Revista **Turismo** & Desenvolvimento | n.º **32** | 2019 | [**265** - 280]
e-ISSN 2182-1453

Host-Guest Interaction: Analysing Perceived Service Quality, Satisfaction, **Residents support** and **Tourists behaviour**

VAHID GHASEMI * [vahid.ghasemi@universidadeeuropeia.pt]

Abstract | Understanding the quality of tourist experiences in the context of host-guest interaction is essential for tourism development, as it helps to better position the brand of destinations by engaging both visitors and residents. This could be achieved by measuring their satisfaction and perceived service quality. In this context, the current study aimed to analyse how tourists perceive residents' engagement and attitudes toward tourism in their destination and how this affects tourists' satisfaction, their intention to recommend the destination to others and their likelihood to act as brand ambassadors of the destination (both online and offline). To this end, a survey was carried out with 609 tourists in two destinations in Portugal (Lisbon) and Italy (Olbia, Sardinia). The collected data was subjected to Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Findings support the research hypotheses and contribute to a better understanding of tourists' perceptions of service quality, resident support and their brand ambassadorship behaviour in two cross cultural European destinations. Several implications are discussed from the research findings and directions for future research are presented.

Keywords | Host-guest interaction, Tourist engagement, Perceived service quality, Brand ambassadorship, Italy, Portugal

* **Assistant professo**r, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Universidade Europeia, Portugal

1. Introduction

There is wide agreement on the idea that residents' attitudes and behaviours are able to significantly affect the quality of host-guest interaction, thus influencing the quality of tourists' experiences (e.g. Gursoy, Jurowski & Uysal, 2002; Smith, 1989). Service quality has been widely investigated in marketing and tourism-related literature during the 1990s and early 2000s (Gallarza et al., 2011). These studies show that assuring service quality is a way to increase customer satisfaction and to shape positive behavioural intentions (Fornell, 1996).

Based on existing literature (Baker et al., 2002), perceived service quality is highly affected by the quality of the interactions occurring between employees and customers during the experience of tourism product (Scheyvens, 1999; Simmons, 1994) and tend to act as cultural brokers (Smith, 2001) and gatekeeper that allow visitors to be in touch with the local identity and authenticity of the visited destination. In others words, borrowing from studies in the field of internal marketing (e.g Punjaisri, & Wilson 2007; Bregoli, 2013; Del Chiappa and Bregoli, 2012) residents could be considered as being "front-line employees", who are able to significantly shape tourists' perceived quality and their behavioural intentions, as well as offline and online word-of-mouth.

Despite these theoretical perspectives, there is still lack of academic research aimed to empirically test the aforementioned arguments. This study was therefore carried out to analyse how tourists perceive residents' engagement and attitudes toward tourism in their destination and how this is affecting tourists satisfaction, their intention to recommend the destination to others and their likelihood to act as brand ambassadors of the destination (both online and offline). To achieve this aim, a conceptual model is proposed and a SEM is run on data collected through a cross-cultural study with visitors in two international tourism destinations: Lisbon (Portugal) and Olbia (Sardinia, Italy). Moreover, a multigroup analysis is conducted to investigate whether the different types of tourism destination could moderate the model (Jahandideh, Golmohammadi, Meng, O'Gorman, & Taheri, 2014).

2. Literature review

2.1. Host-guest interaction, community participation and tourist engagement

Researchers concur that studying residents' perceptions of and attitudes towards tourism is relevant to the planning of a tourism development that is sensitive to the views, attitudes, needs and desires of residents and to obtaining a high level of community participation (Mitchell & Reid, 2001) and integration (Del Chiappa & Atzeni, 2015). Referring to the definition provided by the United Nations, Joppe (1996) defines community development as a "process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation" (Moser, 1989, p. 81).

Based upon this definition, Simmons (1994) introduces two main reasons why community participation is crucial for any tourism development project. "First, the impacts of tourism are felt most keenly at the local destination area and, second, community residents are being recognized as an essential ingredient in the 'hospitality atmosphere' of a destination" (Simmons, 1994, p.98). For the successful implementation of community participation plans, considerable public education is often required, especially if residents are the object/subject of tourism development.

Having analysed many case studies in the search for the meaning of community participation, Simmons (1994) argues that three fundamental objectives should be achieved through favouring

community (public) participation, namely:

> Obtaining a high degree of resident involvement (both in term of the number of individuals and the intensity of their involvement);
>
> Gaining fairness and equity in the participation—equity being defined as the "the extent to which all potential opinions are heard" (Sewell & Phillips, 1979. p. 354);
>
> Reaching efficiency in stimulating community participation—efficiency being defined as the amount of time, personnel and other agency resources required to plan and implement any actions/plans aimed at favouring participation programmes (Simmons, 1994).

There is wide agreement on the idea that residents' attitudes and behaviour are able to significantly affect the quality of host-guest interaction, thus influencing the quality of tourists' experiences (e.g. Gursoy, Jurowski & Uysal, 2002; Smith, 1989; Taheri, Gannon, Cordina, Lochrie, 2018). Hence, it can intuitively be argued that passive behaviour of residents (apathy) in its different dimensions and as perceived by visitors, is expected to negatively influence the extent to which guests think that residents are supporting the tourism phenomenon in their place and the extent to which they perceive the overall service quality related to their stay, which in turn negatively influences tourists' willingness to recommend the destination to others and/or to positively talk about it (i.e. brand ambassadorship behaviour), both offline and online (Figure 1).

As discussed, residents are considered frontline employees in this research and it is assumed that their attitudes and behaviours affect the relationship (which lead to an interaction) with visitors and influence their perceived service quality. Referring to Taheri, Jafari & O'Gorman (2014) the relationship between the consumer and service provider is built upon the engagement of both tourists and residents in a constant process of exchange. Therefore, the attempts of the service provider (residents) to deliver the experience to the consumer (tourists) could be considered an important encounter in destinations (Curran, Taheri, MacIntosh, & O'Gorman, 2016; Hollebeek, 2010; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). According to existing studies, the level of engagement can differ across different tourism destinations based on destination based-characteristics (e.g., the stage of the life cycle, the host-guest ratio, etc.), or intrinsic characteristics of residents (age, gender, environmental beliefs, etc.) and/or visitors- (e.g., motivation to travel, personality, etc.) (e.g. Spencer, 2010; Chathoth, Ungson, Altinay, Chan, Harrington, & Okumus, 2014). Three drivers of engagement are also discussed and researched in tourism literature: prior knowledge, multiple motivations and cultural capital (Taheri, Jafari & O'Gorman, 2014).

2.2. Service Quality, residents' support and satisfaction

Service quality has been widely investigated in marketing and tourism-related literature during the 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. Gallarza et al., 2011). Assuring service quality is a way to increase customer satisfaction (Fornell, 1996) and loyalty, to increase/defend the market share and a way to economic sustainability (Munro-Faure & Munro-Faure, 1992). Based on previous research (e.g. Baker et al., 2002; Bitner, 1990; Dabholkar et al., 1996; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996), perceived service quality is hugely affected by the quality of the interactions between employees and customers during the experience consumption. Similarly, it could be argued that host-guest interactions exert a relevant role in influencing the perceived service quality that tourists distinguish in all the interactions (i.e. service encounters) that they have with residents while staying at the destination. Assuring a high level of perceived service quality requires

not only that visitors have positive feeling of security and comfort created by the physical structure, design, décor and location of the facilities but also that the host-guest interactions are fostered by warm, friendly, courteous, open and proactive attitudes and behaviours toward visitors. In turn this requires that the local community as a whole does not appear to be apathetic towards the tourism phenomenon (Burgess, 1982).

Residents' support to tourism has been investigated in several theories such as social exchange theory (Ap, 1992) and identity theory (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Based on the social exchange theory of Ap (1992), residents would support tourism development (e.g. take part in tourism planning, express a positive attitude toward the idea of realizing certain tourism projects, warmly welcome guests, etc.). When tourism activity brings them more benefits than related costs. However, a real support to tourism can exist only when residents are not apathetic towards the tourism phenomenon in their community. It appears to be evident that visitors can perceive residents as being supportive of tourism activity only when the local community expresses a non-apathetic attitude and behaviour towards guests and, broadly, towards the tourism phenomenon (e.g. proactively providing information to visitors, trying to collect information about tourism in their place, telling visitors about their traditions and identity, etc.) (Del Chiappa, Atzeni & Ghasemi, 2018).

Satisfaction has been acknowledged as one of key features in evaluating competitiveness and success of a firm. Customer satisfaction is the main indicator of whether customer needs are fulfilled or not (Chen, Yang, Li, & Liu, 2015). The "disconfirmation of expectations theory developed by Oliver (1980)" is the main applied theory for study of satisfaction. Based on this theory, satisfaction is "defined a result of the disconfirmation of performance from expectation" (Tutuncu, 2017, p. 30). Hence, the following hypotheses are put forth:

H1: Tourist perception of residents support influences service quality.

H2: Perceived service quality influences satisfaction.

H3: Tourist perception of resident support influences satisfaction.

2.3. Brand ambassadorship and intention to recommend to others

An ambassador not only refers to an official envoy but also to an unofficial representative who is promoting a place/city/country with his/her goodwill behaviour. Brand ambassadorship behaviour can occur both offline (traditional word-of-mouth, WOM) and online (electronic word-of-mouth, eWOM). In the specific context of resident/community-based studies, residents have been recently considered brand ambassadors of their destination. According to this view, they need to be effectively involved in destination branding (Kavaratzis, 2012; Taecharungroj, 2016; Vollero, Conte, Bottoni, & Siano, 2018). Considering the proposed conceptual model and the aforementioned argument, the following hypotheses are introduced:

H4: Satisfaction influences behavioural ambassadorship of tourists.

H5: Behavioural ambassadorship influences intention to recommend.

H6: Tourist perception of residents support influences behavioural ambassadorship of tourists.

H7: Brand ambassadorship behaviour is related to offline word of mouth.

H8: Brand ambassadorship behaviour is related to online word of mouth.

Figure 1 summarises the conceptual model encompassing the variables and their hypothesised relationships

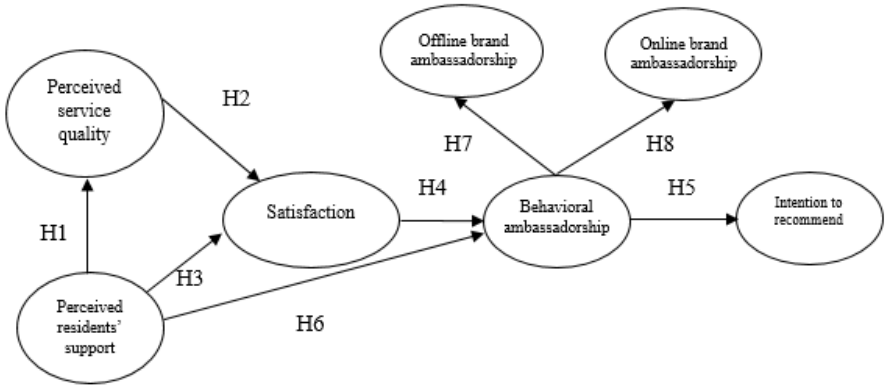

Figure 1 | Conceptual model

3. Methodology

For the purposes of this study, a survey instrument has been developed based on existing literature on the concept of perceived service quality and tourists' perceptions of residents' support to tourism. In this context, scales and items traditionally used to measure satisfaction, online and offline brand ambassadorship behaviour and intention to recommend to others (i.e. Arnett, German and Hunt, 2003; Morhart, Herzog and Tomczak, 2009; Chen, Dwyer and Firth, 2014) were adapted to suit the specific research topic. The instrument included four sections. In the first section, respondents were asked to assess their level of agreement with items measuring their perception of residents' level of support to(wards) tourism development. In the second section respondents were asked to assess the perceived service quality of their interaction with residents (Cronin et al., 2000). In the third section respondents were asked their level of agreement on items expressing their intention to recommend the destination to others and to exchange positive comments about it (brand ambassadorship behaviour), both offline and online and also their satisfaction. These three sections were operationalised through a 7-point Likert scale to obtain answers (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither disagree nor agree, and 7 = strongly agree). The fourth section invited respondents to provide their general socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, education, length of stay, etc.).

Data was collected face-to-face through self-administered questionnaires from tourists aged 18 or above visiting two different destinations: Lisbon (Portugal) and Olbia (Sardinia, Italy). Respondents were approached onsite while at the destination. The author personally engaged in the data collection process. Overall, 609 completed questionnaires (a convenience sample) were obtained, 309 from Lisbon and 300 from Olbia. For the purposes of the statistical analysis, a three-stepwise model, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), was used to test the conceptual model. The data analysis was developed in two phases. In the first phase, an EFA followed by a CFA was run by using SPSS (version 23) and AMOS (version 15). EFA is used as a preliminary technique to find the underlying dimensions or constructs in the data. A subsequent CFA allows for evaluation of the resulting scales. This analysis specifies the relationships between observed and latent variables, and suggests that all the constructs can be freely interrelated (Joreskog, 1993). This identified the underlying dimension contained in the data related to perceived residents' support. The same approach was adopted for the remaining data describing the other constructs included in the conceptual model (namely, service quality, sa-

tisfaction, intention to recommend to others and brand ambassadorship behaviour). In the second phase, a structural model was estimated to evaluate the dimensions. In the third phase, SEM was employed to test the hypotheses and the model fit. Moreover, a multigroup analysis was also run to investigate whether differences could exist in the way the conceptual model and related paths work based on the specific tourism destinations.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Sociodemographic and Tripographic Profile of the Sample

Table 1 shows the general socio-demographic characteristics and tripographic profile of respondents. Most respondents were reported to be females (62.1 %), in the 25–34 age group (34.8 %), employees (44.8 %) or students (26.3 %), mostly first-time visitors (56 %), travelling with friends (43.3 %) and university degree (57.6 %). Respondents were mostly leisure travellers (92.9 %) with an average length of stay between 3–7 days (54 %). Visitors were mostly from France (22.7 %), Spain (7.6 %) and Britain (7.1 %).

Table 1 | Socio-Demographic Characteristic of Respondents (descriptive statistics in percentage, Tourists: n = 609)

Gender	**Portugal (n = 309)**	**Italy (300)**	**Whole data (609)**	**Education**	**Portugal (n = 309)**	**Italy (n = 300)**	**Whole data (609)**
Male	34.3	41.7	37.9	None	0.3	1.3	0.8
Female	65.7	58.3	62.1	Primary school	0.3	0.7	0.5
Age	**Portugal (n = 309)**	**Italy (300)**	**Whole data (947)**	High school	8.1	11	9.5
18–24	48.9	18.3	33.8	Secondary school	4.5	18.7	11.5
25–34	38.5	31.0	34.8	University degree	57.0	58.3	57.6
35–44	8.1	30.0	18.9	Master/ PhD	29.8	10.0	20
45–54	2.9	12.3	7.6	**First trip?**	**Portugal (n = 309)**	**Italy (300)**	**Whole data (609)**
55–65	1.3	6.3	3.8	Yes	67.6	44.0	56
> 65	0.3	2.0	1.1	No	32.4	56.0	44
Occupation	**Portugal (n = 309)**	**Italy (300)**	**Whole data (609)**	**Accompanying person/s**	**Portugal (n = 309)**	**Italy (300)**	**Whole data (609)**
Employee	42.4	47.3	44.8	Alone	8.1	1.0	4.6
Self-employed	6.1	22.3	14.1	Girlfriend/boyfriend	32.0	24.3	28.2
Retired	0.6	2.3	1.5	Family	16.2	31.7	23.8
Occasional worker	1.6	8	4.8	Friends	43.7	43.0	43.3
Unemployed	3.9	0.3	2.1	**Reason for stay**	**Portugal (n = 309)**	**Italy (300)**	**Whole data (609)**
Student	43.4	8.7	26.3				
Other	1.9	11.0	6.4				
Length of stay	**Portugal (n = 309)**	**Italy (300)**	**Whole data (609)**	Leisure	89.6	96.3	92.9
Less than 3 days	16.2	8.3	12.3	Business	4.9	1.0	3
Between 3–7 days	59.5	48.3	54	Other	5.5	2.7	4.1
More than three days	24.3	43.3	33.7	**Nationalities**	French	Spanish	British
					22.7	7.6	7.1

4.2. Dimensions of Service quality, Residents' perceived support, Satisfaction brand ambassadorship behaviour and Intention to recommend to others

For the purposes of this study, an exploratory factor analysis (extraction method: generalized least squares) with Varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization was used to reveal the underlying factors in the data. The EFA was run separately for each factor. One factor was identified describing the perceived service quality (63.004 % of total variance). KMO index (Kaiser-Myer-Olkin = 0.927(.000)) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (chi-square = 4076.294; p-value <0.000) confirm that the results are appropriate to explain the data (Parinet, Lhote, & Legube, 2004). Cronbach's alpha was then calculated to test the reliability of the extracted factors; all values are 0.7 or higher (0.936), which suggests that the factors are reliable (Table 2). On the perceived resident support scale one factor was identified (59.190 % of total variance). Once again, KMO index (Kaiser-Myer-Olkin = 0.884 (.000)) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (chi-square = 2588.291; p-value <0.000) confirm that the results are appropriate to explain the data. Cronbach's alpha was 0.905. One factor was identified describing satisfaction (77.846 % of total variance). The KMO index (Kaiser-Myer-Olkin = 0.728(.000)) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity (chi-square = 1296.306; p-value <0.000) confirm that the results are appropriate to explain the data. Cronbach's alpha was 0.911. Two factors were identified describing the brand ambassadorship behaviour (75.796 % of total variance; factor 1: 40.124; factor 2: 35.672). The KMO index (Kaiser-Myer-Olkin = 0.733(.000)) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity (chi-square = 2415.964; p-value <0.000) confirm that the results are appropriate to explain the data. Cronbach's alpha was 0.878 for offline brand ambassadorship behaviour factor and 0.922 for online brand ambassadorship behaviour. Finally, one factor was identified describing the intention to recommend to others (77.681 % of total variance). The KMO index (Kaiser-Myer-Olkin = 0.741 (p-value <0.000) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity (chi-square = 1272.729; p-value <0.000) confirm that the results are appropriate to explain the data. Cronbach's alpha was 0.910 (see Table 2).

Table 2 | Exploratory Factor Analysis (Tourists: n = 609)

Constructs and Indicators	Eigen values	Mean	Std. Deviation	Total variance explained (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Service quality				63.004	0.936
Residents are always willing to help tourists.	.780	5.1379	1.37913		
The behaviour of residents should instil confidence in tourists	.678	5.4122	1.21636		
Generally, the residents provide information on the area reliably, consistently, and dependably.	.802	5.2660	1.25191		
Generally, the residents are competent and well informed about the tourist offerings of the area.	.809	5.1281	1.36088		
Generally, the residents enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	.860	5.1938	1.31235		
Generally, the residents are approachable and easy to contact.	.855	5.3038	1.35409		
Generally, the residents are courteous, polite, and respectful.	.821	5.4877	1.28129		
Generally, the residents are trustworthy, believable, and honest.	.758	5.5747	1.23999		
Generally, the residents make the effort to understand my needs.	.764	5.5025	1.33170		
traction Method: Generalized Least Squares—Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization - a Rotation Converged in 4 Iterations					
Factor 2: Residents' perceived support				59.190	0.904
I perceive the overall impact of tourism development in this community positively.	.701	5.1133	1.46066		
I think residents would support tourism development in their community.	.835	5.1921	1.34661		
I feel further tourism development would positively affect this community's quality of life.	.820	5.2972	1.37123		
Tourism is the most important industry for this community.	.775	5.1790	1.46533		
Tourism helps this community grow in the right direction.	.802	5.3186	1.37303		
Tourism continues to play an important economic role in this community.	.733	5.6929	1.19730		
I think residents proud that tourists are coming in their community	.709	5.4089	1.31614		
traction Method: Generalized Least Squares—Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization - a Rotation Converged in 4 Iterations					
Factor 3: Satisfaction				77.846	0.910
I'm satisfied with my holidays in this tourist area.	.830	6.1839	1.06020		
I'm glad I chose this area as a destination for my holidays.	.962	6.3153	1.01426		
This holiday has met my expectations.	.850	6.2233	1.06964		
traction Method: Generalized Least Squares—Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization - a Rotation Converged in 4 Iterations					
Factor 4: Offline brand ambassadorship behaviour				40.124	0.875
I 'talk up' this destination as a tourism destination to people I know.	.780	5.9639	1.30863		
I bring up this destination as a tourism destination in a positive way in conversations I have with friends and acquaintances.	.934	6.0115	1.16056		
In social situations, I speak favourably about this destination as a tourism destination.	.809	5.9097	1.25920		
Factor 5: Online brand ambassadorship behaviour				35.672	0.920
I frequently participate in knowledge sharing activities about Portugal as a tourism destination in travel or tourism online forums e.g. TripAdvisor.com.	.851	2.7011	1.77594		
I usually involve myself in discussions of various topics about Portugal as a tourism destination in travel or tourism online forums e.g. TripAdvisor.com.	.958	2.4401	1.62123		
When participating in travel or tourism online forums e.g. TripAdvisor.com, I usually actively share my knowledge about Portugal as a tourism destination with others.	.871	2.4433	1.61219		
traction Method: Generalized Least Squares—Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization - a Rotation Converged in 3 Iterations					
Factor 6: Intention to recommend to others				77.681	0.910
I will say positive things about this destination to other people.	.847	6.3038	1.01210		
I will recommend this destination to someone who seeks my advice.	.944	6.2381	1.07336		
I will encourage friends and relatives to visit this destination.	.850	6.1215	1.17331		
traction Method: Generalized Least Squares—Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization - a Rotation Converged in 4 Iterations					

4.3. Model test

Following the two-step approach proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using the generalized least squares method in order to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs of the original model (Table 3 and Table 4). A preliminary CFA was triggered and model fit was assessed through fit indices as suggested by Hair et al. (2009). As the results of the main adjustment measures did not prove satisfactory compared to the reference values, some changes in the model were introduced by observing the modification indices data of the covariance matrix of the standardized residuals. As a result of this iterative process of adjustment, 26 indicators were retained for inclusion in the final model. After this process, the adjustment results improved significantly, yielding the values in Table 3 and the adjustment values expressed in Table 4.

Table 3 | Exploratory Factor Analysis (Tourists: n = 609)

Constructs and Indicators			St. Regression	S.E	C.R.	P
I will say positive things about this destination to other people.	<---	Intention to recommend	0.896			
I 'talk up' this destination as a tourism destination to people I know.	<---	Off BA	0.815			
I bring up this destination as a tourism destination in a positive way in conversations I have with friends and acquaintances.	<---	Off BA	0.908	0.043	23.153	***
In social situations, I speak favourably about this destination as a tourism destination.	<---	Off BA	0.812	0.048	19.993	***
I frequently participate in knowledge sharing activities about Portugal as a tourism destination in travel or tourism online forums e.g. TripAdvisor.com.	<---	Online BA	0.843	0.041	26.071	***
I usually involve myself in discussions of various topics about Portugal as a tourism destination in travel or tourism online forums e.g. TripAdvisor.com.	<---	Online BA	0.952	0.036	30.402	***
When participating in travel or tourism online forums e.g. TripAdvisor.com, I usually actively share my knowledge about Portugal as a tourism destination with others.	<---	Online BA	0.87			
Generally, the residents make the effort to understand my needs.	<---	Service quality	0.78			
Generally, the residents are trustworthy, believable, and honest.	<---	Service quality	0.804	0.044	20.525	***
Generally, the residents are courteous, polite, and respectful.	<---	Service quality	0.841	0.053	20.267	***
Generally, the residents are approachable and easy to contact	<---	Service quality	0.88	0.058	20.549	***
Generally, the residents enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	<---	Service quality	0.873	0.057	20.179	***
Generally, the residents are competent and well informed about the tourist offer of the area.	<---	Service quality	0.815	0.059	19.074	***
Residents are always willing to help tourists.	<---	Service quality	0.742	0.06	17.649	***
Tourism helps this community grow in the right direction.	<---	Perceived Resident support	0.829			
Tourism is the most important industry for this community.	<---	Perceived Resident support	0.829	0.045	23.62	***
I feel further tourism development would positively affect this community's quality of life.	<---	Perceived Resident support	0.83	0.047	21.228	***
I think residents would support tourism development in their community.	<---	Perceived Resident support	0.766	0.046	18.894	***
I will say positive things about this destination to other people.	<---	Satisfaction	0.856			
I will recommend this destination to someone who seeks my advice.	<---	Satisfaction	0.917	0.039	27.826	***
I will encourage friends and relatives to visit this destination.	<---	Satisfaction	0.902	0.048	23.506	***
I will recommend this destination to someone who seeks my advice.	<---	Intention to recommend	0.92	0.037	29.245	***
I will encourage friends and relatives to visit this destination.	<---	Intention to recommend	0.848	0.045	24.032	***
Tourism continues to play an important economic role in this community.	<---	Perceived Resident support	0.772	0.038	21.102	***
I think residents proud that tourists are coming in their community	<---	Perceived Resident support	0.805	0.048	19.798	***
I perceive the overall impact of tourism development in this community positively.	<---	Perceived Resident support	0.605	0.053	14.255	***

In terms of validity and reliability, the final model results show levels that can be considered good or very good: composite reliability (CR) far exceeds the minimum recommended limits ($\alpha \geq 0.70$ and $\rho \geq 0.70$). With regard to the average variance extracted (AVE), the value obtained also clearly exceeds the reference value (≥ 0.50) set in the literature (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2009) (Table 3 and Table 4).

An initial step for evaluating the convergent validity of the measurement model is based on the observation of significant coefficient estimates (Hair et al., 2009). As can be observed, the values of standardized coefficients are between 0.605 and 0.952. The convergent validity of the items regarding their constructs is shown in the final model (Table 4). All indicators show a strong relationship with the construct to which they are attached (t-value >1.96; p <0.05). In addition to this analysis, the verification of convergent validity was performed by examining the adjustment measures' estimates by CFA. As can be seen (Table 4) the results of an adjustment of dimensional structure are very suitable. The chi-square ($\chi 2$), and the degrees of

freedom for the dimensional model found indicate that the fit is good with a $\chi 2$ value that does not reject the null hypothesis, i.e. the model is supported by the data ($\chi 2$ =676.152, p = 0.000) and the values of the other indexes are all within the recommended values (GFI = 0.914; CFI = 0.750; TLI = 0.710; RMSEA = 0.048). Given the results, it is considered that there is evidence of the reliability and validity of the constructs that compose the model. To complete this phase of the construct's validity, the analysis of the discriminant validity of the measurement model followed to assess to what extent a measure of one construct is not correlated with measurements of other constructs. This allows for those constructs which are extremely correlated with each other (more than 0.95) not to be considered. Further, the evaluation of all variables allows the observation of the discriminant validity of the constructs involved in this research. Through observation of the data in Table 4, it can be proceed to a comparative analysis of inter-construct correlation coefficients and the square root of the AVE, whose values are displayed in the main diagonal. To assess the discriminant validity, correlations between all latent variables were analysed.

Table 4 | Confirmatory factor Analysis (Reliability and Validity)

Notes: *** p-value < 0.01

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV		Perceived Resident Support	Off BA	Service quality	Satisfaction	Online BA
Perceived Resident Support	0.915	0.609	0.270	0.179	0.780					
Off BA	0.883	0.716	0.438	0.275	0.520	0.846				
Service quality	0.935	0.673	0.415	0.260	0.512	0.489	0.821			
Satisfaction	0.921	0.796	0.767	0.359	0.434	0.651	0.644	0.892		
Online BA	0.919	0.791	0.011	0.003	0.021	-0.039	0.000	-0.034	0.890	
Intention to recommend	0.918	0.789	0.767	0.354	0.414	0.662	0.620	0.876	-0.103	0.889
GOF Indexes		**X^2**	**df**	**P**	**X^2/df**	**GFI**		**CFI**	**TLI**	**RMSEA**
Whole sample (n=609)		676.152	280	0	2.415	0.914		0.75	0.71	0.048

Notes: *** p-value < 0.01

According to Hair et al. (2009), the correlation between the variables must be less than 0.95. Based on this criterion, it can be observed that all variables comply with the suggested limit. On the other hand, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the AVE can be used to assess discriminant validity. Thus, the elements of the main diagonal (square root of the AVE) for each construct must show values higher than the correlation coefficients between different constructs (elements of corresponding rows and columns that were not on the main diagonal) (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995). The total latent variables satisfy this condition, confirming the existence of discriminant validity and suggesting that the theoretical model fits the data well and as such, the structural model was performed.

In the last stepwise analysis, structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied and the relationships between the constructs of the model were analysed using generalized least squares. The results of the model's overall fit indices ($\chi 2$ = 625.951, df = 258, $\chi 2$ /df = 2.426, p = 0.000, GFI = 0.924, CFI = 0.969, TLI = 0.964, RMSEA = 0.048) resulted in being coherent with what is suggested by the existing literature (Hair et al., 2009), confirming the goodness of fit of the model. These results suggest that the proposed model fits well with the empirical data. It should be also taken into consideration that in SEM, there is several Fitness Indexes that reflect how fit is the model to the data at hand. Specifically, there

are three model fit categories namely Absolute Fit, Incremental Fit, and Parsimonious Fit. In the current study, Absolute model fit considered by three main indices Chi-Square, RMSEA and GFI. Their values are supported by literature (e.g. Browne and Cudeck, 1993; and Joreskog and Sorbom, 1984; Rigdon, 1996; Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin & Summers, 1977). The estimated model and the values of standardized structural coefficients are shown in Figure 2 and Table 5. Based on the statistical analysis, all hypotheses were supported by the data.

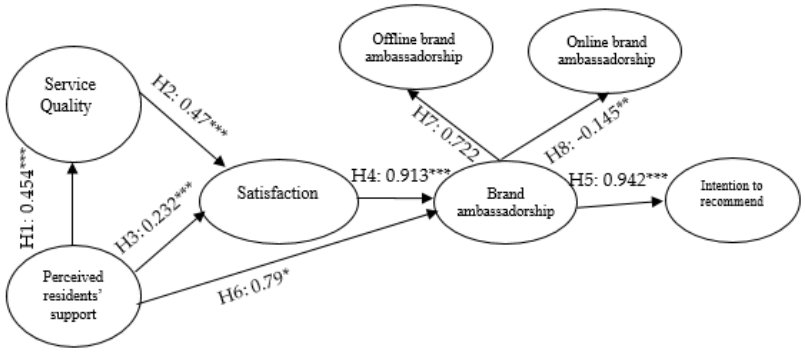

Figure 2 |Hypotheses test

Notes: *** p-value <0.01; ** p-value <0.05;

Table 5 | Structural Equation Modeling (Testing hypothesis) (n=609)

Hypotheses				Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
H1	Service quality	<---	Resident perceived support	0.454	0.039	10.167	***
H2	Satisfaction	<---	Service quality	0.47	0.039	10.038	***
H3	Satisfaction	<---	Resident perceived support	0.232	0.031	5.373	***
H4	Brand Ambassadorship	<---	Satisfaction	0.913	0.058	14.195	***
H6	Brand Ambassadorship	<---	Resident perceived support	0.079	0.02	2.547	0.011**
H7	Offline BA	<---	Brand Ambassadorship	0.722			
H8	Online BA	<---	Brand Ambassadorship	-0.145	0.083	-3.282	0.001**
H5	Intention to recommend	<---	Brand Ambassadorship	0.942	0.073	16.08	***

	GOF Indexes	**X2**	**DF**	**P**	**X2/df**	**GFI**	**CFI**	**TLI**	**RMSEA**
	Whole sample (N=609)	625.951	258	0.0	2.426	0.924	0.969	0.964	0.048

Notes: *** p-value < 0.01; ** p-value < 0.05;

The evaluation of the significance of a regression coefficient is performed by analysis of its t-test (Garver & Mentzer, 1999). The existence of a significant regression coefficient (the value of t exceeds 1.645 or 1.96) involves a consideration that the relationship between the two latent variables is demonstrated empirically (Hair et al., 2009) and in the case of a positive or satisfactory evaluation of adjustment measures, this confirms the predictive validity of the model (Garver & Mentzer, 1999). Because in this study it was assumed that unilateral cases (direct and positive influence), significant relations would present a t-value greater than 1.645.

Results supported all hypotheses. H1 expresses that tourist perception of resident support positi-

vely influences service quality in destinations (H1: 0.454; p-value <0.01). Accordingly, tourist perception of service quality is reported to positively influence satisfaction (H2: 0.47; p-value <0.01). This confirms prior research stressing that the quality of the host-guest interaction is able to significantly shape the tourist experience, (e.g. Correia, Kozak, & Ferradeira, 2011). Results also confirm that tourist perception of resident support directly and positively influences tourist satisfaction (H3: 0.232, p-value <0.01) and brand ambassadorship behaviour of tourists (H6: 0.079, p-value <0.05). This seems to suggest that visitors are feeling more satisfied and prone to talk positively about the destination when they perceive that the local community is willing to whatever they could do to support the tourism development in their community. In sum, the analysis showed that brand ambassadorship behaviour consists of two dimensions respectively related to an offline (H7: 0.722, p-value <0.01) and online domain (H8: -0.145, p-value <0.05).

Findings also show that satisfaction positively influences ambassadorship behaviour of tourists (H4: -0.913, p-value <0.01), thus confirming that higher satisfaction shapes higher willingness to talk favourably about the destination to others, both offline and online (Taecharungroj, 2016). Furthermore, the hypothesis assuming that the brand ambassadorship behaviour influences intention to recommend the destination to others as the place for their holidays was also supported by data (H5: 0.942, p-value <0.01).

Following the SEM analysis, variable correlations were tested for invariance among two different groups of tourists. Multigroup analysis, as displayed in Table 6, highlights how the proposed model in Portugal (Lisbon) and Italy (Olbia) differ from each other from the tourists' perspective. Table 6 includes only those paths that were proved to significantly different within the two tourism destinations.

Table 6 | Multi Group Analysis

			Olbia (Italy)		Lisbon (Portugal)		
			Estimate	P	Estimate	P	z-score
Satisfaction	<---	**Service quality**	0.424	0.000	0.529	0.000	2.93***
I frequently participate in knowledge sharing activities about this destination in travel or tourism online forums e.g. TripAdvisor.co.	<---	Online BA	0.892	0.000	0.812	0.000	-2.548**
I usually involve myself in discussions of various topics about this tourism destination in travel or tourism online forums e.g. TripAdvisor.com.	<---	Online BA	0.983	0.000	0.94	0.000	-2.459**
Generally, the residents are approachable and easy to contact	<---	Service quality	0.929	0.000	0.833	0.000	-2.175**
Generally, the residents enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	<---	Service quality	0.893	0.000	0.796	0.000	-2.675***
Generally, the residents are competent and well informed about the tourist offer of the area.	<---	Service quality	0.871	0.000	0.698	0.000	-3.484***
Residents are always willing to help tourists.	<---	Service quality	0.798	0.000	0.669	0.000	-2.18**
I will recommend this destination to someone who seeks my advice.	<---	Intention to recommend	0.858	0.000	0.907	0.000	-2.096**
Tourism continues to play an important economic role in this community	<---	Resident support	0.894	0.000	0.706	0.000	-1.964**
I perceive the overall impact of tourism development in this community positively	<---	Resident support	0.542	0.000	0.502	0.000	-2.147**

Notes: *** p-value < 0.01; ** p-value < 0.05;

Overall, findings support all the hypothesised relationships in both tourism destinations, which reinforces the model's consistency. The main difference is service quality and satisfaction (H2). The influence of perceived service quality by tourists on satisfaction is more evident in Portugal (0.529,

0.000) than in Italy (0.424, 0.000). A possible explanation for such discrepancy is that visitors in Lisbon, when compared to those visiting Olbia, are more interested in the quality of the host-guest interaction as a way to have a more profound experience of the place's identity and authenticity.

5. Conclusion

This study was built on a host-guest perspective. The research aimed to investigate whether the residents support to tourism and their ability to deliver quality to visitors may positively influence visitors' satisfaction, their brand ambassadorship behaviour and intention to recommend. More specifically, findings revealed that visitors' perceived service quality and residents' support of tourism directly influence visitors' satisfaction, their willingness to act as brand ambassadors for the destination (both offline and online) and, finally, their willingness to recommend it to others. This sheds light on the idea that the quality of the host-guest interaction is pivotal to shape visitors' experiences, engagement and likelihood to actively engage in destination branding. The findings underline and reinforce the positive role that locals should exert in contributing to destination branding by pleasing and warmly welcoming visitors, and letting them feel that tourism is considered a relevant phenomenon (Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker, 2013). It also shed light on the fact that this in turn will allow policymakers and destinations marketers to count on visitors that are much more satisfied about their stay and more prone to support a further development of the destination in term of destination awareness and image.

From a managerial point of view, the results suggest that policy makers and destination marketers should run internal marketing operations. This aim could help to make residents active actors, rather than passive and/or apathetic (Ghasemi, Del Chiappa, Correia, 2019a; Ghasemi, 2019), and to let them to fully realise the relevant role that their attitudes and behaviour toward guests boosting their perceived service quality, their satisfaction and their likelihood to recommend the destination to other and act as brand ambassadors (Ghasemi, Del Chiappa, Correia, 2019b).

Despite its theoretical and managerial contributions, this study is not free of limitations. Firstly, a convenience sample was adopted; hence, findings cannot be generalized. Furthermore, although the study was carried out in two different tourism destinations, it is relatively site specific and did not explicitly consider the moderator effect that destination based-characteristics (e.g. the stage of the life cycle, the host-guest ratio, etc.) or visitor-related characteristics (e.g. motivation to travel, personality, etc.) could exert on the different paths and relationships included in the theoretical model.

Theoretical model lack the ability properly to take into account other factors (such as cultural values, personal norms and past perceived needs) that could affect the way it runs. These factors could, obviously, influence the predictive power of the models (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010). These aspects would merit attention in future studies and repeating the study in other tourism destinations could help to validate the model and related hypotheses in different settings.

References

Ap, J. (1992). Residents' perceptions on tourism impacts. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(4), 665-690.

Arnett, D. B., German, S. D. & Hunt, S. D. (2003). The identity salience model of relationship marketing success: The case of nonprofit marketing.*Journal of Marketing*, 67, 2, 89-105.

Baker, J., Parasuraman, A., Grewal, D., & Voss, G. B. (2002). The influence of multiple store environment cues on perceived merchandise value and patronage intentions. *Journal of marketing*, 66(2), 120-141.

Barclay, D., Higgins, C., & Thompson, R. (1995). *The Partial Least Squares (pls) Approach to Casual Modeling: Personal Computer Adoption Ans Use as an Illustration*.

Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: the effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *The Journal of Marketing*, 69-82.

Braun, E., Kavaratzis, M., & Zenker, S. (2013). My city–my brand: the different roles of residents in place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 6(1), 18-28.

Bregoli, I. (2013). Effects of DMO coordination on destination brand identity: a mixed-method study on the city of Edinburgh. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(2), 212-224.

Browne, M. W., & Cudeck, R. (1993). Alternative ways of assessing model fit. *Sage Focus Editions*, 154, 136-136.

Burgess, T. (1982). Autonomous and service traditions. *Agenda for institutional change in higher education*, 70-79.

Chathoth, P. K., Ungson, G. R., Altinay, L., Chan, E. S., Harrington, R., & Okumus, F. (2014). Barriers affecting organisational adoption of higher order customer engagement in tourism service interactions. *Tourism Management*, 42, 181-193.

Chen, C.-M., Yang, H.-W., Li, E. Y., & Liu, C.-C. (2015). How does hotel pricing influence guest satisfaction by the moderating influence of room occupancy?. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 49, 136–138. http://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJHM.2015.06.006

Chen, N., Dwyer, L. & Firth, T. (2014). Effect of dimensions of place attachment on residents' word-of-mouth behavior. *Tourism Geographies*, 16, 5, 1-18.

Correia, A., Kozak, M., & Ferradeira, J. (2011). Impact of culture on tourist decision-making styles. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 13(5), 433-446.

Cronin Jr, J. J., Brady, M. K., & Hult, G. T. M. (2000). Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioral intentions in service environments. *Journal of retailing*, 76(2), 193-218.

Curran, R., Taheri, B., MacIntosh, R., & O'Gorman, K. (2016). Nonprofit brand heritage: Its ability to influence volunteer retention, engagement, and satisfaction. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 45(6), 1234-1257.

Dabholkar, P. A. (1996). Consumer evaluations of new technology-based self-service options: an investigation of alternative models of service quality. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 13(1), 29-51.

Del Chiappa, G., & Atzeni, M. (2015). Collaborative Policy Making: A Community-Based Perspective in the Context of Sardinia's Maddalena Archipelago, Italy. Collaboration in Tourism Businesses and Destinations: A Handbook, edited by D. Gursoy, M. Saayman, M. Sotiriadis, Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing, 57-76., Italy. *Collaboration in Tourism Businesses and Destinations: A Handbook*, 57.

Del Chiappa, G., Atzeni, M., & Ghasemi, V. (2018). Community-based collaborative tourism planning in islands: A cluster analysis in the context of Costa Smeralda. *Journal of destination marketing & management*, 8, 41-48. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.10.005

Del Chiappa, G., & Bregoli, I. (2012). Destination branding development: linking together supply-side and demand-side perspectives. Tsiotsou, R. H. and Goldsmith, R. E. (Eds). *Strategic Marketing in Tourism Services*. Bingley: Emerald. ISBN: 978-1-78052-070-4.

Fornell, C. & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50.

Fornell, C., Johnson, M., Anderson, E., Cha, J. & Everitt Bryant, B. (1996). "The American Customer Satisfaction Index: Nature, Purpose, and Findings,". *Journal of Marketing*, 60 (October): 7–18.

Gallarza, M. G., Gil-Saura, I. & Holbrook, M. B. (2011). The value of value: further excursions on the meaning and role of customer value. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 10 (4), 179-191.

Garver, M., & Mentzer, J. (1999). Logistics research methods: employing structural equation modeling to test for construct validity. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 20(1), 33-57.

Ghasemi, V. (2019). Residents' apathy and its influence on tourism development. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 22, 193-197.

Ghasemi, V., Del Chiappa, G., & Correia, A. (2019a). Residents' Apathy and Heritage Tourism Development. *Experiencing Persian Heritage (Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice)*, 10, 257-273.

Ghasemi, V., Del Chiappa, G., & Correia, A. (2019b). The role of residents' apathy in tourism: a tourist perspective. *Anatolia*, 1-14.

Gursoy, D., Jurowski, C., & Uysal, M. (2002). Resident attitudes: A structural modeling approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (1), 79–105.doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(01)00028-7.

Gursoy, D., Jurowski, C., & Uysal, M. (2002). Resident attitudes: A structural modeling approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (1), 79–105.doi:10.1016/S0160-7383 (01)00028-7.

Hair, J., Black, W., Babin, B., Anderson, R., & Tatham, R. (2009). Análise Multivariada de Dados (6.ª Edição). *Bookman Editora*, São Paulo, Brasil.

Hartline, M. D., & Ferrell, O. C. (1996). The management of customer-contact service employees: An empirical investigation. *The Journal of Marketing*, 52-70.

Hollebeek, L. D. (2010). Demystifying customer brand engagement: exploring the loyalty nexus. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(7-8), 785-807.

Jahandideh, B., Golmohammadi, A., Meng, F., O'Gorman, K. D., & Taheri, B. (2014). Cross-cultural comparison of Chinese and Arab consumer complaint behavior in the hotel context. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 41, 67-76.

Joppe, M. (1996). Sustainable community tourism development revisited. *Tourism Management*, 17(7), 475-479.

Joreskog, K. (1993). *Testing Structural Equation Models*. Sage: Newbury Park, CA.

Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (1986). *LISREL VI: Analysis of linear structural relationships by maximum likelihood, instrumental variables, and least squares methods*. Scientific Software.

Kavaratzis, M. (2012). From "necessary evil" to necessity: stakeholders' involvement in place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 5(1), pp.7-19.

Mitchell, R. & Reid, D. G. (2001). Community integration. Island tourism in Peru. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(1), 113-139.

Mollen, A., & Wilson, H. (2010). Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: Reconciling scholastic and managerial perspectives. *Journal of business research*, 63(9-10), 919-925.

Morhart, F. M., Herzog, W. & Tomczak T. (2009). Brand-specific leadership: Turning employees into brand champions. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 122-142.

Moser, C. O. (1989). Community participation in urban projects in the Third World. Progress in Planning, 32, 71-133.

Munro-Faure, L., & Munro-Faure, M. (1992). *Implementing total quality management*. Pitman Publishing.

Nunkoo, R., & Ramkissoon, H. (2010). Gendered theory of planned behaviour and residents' support for tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 13(6), 525-540.

Nunkoo, R., & Gursoy, D. (2012). Residents' support for tourism: An identity perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(1), 243-268.

Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of marketing research*, 460-469.

Parinet, B., Lhote, A., & Legube, B. (2004). Principal component analysis: an appropriate tool for water quality evaluation and management—application to a tropical lake system. *Ecological modelling*, 178(3-4), 295-311.

Punjaisri, K., & Wilson, A. (2007). The role of internal branding in the delivery of employee brand promise. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(1), 57-70.

Rigdon, E. E. (1996). CFI versus RMSEA: A comparison of two fit indexes for structural equation modeling. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 3(4), 369-379.

Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism Management*, 20(2), 245-249.

Sewell, W. D., & Phillips, S. D. (1979). Models for the evaluation of public participation programmes. *Natural Resources Journal, 19*(2), 337-358.

Simmons, D. G. (1994). Community participation in tourism planning. *Tourism Management*, 15(2), 98–108.

Smith, V. L. (1989). *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Smith, V. L. (2001). The culture brokers. *Hosts and guests revisited: tourism issues of the 21st century*, 275-282. New York, NY. Cognizant Communication Corporation.

Spencer, R. (2010). Rights-based tourism–tourist engagement in social change, globalised social movements and endogenous development in Cuba. In *Tourist Experience* (pp. 97-114). Routledge.

Taecharungroj, V. (2016). City ambassadorship and citizenship behaviours: Modelling resident behaviours that help cities grow. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 9(3), 331-350.

Taheri, B., Gannon, M., Cordina, R., & Lochrie, S. (2018). Measuring host sincerity: Scale development and validation, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. Forthcoming.

Taheri, B., Jafari, A., & O'Gorman, K. (2014). Keeping your audience: Presenting a visitor engagement scale. *Tourism Management*, 42, 321-329. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.12.011

Tutuncu, O. (2017). Investigating the accessibility factors affecting hotel satisfaction of people with physical disabilities. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 65, 29–36. http://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJHM.2017.06.002

Vollero, A., Conte, F., Bottoni, G., & Siano, A. (2018). The influence of community factors on the engagement of residents in place promotion: Empirical evidence from an Italian heritage site. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(1), 88-99.

Wheaton, B., Muthen, B., Alwin, D. F., & Summers, G. F. (1977). Assessing reliability and stability in panel models. *Sociological Methodology*, 8, 84-136.

Woo, E., Kim, H., & Uysal, M. (2015). Life satisfaction and support for tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 50, 84-97.