therefore, significant interactions occur between organizations and their stakeholders.

From the tourism sector’s perspective as a leading economic sector in many countries, which contributes to their growth and survival, stakeholder management issues are quite important in achieving business success. Tourism enterprises carry out their businesses based mostly on relationships. The priorities of all organization’s stakeholders are determined by the organization’s business conditions, which vary from one organization to another. Also, these priorities can change within an organization from time to time. Therefore, in stakeholder theory, a single, constant stakeholder list for a given organization cannot be said to exist.

The stakeholder groups of any organization represent a wide and diverse range of interests, given that each stakeholder group has its own unique set of expectations, needs, and values. The most common way of classifying stakeholders is to consider groups of people with an identifiable relationship with the organization in question. The most common stakeholders to be considered are shown in Figure, below.
Several stakeholder initiatives have emerged on various levels, including multistakeholder partnerships, multilateral aid agencies, international businesses, and conservation philanthropy. Some of these initiatives involve partnerships between local businesses, communities, governments, and other actors from developing countries, together with international corporations, aid agencies, and financial institutions. According to Donaldson (1995), one of the central problems in the evolution of stakeholder theory has been confusion about its purposes, which are:

a) To describe how organizations operate
b) To help predict organizations’ behavior.

From a broader perspective, Donaldson (1995) contends that stakeholder theory differs from other business organization theories in fundamental ways. Different theories have different purposes and, therefore, different validity and different implications. The normative basis for stakeholder theory involves its connection with more fundamental philosophical concepts. In this way, the theory is used to interpret organizational functions, including the identification of moral or philosophical guidelines for organizations and their management.
The complexity of, and interdependency among, stakeholders has resulted in the creation of many local tourism marketing alliances (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). When products involve multiple suppliers and distributors – as is the case for typical tourism destinations – strategic consistency and coordination between these people become critical to the products’ success. Overall, tourism supply involves the provision of goods or services to facilitate business, pleasure, and leisure activities away from the home environment.

From a stakeholder perspective, destinations can be seen as open social systems of interdependent and multiple stakeholders. Networks, alliances, partnerships, collaborations, and clusters have been found to represent more effective strategies than those embedded within more conventional business models.

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Nine hotels were selected from regional tourist guides of the province of Santos and Ubatuba (Sao Paulo/Brazil). Four were rated four stars, and five hotels were rated three stars. Five of them had not obtained an eco-certification. Five hotels could be classified as a small business (less than 25 rooms) and four as a large business. As to the type of ownership, six hotels were independent and three belonged to a hotel chain. The sample is composed of customers who stayed at these hotels from September 10, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

A total of 665 questionnaires were distributed to the nine hotels’ managers and the employees of the front desk were asked to give the questionnaire to customers as they arrived. The purpose of the research is explained with a letter that encourages customers to participate by offering them the chance to win a one-night stay at the hotel. Our research team collected the questionnaires after customers completed them. A total of 545 usable questionnaires were received, representing an 82% response valid.

The questionnaire includes two sections, the first is a measurement that is adapted to use a Likert-type scale, and the second section spaces for customers’ comments. The first section measures the respondent’s hotel stay characteristics and customer satisfaction on the definition of satisfaction. We are composed of 22 items grouped into five
dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, and communication) and customers’ intention to return to the hotel and to recommend the hotel. The proposed scale will evaluate the quality of service provided in line with that developed and validated for the hotel industry. We are including also the eco-sustainable activities of the hotel. Given the objective of our study, we added items related to sustainable development practices in hotel services. As the literature reviewed shows certain hotel customers are influenced by such practices, and adding these items provides greater content validity to the measure. Customer satisfaction is thus measured with 22 items designed to evaluate the tangible and intangible elements of hotels’ three main services (Schall, 2003), that is, the front desk, food, and rooms.

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1 below, wherein 59% are men. About education, more than 69% have higher education, and more than 66% are over 41 years old.

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A principal component factor analysis with a varimax rotation identified three components of customers’ responsible behaviors in daily life: purchases, energy, and recycling. Similarly, three components were identified for customers’ hotel selection criteria: charm, sustainability-oriented practices, and convenience. As for hotel customer
satisfaction, the four components found were food, front desk and rooms, ecological concerns, and access.

Further descriptive analysis revealed that 48% of customers had stayed in the hotels surveyed more than 30 times, thus providing empirical support for Reichheld (1996) finding that customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty (Agapito, Pinto & Mendes, 2017). More than 35% of the sampled customers were on a business trip. More than 63% considered hotel selection criteria important, while only 37% of customers rated ‘very important’ the hotels’ adoption of environmental policies and obtainment of eco-certification.

4.1 TEST OF THE RESEARCH MODEL

It was used, in this case, the modeling of the structural equation to validate the model in this research, being thus to evaluate simultaneously the propositions and the theoretical properties of the research object. For this purpose, a partial least square (PLS) component-based technique was defined as robust in the analysis because it is much less exacting concerning the distribution of residuals than the covariance structure analysis techniques.

PLS regression is also more suitable for predictive applications than for theoretical tests (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Using the PLS method simultaneously evaluates the propositions presented and the properties to be measured to evaluate the internal consistency of the research constructs and to see their reliability. After concluding the connection process between the latent construct, Path-Modeling estimation is applied, accessing the option ‘Calculate’ followed by ‘PLS Algorithm’, according to the software program. The traditional analysis configuration is the standard in Smart PLS. After exemplifying how to create and estimate a PLS path model, we will now focus on assessing the quality of the results. This process is divided into two phases: the assessment measuring model and the structural model. Initially, the model assessment focuses on the measuring model.

As the example used involves a reflexive measuring scale, the composite reliability, variance extracted, indicator reliability, and discriminant validity will be
assessed. In SEM, the composite reliability is used to replace Cronbach’s Alpha (Bagozzi & Yi, 1990). To obtain the composite reliability, access: PLS =>Calculation Results =>Quality Criteria =>Overview. As the coefficients (0.9107 and 0.977=5 for Cp and Cd respectively), are much higher than the minimum of 0.7, it can be concluded that high levels of internal consistency exist in the latent variables. If the measuring model were formative, this indicator would not be reported.

To calculate the indicator reliability, the loadings need to be squared (available in PLS =>Calculation Results=>Outer Loadings). Therefore, an electronic worksheet should be used (to transport the data between the applications, select the values in Smart PLS, and paste them into the worksheet). In Table 2, the loadings and respective reliability coefficients are indicated. To give an example, items Cp (customer perception), Cd (Customer Data), C1 presented a factor loading of 0.9055. The squaring of this coefficient results in a reliability indicator of 0.8199.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer intentions</td>
<td>Cp1</td>
<td>0.9055</td>
<td>0.8199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Cp2</td>
<td>0.8781</td>
<td>0.7711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel selection criteria</td>
<td>Cp3</td>
<td>0.8907</td>
<td>0.7933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible behaviors</td>
<td>Cp4</td>
<td>0.80005</td>
<td>0.6408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Cd1</td>
<td>0.8873</td>
<td>0.7873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Cd2</td>
<td>0.7994</td>
<td>0.6390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Cd3</td>
<td>0.9699</td>
<td>0.9407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Cd4</td>
<td>0.9113</td>
<td>0.8305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9055</td>
<td>0.8199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research data

The analysis shows that all indicators present individual reliability coefficients superior to the minimum acceptable level of 0.4 for exploratory studies and close to 0.8 for confirmatory studies (Hulland, 1999). Using the PLS method simultaneously evaluates the propositions presented and the properties to be measured to evaluate the internal consistency of the research constructs and to see their reliability. The observable variables that measure a construct must be one-dimensional to be considered as positive values. This is a criterion that is satisfied only by the retention of variables whose factorial loads (λ), calculated by the PLS technique are greater than 0.5. The variable for the
"convenience" variable is associated with the hotel selection criteria ($\lambda = 0.49$). Reliability can be verified by examining the value of the rho coefficient ($\rho$), defined as the ratio between the square sum of the loads and the sum of the errors due to the construction variation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). A reliability coefficient greater than 0.7 indicates that the variance of a given construct accounts for at least 70% of the variance of its corresponding measure.

Another property to be verified is discriminant validity, which indicates to what extent each research construct is both unique and different from the others, using as the criterion the correlation between each pair of constructs. The variance shared between constructs (the squared correlation) needs to be less than the average variance extracted (AVE) from the measures by the construct to which they are associated. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that this is the case for all construct pairs.

Table 3: Discriminant analysis of research constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Customer intentions</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hotel selection criteria</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Responsible behaviors</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Age</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gender</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Education</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Purpose</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Time</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Diagonal – (AVE) ($\sum \lambda_i / n$) ; sub-diagonals: correlation = (shared variance).
Source: Resource data

4.2 EFFECTS OF HOTEL SIZE AND TYPE OF OWNERSHIP

The research model posited that hotel size and type of ownership would have an impact on customer satisfaction and intentions, including satisfaction with sustainable development-related components of hotels’ service offerings.

This impact was ascertained by comparing sub-group means (small-and-medium vs. large hotels and independent vs. chain-affiliated hotels), as shown in Table 4. Note that this was done not only for customer satisfaction and intention variables but also for customers’ hotel selection criteria and hotel stay characteristics.
Concerning hotel size, the first notable result is that customers in small and medium hotels are overall more satisfied than those staying in large hotels. This is the case for hotels’ food service, 3R practices (reduce, reuse, and recycle), and front-desk and room services (Ritchie & Lashley, 2012). Concerning hotel selection criteria, customers in small and medium hotels give more importance to privacy and sustainable development orientation criteria, while customers in large hotels give more importance to convenience criteria. As for the characteristics of the stay, business travelers tend to stay at large hotels, as expected.

In terms of the type of ownership, the first result of note is that customers in independent hotels overall show more satisfaction than do those in chain-affiliated hotels. This is particularly the case for hotels’ food service, 3R practices, front-desk and room services, and ecological concerns. Concerning hotel selection criteria, customers in independent hotels attribute greater importance to privacy and sustainable development orientation criteria, while customers in chain-affiliated hotels place more value on convenience criteria. Moreover, business travelers tend to stay at chain-affiliated hotels, again as expected. Finally, no significant differences between sub-groups were observed for customers’ intentions, whether in terms of hotel size or type of ownership.

Table 4 - Differences between customers by hotel size and ownership type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intentions</th>
<th>Small/medium mean (218)</th>
<th>Large Mean (255)</th>
<th>T □</th>
<th>independent mean</th>
<th>Chain and Affiliated</th>
<th>T □</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Return</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>(1.8)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food services</td>
<td>6.7 (4.4) ***</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>(3.2) **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3R practices</td>
<td>6.6 (2.1) *</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>(2.2) *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front desk room</td>
<td>6.7 (2.1) *</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>(2.1) *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological concern</td>
<td>5.7 (1.2) *</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>(2.1) *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>6.4 (0.06)</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>(.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hotel selection criteria

| Charm                 | 6.4                      | 6.4              | (1.2) | 6.4              | 6.4                  | (1.0) |
| Privacy               | 5.7 (10.1) ***           | 4.8              |      | 5.7              | 4.7                  | (9.6) *** |
| SD orientation        | 5.3 (2.5) *              | 5.4              |      | 5.4              | 5.3                  | (2.7) ** |
| Convenience           | 4.3 ***                  | 4.9 ***          | 3.4, *** | 4.4          | 4.9                  | 2.7 ** |

Stay

| Purpose               | 0.35                     | 0.77             | 11.5*** | 0.38            | 0.74                 | 8.4 *** |
| Time                  | 1.77                     | 2.1              | 1.9**   | 1.77            | 2.1                  | 1.4 |

Source: Research data
5 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this research was to identify the antecedents of customer satisfaction in different types of hotels. The results discussed above distinguish our study from previous research and complement their results in several ways.

First, this study confirmed that hotel customers’ responsible behavior in daily life influences their hotel selection criteria, including criteria related to sustainable development. If any scenario can be rejected, it is that environmentally friendly practices require immobility. These results support the argument François-Lecompte & Prim-Allaz (2009) that tourists who behave responsibly when traveling.

The present study identifies the components of customers’ hotel selection criteria that significantly influence their satisfaction with hotel services. According to Yarimoglu (2014) the first component is composed of elements such as the quietness and comfort of rooms and the eagerness of employees, called charm, and the second component collects together hotels’ complementary services such as pools or restaurants, which encourage customers to stay at the hotel is privacy. Importantly for this study’s unique contribution to the literature, the third component of customers’ hotel selection criteria, the sustainable development orientation’ adopted by hotels, is indeed shown to influence customer satisfaction quite significantly, thus suggesting that this orientation be included in hotels’ business strategies.

The last factor, ‘convenience’ includes items such as hotel location, which are extremely important for business travelers and tourists’ Internet access (Watkins, 2003). Finally, the present research results confirm the significant influence of customers’ satisfaction on their intentions to return to a hotel and recommend it to relatives, friends, and work colleagues, as previously advanced by such authors as Anderson, Fornell & Lehmann (1994) and Reichheld (1996).

These results thus provide an argument for the relevance of consumer and tourism research that emphasizes sustainable development. This study, however, has two limitations related to the nature of the sample and the measurement instrument. Also, the sample consists of hotel customers whose stay occurred during the summer season only. These aspects limit the generalizability of the results to other types of accommodation.
and to other times of the year. However, future research is already being planned to address these issues.
REFERENCES


