

# HOTELS' FAIR TREATMENT OF STAFF AND SERVICE SATISFACTION AS CAUSES OF CUSTOMER CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR (CCIB)

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## Introduction

Theoretical and empirical hospitality research on conventional forms of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and organizational justice has tended to focus on the employer-employee dyad—in particular how the employee (the “performer”) reacts with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) to fair or unfair treatment he/she receives from his/her employer (the “hospitality organization” or its agents). Although more unusual, also some recent work has studied organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) where customers act as performers, arousing it a great interest in the current hospitality research (Aherne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Bettencourt, 1997; Groth, 2005; Lengnick-Hall, Claycomb, & Inks, 2000; Yi & Gong, 2008; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2014). Groth (2005:11) defines these customer citizenship behaviors (CCIB) as “voluntary and discretionary behaviors that are not required for the successful production and/or delivery of the service but that, in the aggregate, help the service organization overall”. Prior research points to customer citizenship behavior (CCIB) as creating positive outlooks on life, reducing stress in the exchange setting, or contributing to the hotel’s effective functioning (Lengnick-Hall, Claycomb, & Inks, 2000). Specifically in hotel contexts, examples of customer citizenship behavior (CCIB) include taking actions to help reduce the hotel’s costs, and concealing irritation with people who squander the hotel’s resources (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2014).

To date, only a limited number of antecedents have been found to predict customer citizenship behavior (hereinafter, CCIB), mainly dealing with customer attitudes, such as satisfaction, identification, and affective commitment (Aherne et al., 2005; Bettencourt, 1997; Groth, 2005; Gruen et al., 2000). More recently, only Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al. (2014) has found new predictors of CCIB, as guests’ satisfaction with service recovery (SSR) and their loyalty.

A question remains about whether customer perceptions of justice toward hotel staff are able to predict CCIB. Prior hospitality theory and research can offer a considerable support to customers’ perception of justice toward themselves as a driver of CCIB in particular (Yi and Gong, 2008), and customer behavior in general (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Dewitt, Nguyen, and Marshall, 2008; Karande, Magnini, and Tam, 2007; Karatepe, 2006; Kim, Kim, and Kim, 2009; Ok, Back, and Shanklin, 2005; Wirtz and Kum, 2004). However, although some prior justice research suggests that third parties can also make fairness judgments and react to the way hotel staff is treated (e.g., Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk, 1999), no prior empirical work has examined CCIB as hotel guests’ reaction to the way they perceive management’s treatment of hotel staff.

In addition to the need for models that explain why this third-party reaction to justice toward staff in the form of CCIB is possible. Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), this paper argues that the hotel’s fair treatment of staff affects guests’ CCIB because the former also affects satisfaction with hotel service that, in turn, mediate the link.

## Hypotheses

*Hypothesis 1:* Guests’ favorable perceptions of justice toward staff will have positive effects on CCIB.

*Hypothesis 2:* Guests’ favorable perceptions of justice toward staff will have positive effects on satisfaction with hotel service.

*Hypothesis 3:* Guests' satisfaction with hotel service mediates the relationship between favorable justice toward staff and CCIB.

## **Method**

### *Survey Respondents*

We surveyed guests over 18 years old who had stayed at least four nights at one of four 4-star hotels or three 5-star hotels in Gran Canaria.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The collected data were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to assess the validity of the measures and test the hypothesized relationships through AMOS 22.0. The mediation tests follow the approach of Baron and Kenny (1986), Anderson and Gerbing (1988).

## **Results**

The significant path from justice toward staff to CCIB supports Hypothesis 1. To test Hypothesis 3, the three Baron and Kenny (1986) conditions for mediation were first inspected. Conditions (a) and (b) are fulfilled, which support Hypothesis 2. The third condition (c) was also fulfilled, but only for partial mediation.

## **Discussion**

The present study of perceived justice of customers from the third party's perspective has taken a step toward a kind of "cross-over approach," almost missing in the current hospitality service research (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara et al., 2013, is a rare exception), in which customers act as observers of the fair or unfair treatment received by the staff. Therefore, this study supporting CCIB as a reaction by customers who observe the (un)fair treatment received by the staff makes a significant contribution to this portion of the hospitality and service literatures.

Looking at this study's theoretical implications, most research has modeled satisfaction with hotel service by following a habitual sequence of relationships, according to which customer satisfaction is usually posited as the independent variable, that is, as a predictor of CCIB (e.g., Aherne et al., 2005; Bettencourt, 1997; Groth, 2005; Gruen et al., 2000). Instead, we tested the possible role of satisfaction with hotel service as a mediator in the link between CCIB and guest performance in a supportive context. In this view, satisfaction with hotel service appears to be a powerful "breeding ground" for guests' cognitive feelings. These feelings, in turn, are able to unleash guest behaviors that can substantially help the hotel.

In addition, this paper highlights the idea that, during their stay, guests' performance can provide a chance to improve a hotel's effective functioning. Managers must discuss this fact with employees and highlight the idea that episodes of injustice toward staff on their part are relevant to the current performance of the hotel, and not just to potential future outcomes. Furthermore, the mechanism we have outlined creates a service satisfaction climate in which guests' CCIB occur. Hotel managers should pay careful attention to incidents that could decrease satisfaction with hotel service, since it links justice toward staff with CCIB.

In conclusion, this study's results support the mediating role of satisfaction with hotel service in this relationship, thus enabling managers to communicate to guests that, by engaging in fair treatment of the staff, they are making an effort to provide them with a satisfactory stay in the hotel, and, thus, are deserving of their help in the form of CCIB.

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