

Construction and Validation of the Guest Satisfaction Predictors Scale

Carla Peixoto Borges [†]
Universidade de Brasília
Amália Raquel Pérez-Nebra ^Ω
Centro Universitário de Brasília
Claudio Vaz Torres ^Υ
Universidade de Brasília
Eluiza Alberto de Moraes Watanabe ^{*}
Universidade de Brasília

ABSTRACT

In observing the need to validate scales to investigate the satisfaction process in the hotel sector of Brazil, we conducted two studies based on the approach of the disconfirmation of performance expectations, resulting in the construction and validation of a scale of predictors of guest satisfaction. We carry out in the Pilot Study the preliminary validation of the scale in a paper-and-pencil survey of 141 participants. In Study 1, with 677 questionnaires completed via the internet, we obtained the final validation of the internal structure of the instrument. The results corroborated partially with the theory, since the items of disconfirmation and performance formed only one factor, termed as Performance Evaluation. We divided the items referring to the theoretical expectations factor into two factors: Expectation - formed by three items referring to the valence, intensity and clarity of the expectations of the guest - and Comparison and Service Relevance References, composed of five items related to the way the guest evaluates the accommodation, involving criteria adopted and relevance attributed to the service. These results add a new insight into the theory of disconfirmation of performance expectations for the hospitality industry, which was discussed in the light of theories of the evaluation psychology.

Keywords: Consumer Satisfaction, Hotel Management, Guest Satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

The hotel sector, considered as the “backbone” of tourism, represents around 4% of the Brazilian GDP and directly and indirectly employs more than 10 million people (EMBRATUR, 2015). After ten years of continuous growth, 2016 registered (FOHB, 2016) a sharp drop in the occupancy rate and revenue per available apartment (Revpar), result of poor economic performance in the second half of 2015. This has had a negative impact on the operational performance of the hosting media; it is still estimated that the sector’s revenues increased by 8.3% between 2015 and 2016 (FOHB, 2016). With a hotel park of approximately 25

Corresponding author:

[†] Universidade de Brasília
E-mail: carlaborges@unb.br
^Ω Centro Universitário de Brasília
E-mail: amalia.perez@uniceub.br
^Υ Universidade de Brasília
E-mail: claudio.v.torres@gmail.com
^{*} Universidade de Brasília
E-mail: eluizaw@gmail.com

thousand lodging facilities and an equity of 78.7 billion BRL, the Brazilian hotel industry produces annual revenues estimated at 2 billion USD, result of a movement of 8 billion USD a year in 2015 (ABIH, 2010). It is, therefore, a relevant sector from the economic and social point of view, which justifies the undertaking of scientific research that contributes to its development. Studies in the field of consumer satisfaction are relevant, since in the hospitality service, the achievement of satisfaction is directly related to customers returning to the visited establishments (SONG et al., 2011). For Radojevic, Staniscic and Stanic (2015), hotels cannot compete efficiently without meeting the wishes of their consumers.

The literature on consumer behavior points to satisfaction as a predictor of behavior (NOONE; MATTILA, 2010). By setting it up as an important indicator of business results (OLIVER, 1997), consumer satisfaction needs to be assessed and managed by organizations (SONG et al., 2011). However, we need to understand the antecedents to satisfaction, as well as having measuring instruments with evidence of validity for the Brazilian context. Nevertheless, scientific studies on consumer satisfaction have been deprecated in relation to other subjects. The Handbook of Consumer Psychology (HAUGTVEDT; HERR; KARDES, 2008), for example, does not have a session aimed at satisfaction, while an electronic search in the Journal of Consumer Psychology located only two articles on the subject over the last five years. Such a scenario is repeated in the Brazilian hotel sector, which does not rely on reliable measurement instruments for the evaluation of guest satisfaction from a managerial or public policy point of view (Ministry of Tourism) (BORGES; PÉREZ-NEBRA; TORRES, 2006). We also add that we did not find any study in the last five years that proposed to build a scale of predictors of consumer satisfaction of hotel service. We carried out the search in the Periodicals of the Coordination of Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (CAPES), Scholar Google and Science Direct, and covered the years 2010 to 2015. The keywords used in combination were “consumer satisfaction” and “hotel”. We identified a total of 13 articles, three of them national and 10 international. But none focused on building a scale of satisfaction predictors.

The main investigative paradigm with regard to predictors of satisfaction is relative to products and is based on post-consumer performance (HUANG; HSU; CHAN, 2010; YI, 1990). Although this paradigm refers to products, guided by it, Oliver (1997) developed the theoretical proposal of the disconfirmation of expectations with performance, according to which consumer satisfaction can be predicted by consumer expectations, perceived performance of the product or service and subjective disconfirmation of expectations. As a result of this empirical support, this suggestion has become the main theoretical proposal explaining the process of forming consumer satisfaction, as we can verify in a meta-analysis performed by Szymansky and Henard (2001). Other more current proposals repackage part of this model, but without conceptual advances (NOONE; MATTILA, 2010). Nevertheless, we did not find any study in the hotel industry in the literature based on this proposal.

Given the context presented, this study is based on the following question: Do the psychological constructs pointed out by the proposal of the disconfirmation of expectations with performance apply to the context of hospitality? In order to respond to the proposed problem, we built - and we sought evidence of validity, - on an exploratory basis, to the internal structure of a scale of predictors of guest satisfaction, based on the constructs of the theoretical proposal in focus.

2. THE EXPECTANCY DISCONFIRMATION PARADIGM

According to the disconfirmation paradigm, consumers evaluate their satisfaction from a comparison of the perceived performance of the product or service with a reference

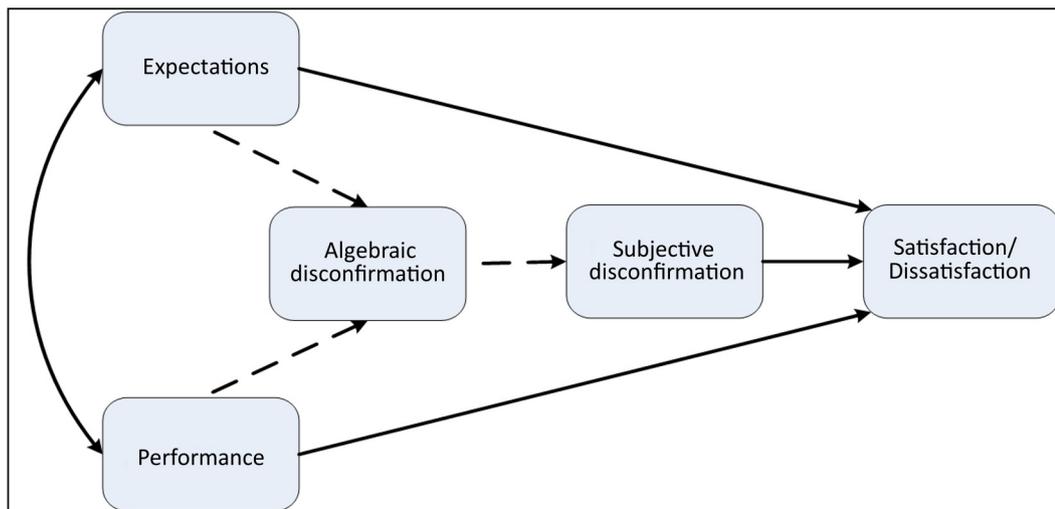
based on their expectations. Expectations would function as references, or as standards against which performance is assessed (SZYMANSKY; HENARD, 2001). If the consumer perceives a discrepancy between the evaluated performance and the comparison reference, disconfirmation occurs, which may be positive (perceived performance beyond the referential) or negative (perceived performance below the reference). When the evaluated performance is not dissimilar from the comparison references, the zero confirmation or disconfirmation process occurs (YI, 1990).

The theoretical proposal of the disconfirmation of performance expectations also considers that satisfaction can be predicted by direct effects of expectations and performance, not mediated by disconfirmation, as shown in Figure 1 (OLIVER, 1997).

According to the model, there are direct and indirect effects of expectation and performance on satisfaction, as well as the direct effect of disconfirmation on satisfaction. Figure 1 also indicates that the expectations and performance results are related. However, this relationship is not specified, since it may vary according to the context studied (NOONE; MATTILA, 2010; OLIVER, 1997). The indirect effect of expectations on consumer satisfaction would be moderated by disconfirmation, construct composed by the interaction between expectations and performance, which has a direct effect on consumer satisfaction (SZYMANSKY; HENARD, 2001).

In practical terms, Oliver (1997) suggests that disconfirmation can be measured either directly (subjective disconfirmation) as well as indirectly (algebraic disconfirmation). However, the author relies on empirical evidence to support the superiority of the version of subjective disconfirmation to the detriment of the algebra. The latter, when measured, seems to be antecedent to the first. As shown in Figure 1, expectations and performance combine to form algebraic disconfirmation. This, in turn, provides a basis for subjective interpretation (subjective disconfirmation) of the perceived discrepancy between performance and expectations. Subjective disconfirmation is treated as a direct antecedent to consumer satisfaction. In it, is the basis for the understanding of the satisfaction training mechanism.

While disconfirmation is presented as the psychological interpretation of the discrepancy between expectations and performance, the latter is defined as the perception of the combined effect of the results of the attributes of the product or service (OLIVER, 1997). At the bottom of Figure 1, the arrow linking performance results directly to satisfaction represents the direct effects exerted by that predictor, not mediated by disconfirmation. Although Oliver (1997) points out study results as justification for the inclusion of the direct



Source: Oliver, R. L. (1997, p. 120).

Figure 1. Full Dispersion Model of Expectations with Performance.

route between performance and satisfaction, he does not explain the phenomenon. Szymansky and Henard (2001), in turn, explain the direct effect of performance as a result of the organization's ability to provide consumers with what they need, want or desires, compared to costs incurred. However, it is argued that the explanation provided does not clarify the issue, since the notion of disconfirmation seems to be present in this interpretation, since the costs incurred would function as references against those which the individual would evaluate the performance.

The link between expectations and satisfaction (Figure 1) it also represents a direct influence, independent of any evaluation or comparison, involving results or levels of performance of the product or service (OLIVER, 1997). Oliver (1997) conceptualizes the construct of expectation as a prediction, sometimes established as a probability or a possibility, as to the performance of the product or its attributes, based on previous experience, the circumstances and other available sources of information. For the author, although a large number of references are adopted in a satisfaction judgment, all are channeled through expectations when the product or service is purchased. For this reason, he considers that, in the context of consumption, an expectation would be more than simply an anticipation of future consequences.

In this regard, Oliver (1997) suggests the expansion of the concept of expectation in order to encompass other concepts that also exert the function of reference of comparison in the satisfaction response, which is supposed to increase the model's predictive ability on satisfaction. Thus, consumers could bring to the consumption experience four different types of expectations: a) ideal level (what "should be"), what Noone and Mattila (2010) denominate as consumer goal; b) expected level ("what will it be"); c) tolerable level ("what it could be"); and d) level of merit (what the consumer considers as appropriate in terms of their investments and rights). Such expectations could be established in relation to previous products, persons, situations and experiences (OLIVER, 1997). Although the full performance expectancy disconfirmation model presents a combination of effects on satisfaction, not all the effects pointed out necessarily occur simultaneously. There may be different configurations involving the effects of predictors on satisfaction (OLIVER, 1997).

As suggested by Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins (1983), the theory of disconfirmation of expectations with performance incorporates the notion of zone of indifference, according to which, performance somewhat above or below expectations is not perceived as a discrepancy. When performance falls within this parameter, the process of zero confirmation or disconfirmation occurs (zone of indifference), because the differences in expectations are attenuated (assimilation effect). Conversely, when the performance falls outside the confirmation parameters, disconfirmation occurs (positive or negative), and these differences are contrasted with expectations in an exaggerated way (contrast effect) (CACIOPPO; PETTY, 1982).

Therefore, the paradigm of the disconfirmation of expectations with performance rests on the notion of assimilation and contrast (ZELLNER, 1988). Theories of assimilation and contrast were originally presented in the literature of social psychology (SULS; WHEELER, 2007) and later adopted in the literature on consumer behavior (OLIVER, 1997). According to Weaver and Schwarz (2008), evaluations based on product characteristics require a mental representation regarding the target or object of the evaluation and another one related to the standard against which the target is evaluated. Both depend on context, as well as relying on information accessed on a chronic or only temporary basis. The way accessible information influences judgment depends in turn on whether it results in representations about the target or the reference standard.

When the information is included in the temporary representation of the target, the result is explained as the effect of assimilation: the target is evaluated in a manner consistent with the valence of the assimilated information. On the other hand, when this information is

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incorporated into the standard of comparison, the result is interpreted as a contrast effect: the more positive the valence of the constructed standard, the lower the valence of the target's evaluation (WEAVER; SCHWARZ, 2008). According to Weaver and Schwarz (2008), the magnitude of the contrast effect is greater as the amount of temporary information used to form the comparison pattern representation increases. The contrast effect is also greater the more extreme the temporary information used are. However, when using chronic access information in the construction of the standard, the tendency is that the contrast effect will decrease with increasing quantity and extremism of information.

The adaptation-level theory by Helson (OLIVER; LINDA, 1981; SZYMANSKY; HENARD, 2001) is also constantly evoked as the foundation for the paradigm of disconfirmation. According to the adaptation-level theory, the judgments of new stimuli would be affected by previous experiences with stimuli of the same class (which would function as a level of adaptation) and by the perceived subjective discrepancy between them (OLIVER; LINDA, 1981). Szymansky and Henard (2001) adopt this theory in line with the theory of assimilation and with the theory of cognitive dissonance (FESTINGER, 1957) to explain the direct effect of expectations on satisfaction, in which case consumers would adapt to a certain level of performance and form expectations consistent with it. Once adapted to the standard performance level, consumers would then assimilate satisfaction judgments toward expectations (assimilation effect), in order to avoid a possible dissonance due to divergences between the two (SZYMANSKY; HENARD, 2001). It is worth remembering that the dissonance refers to the perception of the incompatibility between two different cognitions, in which the concept of cognition is defined as an element of knowledge, including attitudes or behaviors. Thus, a consumer with negative expectations, for example, would tend to evaluate in this direction, even in case of good performance of the product or service (OLIVER, 1997).

It can be noted that the theory of the disconfirmation of expectations with performance comes very close to the explanatory paradigm developed over three decades of studies based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model - ELM (PETTY; CACIOPPO, 1986). According to the ELM, instead of occurring at opposite poles, the processes of judgment or change of attitude (i.e., satisfaction) oscillate along a continuum with a greater or lesser amount of elaboration. Thus, in classical conditioning processes, for example, little elaboration would occur, and the peripheral processing route would be adopted. In processes described from theories based on the expectancy, in turn, (as it is the case of the disconfirmation of expectations theory with performance), higher elaboration levels would occur, and processing would take place through the central route (PETTY; BRIÑOL, 2012). The positioning along the elaboration continuum would, in turn, depend on the individual's ability, motivation, and opportunity to evaluate the fundamental aspects of an object (PETTY; BRIÑOL, 2012). Thus, according to the ELM, the mechanism for forming attitudes varies according to the levels of elaboration in which the individual engages. As a consequence of the adoption of the central or peripheral route, the more elaborate judgments tend to resist more, persists more over time and influences other judgments and behaviors more (HAUGTVEDT; KASMER, 2008).

Based on these approaches, we can better understand the phenomena that the disconfirmation theory attempts to explain. The case of the zone of indifference (WOODRUFF; CADOTTE; JENKINS, 1983), for example, can be explained both from the similarity between the context and the object – effect of assimilation of expectations in the construction of the evaluation of the target (TESSE; MARTIN, 1996; WEAVER; SCHWARZ, 2008) – as well as the influence of chronic information on the formation of the comparison pattern, which would reduce the contrast effect (WEAVER; SCHWARZ, 2008). In the latter case, it is also suggested for the consumer to position at an intermediate point in the elaboration continuum (PETTY; BRIÑOL, 2012). Oliver (1997) points out

that any concept that increases the salience of performance for the consumer must increase the degree to which disconfirmation, in detriment of expectations, affects satisfaction. The increase in the salience of the product performance could, in this case, be configured as a stimulus to the evaluation, accompanied by an increase in the motivation and the ability of the individual to evaluate (PETTY; BRIÑOL, 2012).

From the empirical evidence of the disconfirmation paradigm, Walker (1995) proposed that, in the meeting of services (GUTEK, 1999) consumer expectations would be revised over three stages of evaluation. Events that occurred at one stage would influence the formation of expectations for the next, as well as the relative importance of the dimensions to be evaluated thereafter. It is noted that this interpretation is compatible with the idea of accessibility of the context (TESSER; MARTIN, 1996), since one-stage events can become stimuli to evaluation in the following stages, increasing the individual's motivation or ability to evaluate (PETTY; BRIÑOL, 2012). And if such effect occurs at the service meeting, then it will also occur in the case of hospitality. However, to test it, we need to develop valid research instruments for the measurement of the constructs in question, a demand that will be met by the present study.

3. METHOD

In order to build and validate the proposed scale, we adopted the psychological instruments elaboration model suggested by Pasquali (2005). We carried out a study in two stages: the Pilot Study focused on the elaboration of items in a small paper-and-pencil sample (n=141), and Study 1, aimed at obtaining evidence of validity of the internal structure of the instrument – Modified based on the results of the Pilot Study - in a larger sample via the internet (n=688).

3.1. PILOT STUDY

In the Pilot Study, we performed theoretical procedures focusing on the writing of the items, as well as on empirical and analytical procedures aimed at the preliminary validation of the internal structure of the instrument. The first step involved the definition of the properties of the psychological system, the semantic structure of its components, the construction and theoretical analysis of the items (semantic analysis and judgment analysis). Based on bibliographical sources on the disconfirmation of expectations theory with performance and on the adaptation of items of disconfirmation and perceived performance of the “Consumption Satisfaction Scale” by Oliver (1997, p.343) applied to the hotel context. The result of this stage was the drafting of the preliminary version of the internal structure of the Guest Satisfaction Predictors Scale, composed by 19 items, four of which were disconfirmation, four of perceived performance and 11 of expectations or comparison references.

The number of items of expectations and comparison references was higher than the quantity of items of the two other hypothetical constructs (disconfirmation and performance), due to the diversity of types of expectations and comparison references found in the literature. We also decided to add to the instrument three items referring to expectations proxies (the importance of hotel choice, investment of time for choice and access to information when choosing), included to enrich the measure, due to the conceptual confusion around the construct. We operated the items with a Likert response scale. Once this step was completed, we went on to the empirical procedures for the testing of items.

We conducted a paper-and-pencil survey through a self-administered questionnaire with 141 participants (62.4% men), with an average age of 33 years (SD = 11), residents in 16 Brazilian states (70.2% in Distrito Federal), with higher education level or postgraduate level (57.4%). The means of lodging evaluated were located in 15 different states, being

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Federal District (38.2%), Goiás (12.9%) and Bahia (12.9%) were the ones represented the most. The predominant means of lodging was the hotel (76%), and the average time of lodging was 4.65 days (SD = 4.21).

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The prerequisite for participating in the survey was for the participant to be able to recall their last hosting experience. Approximately 30% of the participants were approached while awaiting boarding in the domestic flight rooms of Brasília International Airport. The others were people in the relationship circle of the researchers, in the city of Brasília, personally addressed in different situations. All the participants were asked to answer the questionnaire considering the last hotel in which they had stayed in Brazil. Once we verified the assumptions, we went on to the preliminary analysis of the instrument.

3.2. STUDY 1

Study 1 involved only empirical and analytical procedures aimed at obtaining evidence of validity for the internal structure of the scale. Based on the results obtained in the Pilot Study, we corrected the writing of some items and two items were removed from the Guest Satisfaction Predictor Scale, resulting in 17 items in total, four of disconfirmation, four of perceived performance and nine of expectations.

Next, the instrument was housed in a web site, integrated to a database to enable the electronic collection. In this stage, 577 valid respondents (49.6% men, 1.4% not informed), with average age of 33.74 years (SD = 10.43), predominantly married (47%), residents in 23 Brazilian states (60.5% in Distrito Federal). The predominant level of schooling was postgraduate (50.1%). The means of lodging evaluated by the participants were located in 24 different Brazilian states, São Paulo being (15%), Goiás (14%) and Bahia (13.2%) were the ones represented the most.

The dissemination of the research was done by electronic mail to 116 addresses of contacts of the researcher, with the request that they answer the questionnaire considering the last experience of lodging. They were also requested to disclose the search address. In addition to personal contacts, there were also four public and private institutions that disseminated the research to their employees. The questionnaire was available for 22 weeks.

The number of responses obeyed the criterion of five to 10 subjects per item (PASQUALI, 2005) and 300 per construct (TABACHINICK; FIDELL, 2007) for the accomplishment of the technique of the factorial analysis in the validation of the internal structure of the instrument. In order to test the internal structure of the instrument, we adopted the exploratory factor analysis. After testing the internal structure of the instrument, we performed descriptive statistics analyzes for each factor found and Pearson's correlation analyzes were performed to verify the relationships among the identified factors.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. RESULTS OF THE PILOT STUDY

The data obtained (N=141) in the Pilot Study were submitted to Exploratory Factor Analysis. We verified the factorial of the correlation matrix by means of the determinant, around zero, and the median KMO index of 0.77 (PASQUALI, 2005). Initially we chose to extract three factors, in line with the theoretical proposal adopted (disconfirmation of performance expectations). Due to the instability obtained with the initial extraction of three factors, we decided to extract two factors. The variance explained was 20.41% for

the first and 15.21% for the second factor. Both factors presented 8 items and Cronbach's alphas of 0.87 and 0.76 respectively.

While Factor 1 collected items related to disconfirmation and performance perceived by the guest, Factor 2 gathered items related to consumer expectations. Three items constructed with the assumption that they would be part of this factor were not grouped as expected. Due to the results, we removed two items of the instrument (access to information and consideration of expectations in hotel evaluation), among the three that were not grouped with the variables of Factor 2. We decided to keep the item "importance", considering that it could be a relevant registry variable. With the revised instrument, we proceeded to Study 1, final, containing the revision of the wording of the items and removing confusing items.

4.2. RESULTS OF STUDY 1

In Study 1, 532 participants were obtained (approximately 31 subjects per item), removing the omission situations. We verified the factorization of the correlation matrix by inspecting the correlation matrix, of the determinant of 0.004 and the merit index of KMO of 0.83 (PASQUALI, 2005).

Based on the scree test, three factors could be extracted. This time, the three-factor solution (PAF, direct oblimin) appeared to be more stable than the solution with two, reducing from 44 (32.0%) to 27 (19.0%) the residuals with absolute values greater than 0.05 in the reproduced matrix (PASQUALI, 2005). The number of items was 8 ($\alpha = 0.86$), 5 ($\alpha = 0.63$) and 3 ($\alpha = 0.69$) for Factors 1, 2 and 3, with variances of 53.04; 16,14 and 6.52 respectively. Table 1 presents the pattern matrix of items.

The minimum value adopted to qualify an item as representative of a factor was the factorial load of 0.30 (PASQUALI, 2005). Although only Factor 1 was consistent ($\alpha = 0.86$), we consider as acceptable the precision indexes of Factors 2 ($\alpha = 0.63$) and 3 ($\alpha = 0.69$), due to the exploratory nature of the study.

We can observe that Factor 1, denominated as Performance Evaluation, brought together valid and interpretable items, with loads from reasonable to excellent (from 0.44 to 0.82), regarding the disconfirmation and the performance perceived by the guest, corroborating the results of the pre-test. This time, the second factor, revealed in the pilot application, was divided into two others. Factor 2 brought together items (from poor to excellent loads - from 0.36 to 0.72) regarding the way the guest evaluates the lodging environment, involving the adopted criteria (regulations and standards of the sector) and the relevance of the service to the consumer. We observe that, this time around, besides the variable importance, the time investment variable was also grouped in Factor 2, termed as Comparison and Relevance References. The third factor, in turn, gathered only three valid items, with reasonable, good and excellent loads (-0.49; 0.56; -0.83). The items of this factor, termed as Expectations, refer to the validity, intensity and clarity of the guest's expectations regarding the hosting environment and the hosting experience.

Correlation analysis showed significant results only between Factors 1 and 3 ($r = -0.33$, $p < 0.05$), which could signal the existence of higher order factors. The literature (OLIVER, 1997; SZYMANSKY; HENARD, 2001), however, points out that disconfirmation and expectations are distinct constructs, although correlated. As to the result of the descriptive analysis (Table 2), Factors 1 and 2 presented very close mean and median values, with the answers between points 3 and 4 of the scale.

As for Factor 3, mean and median values were observed between the highest points of the scale, revealing responses between "I partly agree" and "I totally agree". It is also noted that in Percentiles 25 and 50 the means of the factor are already above point 3 (intermediate) and point 4 of the scale respectively.

Table 1. Pattern matrix resulting from factor rotation (Study 1)

Item	Factor		
	1	2	3
The hotel is excellent (overall performance 2)	0.82		
The hotel exceeded my expectations (positive disconfirmation 2)	0.81		
The stay at the hotel was much better than I expected (positive disconfirmation 1)	0.73		
Overall, the physical aspects of the hotel are excellent (overall performance of physical aspects)	0.66		
The hotel is not as good as I thought it would be (negative disconfirmation)	0.63		
The hotel is one of the best I could have stayed in (overall performance 1)	0.61		
Overall, the performance of the hotel services was appalling (overall performance of services)	-0.45		
The hotel is much worse than other hotels in the same category (negative disconfirmation 2)	-0.44		
When evaluating the hotel I took into consideration what a great hotel should offer (expectations of ideal)		0.72	
When evaluating the hotel I made a comparison with other hotels in the same category (Expectations processing)		0.56	
I consider the choice of hotel a very important item in my trip (importance)		0.48	
I expected to find in the hotel the same quality of other hotels of the category (predictive/standards expectations)		0.37	
I spent considerable time in selecting the hotel I have been staying in (time investment)		0.36	
I had the expectation that the hotel would meet my specific needs (expectations/needs)			
My expectations regarding the hotel were very positive (positive expectations)			-0.83
I had very low expectations regarding the hotel. (low expectations)			0.56
I arrived at the hotel with clear expectations as to what I would find (clear expectations)			-0.49

4.3. DISCUSSION

The discussion was structured for each of the factors found in Study 1, as well as the interpretation of the results of the descriptive analyzes. We can observe in Table 1 that Factor 1 ($\alpha = 0.86$) gathered items initially designed as variables of disconfirmation (e.g., “The hotel exceeded my expectations”) and performance (e.g., “The hotel is excellent”). When extracting three factors, we expected that two of them represented, respectively, the construct of disconfirmation and the construct of performance, as pointed out in the literature. However, only one factor was configured, pointing out that, in hotel service, at least for the sample of this study, the performance judgment is also a judgment of disconfirmation. That is, it seems to be a single construct rather than two.

Table 2. Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion (Study 1)

Measure		F1	F2	F3
Mean		3.53	3.64	4.09
Medium		3.63	3.80	4.50
SD		0.90	0.80	0.93
Percentile	25	2.88	3.00	3.50
	50	3.63	3.80	4.50
	75	4.25	4.20	5.00

F1: Performance evaluation; F2: Comparison and Relevance References; F3: Expectations

An evaluation always takes place in relation to a particular context (TESSER; MARTIN, 1996), involving mental representations about the target and the reference standard (WEAVER; SCHWARZ, 2008). Thus, we can infer that, when argued about the performance of the hosting media service, the consumer makes their assessment based on some reference or context, which in this case may have been the standardization of the sector, for example, what resulted in predictive expectations. Thus, we suggest that the response to the items of Factor 1 may be the result of a cognitive evaluation operation in which the performance of the service is compared to the basic standards of the hotel industry (disconfirmation), which would have resulted in a final performance evaluation. Thus, we indicate that the measured construct is simply the performance evaluation of the service, and that the disconfirmation, in turn, be the cognitive operation or elaboration process that occurs for the formation of the construct.

However, it is important to note that the items of disconfirmation, although they were measured after lodging taking place, refer to expectations that the consumer had before staying. This means, based on Walker (1995), that consumer expectations and their goals (NOONE; MATTILA, 2010) were reviewed over the course of consumer experience and may have been substantially altered during this process. This observation raises some questions that, for the time being, go unanswered: Were the expectations on which the cognitive operation of disconfirmation was based, as foreseen, predictive expectations? Or has the consumer responded based on revised expectations, already altered by consumer experience and by the service's own performance? Had the expectations of the operation of disconfirmation not been assimilated towards the performance evaluation itself?

We can also assume that the guest may have avoided (even if not consciously) evaluating items of disconfirmation and performance inconsistently, which could result in cognitive dissonance. Another possible interpretation refers to the possibility that an assimilation effect has occurred, when completing the answers, as provided by Weaver e Schwarz (2008). In this case, filling in items for situational variables (e.g., hotel classification, people whom the participant hosted with) before responding to items of disconfirmation and performance may have favored the retrieval of partial information on the hosting experience, which would have been assimilated into the temporary representation of the assessed hosting means (target). The responses to the items of Factor 1 would thus have been influenced by the validity of this information.

Regarding the result of the descriptive analysis, in the Performance Evaluation Factor the answers reveal an evaluation standard of confirmation, or small positive disconfirmation. This result can be interpreted as a difficulty of the means of lodging to surpass the expectations of the consumers. Although the evaluations are positive, they show a certain neutrality on the part of the consumer, which may be explained by the possibility that hosting administrators are only working to maintain the standard required by sector norms. We thus assume, that in general, the central service of the means of lodging (e.g., a comfortable night's sleep) coincides with industry standards, and that little attention is being paid to peripheral services

BBR (e.g., receptionist cordiality, speed of service), which could be the source of the competitive differential of the establishments, as suggested Walker (1995).

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From an evaluative point of view, the adoption of the sector norms as a reference for comparison by the guest would work, in this case, as chronic access information adopted to form the representation of the pattern, which, according to Weaver and Schwarz (2008), tends to reduce the contrast effect. Based on the interpretation that the assessments were within the consumer indifference zone, it is still possible to, assume that this is the reason why the items of disconfirmation and performance formed only one construct. Considering the ELM approach (PETTY; BRIÑOL, 2012), it would be feasible to assume that this is an evaluation situated in the central region of the continuum, in which the engagement in cognition may have been only moderate during the evaluation. The moderate adoption of cognition would thus have generated responses similar to the items of performance and disconfirmation, located at the midpoint of the scale.

The results of Factors 2 and 3 were also different from the expected. Instead of forming only one factor with all the items referring to expectations, we obtained two. We can observe in Table 1 that Factor 2 gathered items referring to the way the guest evaluates the hosting environment, involving references of comparison as norms and standards of the sector, since other establishments and ideals of excellence are pointed as referential. The factor also gathered items related to the relevance of the service to the consumer, represented by the items, investment of time and importance of the choice of the establishment. The attribution of relevance to the service seems, therefore, related to the greater adoption of references based on industry norms and standards, as suggested by Cadotte and Turgeon (1988).

To better understand this factor, we need to bring back the debate on the Disconfirmation of Expectations Theory with Performance (OLIVER, 1997). Several aspects necessary to understand the prediction relations between expectations, disconfirmation and satisfaction are not explained by the theory. To some extent, this seems to occur because the theoretical proposal is general and does not intend to explain the specificities of a particular object of consumption. We can observe that the concept of expectation presented by the theory is vague, since it does not explain beforehand the nature (e.g., predictive, ideals or norms), nor the content (e.g., context adopted as reference) nor the qualities of expectations (e.g., intensity, valence, clarity, relevance, accessibility) identified as predictive to satisfaction and disconfirmation.

The Comparative and Relevance References Factor can complement the theory, if we identify it in other samples, at least in the case of the hotel service. The identification of a factor with these characteristics reveals that what is commonly called expectations can possibly be broken down into a series of related constructs and not just one. Therefore, this result contradicts the idea by Oliver (1997) that the concept of expectation should be broadened to encompass other concepts that function as references for comparison. In future studies, we suggest that the factor be improved, especially with more items referring to the relevance of the service or items which represent other references.

As in the case of Factor 1, the results of the descriptive analyzes reveal the adoption of moderate comparison frameworks, as well as a moderate service relevance for the sample. Therefore, the evaluation would have been influenced moderately by the context – sector norms, which again suggests engagement in moderate elaboration, as proposed by the ELM (PETTY; BRIÑOL, 2012).

The third factor brought together only three valid items. The items of this factor seem to refer to the valence, intensity, and clarity of the guest's expectations regarding the hosting environment and the hosting experience. The Disconfirmation of Expectations Theory with Performance (OLIVER, 1997) Predicts a factor of expectations, but it does not specify concerning the quality of these expectations, as commented in the discussion of

Factor 2. With the interpretation of the meaning of this factor, it is now possible to discuss the problematic of the concept of expectation indicated by the theory (OLIVER, 1997).

According to the proposal by Oliver (1997), although several references of comparison can be adopted by the consumer, they end up channeled through the expectations. Based on this assertion, it is argued in favor of the idea that expectations are a single construct, but it is almost impossible to define it clearly: if one concept can be everything, then what is the concept, anyway? And what seems to be more relevant: what is its scientific application? The fact that the factorial structure of the instrument revealed two distinct factors suggests for the concept of expectations and their role in the formation of satisfaction to be reviewed. It seems that what has been called Expectations seems to bring together at least these two constructs, not to mention the other types of comparison references or other qualities that the term could encompass.

According to the arguments presented, it seems that the Service Comparison and Relevance References function as the context in which the evaluation is carried out (TESSER; MARTIN, 1996). We suggest, therefore, that the influence of this context on the evaluation would be mediated by the intensity, valence and clarity of the Expectations, which would be established according to the relevance, the accessibility and applicability of this context to the consumer (TESSER; MARTIN, 1996). In future studies, we consider the need to improve the factor, with the inclusion of more specific and clearer items regarding consumer expectations.

In contrast to the structure identified in the present study, consisting of three factors and sixteen items, in general, in the most recent studies that addressed the satisfaction of consumers with means of hosting, different measures were adopted to measure the construct. Albayrak and Caber (2015) used only one item relating to the overall satisfaction of hotel guests in Turkey (“Overall, I’m satisfied with the hotel service experience”). In addition, consumers were asked about the quality aspects of the service, such as room decor and cleanliness. Studies by Al-Msallam (2015) and by Kim et al. (2013) considered satisfaction as a latent variable, as measured by the overall satisfaction scale proposed by Fornell (1992), composed by three items. The description of these works shows that the instrument identified in this research is more complete and covers different dimensions of consumer satisfaction with the hotel service.

As for the descriptive analysis, we verified that the majority of the sample guests reported high expectations (in intensity, valence and clarity), which may be the result of industry standardization and perhaps a positive mood associated with the experience of traveling or staying (AJZEN, 1996). In addition, it may be that the positive emotional state of the guests has established clues for generally positive evaluations of the performance of the hosting media (PETTY; BRIÑOL, 2012), even if moderately. This would explain the small positive correlation found between Factors 1 (Performance Evaluation) and 3 (Expectations), configuring itself as an interpretation for the influence of expectations on performance evaluation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the research is achieved by constructing and demonstrating evidence of validity for the Guest Satisfaction Predictor Scale. However, the results of the factorial analysis obtained from Study 1 partially corroborated the Disconfirmation of Expectations Theory with Performance. First, two constructs pointed out by the theory merged into just one, the Performance Evaluation (Factor 1). Secondly, we expected only one factor related to expectations. However, besides a factor related to Expectations (Factor 2), we also obtained a factor interpreted as Comparison and Service Relevance Reference (Factor 3).

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The first limitation of the studies refers to the theoretical proposal itself adopted as reference. It is noted that, as it is restricted to identifying predictors that reveal the psychological process involved in the formation of consumer satisfaction, the proposal presented by Oliver (1997) does not directly address historical and context variables that may influence the formation of the construct. In the proposal adopted, limited as the “black box” (OLIVER, 1997, p. 39) represented by the body, in the Stimulus-Organism-Response approach, environmental stimuli are considered only when “channeled” through expectations. Therefore, we need to aggregate environmental variables for their more complete and precise measurement.

The study presents methodological limitations. As for the participants, we verify that they are predominantly people of high schooling, residing in the Center-West, who dominate the Portuguese language and who, in the case of Study 1, have access to the Internet. Another limitation, related to the application of the instruments via the Internet, is the time elapsed between the lodgings and the answers to the electronic questionnaire. Participants may not have remembered service details, as suggested by Rossi and Slongo (1998), which may have been one of the causes of the neutrality pattern observed in the results of the descriptive analyzes of the factors.

The survey method can also be pointed as a limitation, since problems such as the accessibility of information (TESSER; MARTIN, 1996), The measurement of a posteriori expectations and the forced step-by-step evaluation can both bias the results and lead to misinterpretations (SZYMANSKY; HENARD, 2001). The questions about references that we adopted, for example, may have made industry standards more accessible during the assessment.

The main contribution of this research is the construction and validation of the instrument for the investigation of predictors of consumer satisfaction in Brazil, in the service sector, and especially in the hotel industry, since one of the main problems related to the study of consumer satisfaction stems from the diversity of measures adopted in the surveys (BORGES; PEREZ-NEBRA; TORRES, 2006). In addition, the suggestion that disconfirmation and performance may be just a construct, as well as the identification of the construct Comparison and Relevance References, constitute an important contribution, insofar as they add a new insight into the theory of disconfirmation of expectations with performance.

We observe that, in addition to serving the purpose of the research, the results provide an exploratory photograph regarding the performance of the investigated means of hosting. It seems they are able to maintain the standard required by guests to the point of generating neutral to satisfactory ratings (as verified in Study 1). However, it seems that the highest point of the Performance Evaluation scale still represents a challenge. Thus, the main managerial implication pointed out refers to the need to break the zone of consumer indifference so that higher levels of performance evaluation are achieved. It is likely that the dominant concern of the hosting media administrators will be the maintenance of standards, and that few have established as a strategy the differentiation of the services offered, especially with regard to the unregulated aspects.

As perspectives for future studies, we recommend the improvement of the Factors Expectation and Comparison and Relevance References. For this purpose, we also suggest analyzes with the Theory of Response to the Item, in order to verify the power of discrimination and difficulty of the items. Analyzes of this nature would help explain the predominantly median results observed in the descriptive analyzes of the factors. We also suggest that experimental studies, in order to better understand the process of expectations formation and the influence of comparison and relevance references on consumer satisfaction, besides the inclusion of environmental variables. Not less necessary, is the comparison of the effects

of the presentation of the order of the questions in the research instruments and the effects of the time interval between the lodging and the satisfaction survey.

We recommend, finally, to carry out new studies with samples (e.g., foreign guests) and different application procedures (e.g., in-person with a stratified sample), in order to compare the results. Researching for other service contexts would also be useful in verifying the extent to which the adoption of a general consumer satisfaction model is applicable to the service sector.

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