

## The Effect of Recreational Experiences and Emotional Gratification on Guest Loyalty in Resorts

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### ABSTRACT

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The aim of the study is to examine the effect of guests' recreational experience and emotional gratification at resort hotels on guest loyalty. The aim of the study was achieved by employing an integrative model using SmartPLS. The convenient sampling was used. Four hundred questionnaires form were distributed to resort hotel guests in Sharm El-Sheikh, out of which 305 were returned, and 286 usable ones were statistically handled (71.5% response rate). Mann–Whitney U, Kruskal–Wallis tests, and confirmatory factor analysis were used to analyze the questionnaire forms collected from resort hotel guests. The study results show that most experience factors (entertainment, education, and escapism) significantly affected guest loyalty. Furthermore, three factors of emotional gratification (i.e., fun, the vicarious release of emotions, and social sharing of emotion) were essential for guest loyalty. The study holds crucial academic implications for future scholarly research in tourism and hospitality. Hotel management should hire professional teams and provide different training programs for the animation team. The hotel managers should motivate senior guests to use recreational activities to enhance their experience and increase their loyalty. The animation team should design activities that attract guests.

### Introduction

When planning a holiday and deciding to visit a particular resort, tourism experts will cite the recreational activity program as a vital deciding element (Brey, 2011). Hence, entertainment is an essential travel motive (Gowreesunkar & Sotiriadis, 2015). Guest often search for recreational facilities; therefore, hotels usually fulfill this by offering recreational activity programs (Glinia *et al.*, 2004). The entertainment experience is about feelings and how those feelings could strongly connect customers with a particular place. This study introduces backgrounds experiences, namely, educational, esthetics, and escapist experiences, and how those experiences would motivate and

trigger emotions and potentially increase guest loyalty (Hosany & Witham, 2010; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2012). Consequently, the potential for guest retention will be increased as more it is costly to attract new guests than to retain existing ones (Lee *et al.*, 2017).

According to Syaquirah and Faizurrahman (2014), the tourism and hospitality industry's success depends on understanding guest satisfaction's key factors as it leads to preserving the reputation and increasing the revisit rate. Satisfying guests during their visit and prolonging their stay through well-planned recreational activities increase guest loyalty and encourage the desire to revisit the resort. Hence, hotels can achieve long-term success if the management can expand and maintain a loyal guest base. Therefore, guest loyalty is considered a valued asset (Wilkins *et al.*, 2010). According to Cheung and Thadani (2010), customer show different stages of allegiance, loyalty or commitment toward specific supplier. Therefore, hotels have given more attention to recreational activities as they are considered influential in guest loyalty (Boon-Liat & Abdul, 2013). Furthermore, Berry *et al.* (2006) mentioned that guests tend to spread a positive reputation about the hotel when they have enjoyed the offered recreational activity programs. Additionally, emotional gratification is associated with different recreational activities as guests develop certain emotions during their participation in those activities (Bartsch & Viehoff, 2010). Moreover, emotional gratification could be one of the primary factors that increase loyalty. Therefore, the present study investigates emotional gratification and recreational experience and their impact on achieving guest loyalty.

## **Literature review**

### **Recreational Experience**

Guest experience is an important concern in today's highly competitive environment in service organizations (Garg *et al.*, 2012). Khan (2015) posited that the influence of guest experience could lead to guest loyalty. Meanwhile, Oh *et al.* (2007, p120) defined experiences as "enjoyable, engaging, memorable encounters for those consuming these events". The experience has been applied in the hospitality industry, where "experiences have always been at the heart of the entertainment business" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 99). Experience is divided mainly into two categories of individual dimensions. The first dimension (passive and active) looks at the level of guest involvement. The second (absorption vs. immersion) desires guest engagement with the activity or performance (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Moreover, Yuan *et al.* (2008) identified four realms of guest experiences: educational (active absorption), entertainment (passive absorption), escape (active immersion), and esthetics (passive immersion).

### **Entertainment experience**

Entertainment embraces an interest of a person or feeling delighted. There are numerous ways to identify an activity or event as entertainment (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The entertainment experience is considered as one of the well-known experience that require effortless participation. that experience happens when guests observe the animation team performance and activities in resort hotels (Crick-Furman & Prentice, 2000). Mill (2001) illustrated that entertainment experience could be listening to

orchestra, watching a child play or reading a new book. Roberts (2002) added some other types of entertainment experiences, including concerts and live shows. Entertainment experience considered an primary factor of the hospitality industry (Hughes and Benn, 1995). Furthermore, Cole and Chancellor (2009) supported these ideas by investigating the effect of recreational programs, and quality of entertainment activities on resort hotels. This study reveals that entertainment activities significantly impact the best experience, guests' satisfaction, and revisit.

***H1a.*** *The entertainment experience positively impacts guest loyalty.*

### ***Education experience***

The education experience is active and permeable and it requires active customer participation in the resort activities (Hosany & Witham, 2010). Moreover, Ritchie and Hudson (2009) explained that education experience considered as an important aspect in the guests' perspective. Guest demand for the learning experience is increasing. Furthermore, customers are the main element in animation activities. In addition, education always require customer intentions that increases their desire to learn new things (Yuan *et al.*, 2008). Guests play an essential role in determining their educational experience as they perceive this experience as active and porous. Consequently, guests participated in any education experience will improve their skills. Therefore, an education experience happens when hotel guests directly participate in recreational activities and improve their awareness.

***H1b.*** *The educational experience positively impacts guest loyalty.*

### ***Esthetics experience***

Pine and Gilmore (1999) mentioned that the esthetics experience is the most essential factor of hotel customers. Esthetics experience defined as customer's interpretation and comprehension of the surrounding environment (Kastenholz *et al.*, 2017). Esthetics experience includes functionality, spatial layout, symbols, ambient conditions, signs, and artifacts. Physical atmosphere plays an essential role in the hospitality industry, where it is essential to detect guests' future intentions (Bonn *et al.*, 2007). The aesthetic experience occurs via audio or visual tools, and it does not include receiving or giving any effect to or from the surrounding environment. Moreover, Hosany and Witham (2010) explained that a guest has passive participation and immersion in the experience esthetics. Meanwhile, Anderson (2007) illustrated that the physical environment and the existing elements gratify the customers. Esthetics experience is a sensory reaction to a leisure activity's physical setting. Entertainment experience and physical setting can influence guest experience toward recreational activities in resorts (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999).

***H1c.*** *The aesthetic experience positively impacts guest loyalty.*

### ***Escapism Experience***

People travel and stay in outside their usual environment to escape from their daily routine, where the escapism experience arises (Getz, 2010). An escapism experience occurs when guest participate in a specific activity (Morgan, 2009). Furthermore, Hosany and Witham (2010) added that escapism happens when participants influence the virtual or real environment's actual performances. Resort hotels provide abundant

experiences for escapism, particularly during vacation. Escape is a factor influencing leisure behavior. In particular, individuals tend to participate in existing activities that can achieve a certain level of arousal. In this vein, entertainment experiences could be arise when guests seek higher stimulation, therefore it will increase the opportunity to escape their daily routine (Kleiber *et al.*, 2011).

**H1d.** *Escapism experience positively impacts guest loyalty.*

### **Emotional gratification**

Scholars from different theoretical and practical backgrounds have studied emotional gratification and its impact on individuals' experiences. Still, only such studies have focused on social media or media channels and their influence in achieving different gratification kinds (Bartsch & Viehoff, 2010; Bartsch, 2012; Gogan *et al.*, 2018; Xu & Takai, 2018). The present study focuses on examining the emotional gratification associated with recreational activity programs planned by resorts. According to Scheve (2013) and Holloway (2020), gratification refers to the enjoyable emotional response of happiness due to fulfilling a desire or achieving a goal. In addition, gratitude can be stimulated by fulfilling social needs such as affiliation, socialization, social acceptance, mutual appreciation, and recreational activities. Therefore, gratification plays an important role in the human social system (Jarvela, 2011). Bartsch and Viehoff (2010) suggested that using gratification as an umbrella term for gratifying entertainment and satisfaction leads to more accurate loyalty. According to Li (2013), the three types of emotional gratification are content gratification, process gratification, and social gratification.

Meanwhile, Barton (2009) stated that content gratification occurs when people participate in any entertainment activities connected with their behavior or attitude. Furthermore, the main driver of content gratification is to gain knowledge or entertainment (Gao & Feng, 2016). By applying emotional gratification methods in the tourism sector, hotels can attract tourists to well-established content of entertainment programs that fulfill their needs. Process gratification emphasizes the convenience and comfort of use (Yoo, 2011). Social gratification describes the interaction that occurs between participants during recreational activities. These interactions bring social satisfaction to tourists (Chiu & Huang, 2015). Stafford *et al.* (2004) stated main factors for social gratification are talking, little discussions, and interaction between people. The study investigates the impact of emotional gratification on achieving guest loyalty. In addition, it examines the factors of emotional gratification factors (contemplative experience, fun, excitement, vicarious release of emotion, and social sharing of emotions and their impact on gaining customer loyalty).

**H2a.** *The contemplative experience positively impacts the loyalty of the guest.*

**H2b.** *Fun positively impacts guest loyalty.*

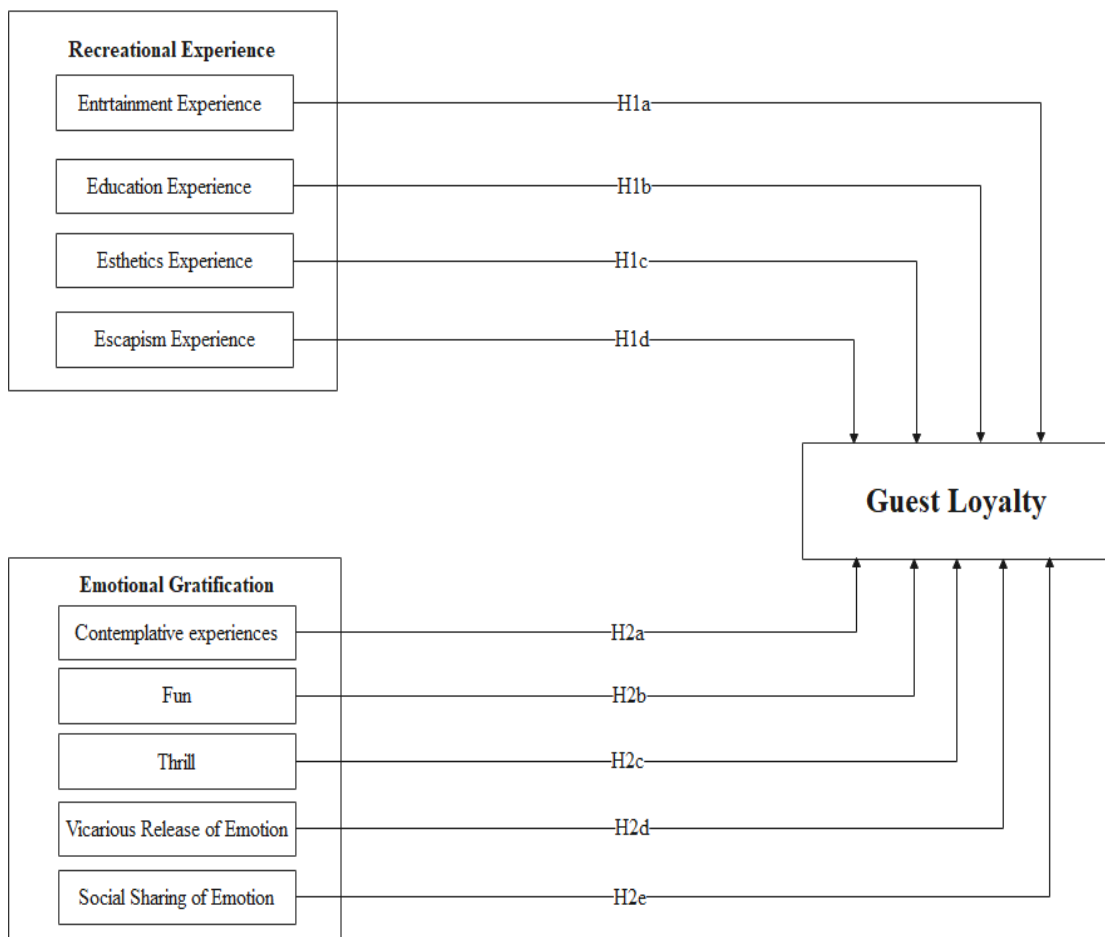
**H2c.** *Thrill positively impacts guest loyalty.*

**H2d.** *Vicarious release of emotion positively impacts guest loyalty.*

**H2e.** *Social sharing of emotions positively impacts guest loyalty.*

## Guest loyalty

Guest loyalty is considered as a revisit behavior affected by the favorable attitude of customers regards service (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Kandampully and Suhartanto separated guest loyalty into behavioral dimensions (e.g., repeat purchase) and attitudinal dimensions (e.g., recommending other guests) (Wang & Chaipoopirutana, 2015). Moreover, Skogland and Siquaw (2004) summarized that there are three dimensions of guest loyalty: price sensitivity, repeat patronage/revisit, and word of mouth. Price sensitivity indicates a willingness to pay more for staying in the same hotel regardless of the rate increase. Meanwhile, revisit means the intension to visit the same hotel whenever having a avacation and not looking for other hotel. Finally, word of mouth indicates a willingness to positively recommend this hotel to friends and relatives (Pungpho & Wanarat, 2017). The importance of guest loyalty to hotels could lead to marketing benefits, as a stronger market position could be achieved (Zakaria *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, recommendations from loyal guests, especially those that help attract new guests, increase the guest's value to the hotel. In addition, a loyal guest contributes significantly to the hotel's revenue growth, given reasonably predictable sales and a stable source of revenue (Huang, 2012).



**Fig.1.** Hypothesized research model

## Methodology

### Study instrument

The study used a questionnaire form as the data collection tool adapted from different studies (e.g., Bartsch, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2016; Bolzmann *et al.*, 2018). Table 1 lists the questionnaire items. The questionnaire items were discussed with some of academic staff, hotel managers, and experts in the hospitality industry. The questionnaire was tested to assure the accuracy of the form, sequence, and length of the questions. The questionnaire contained two sections. The first one consists of three categories wherein hotel guests are asked to rate their experience, gratification, and loyalty via 29 items on a five-point Likert scale: one = “strongly disagree,” two = “disagree,” three = “undecided,” four = “agree,” and five = “strongly agree.” The response is based on the following question: Does the guest agree or disagree with each item? Questions 1–12 measured the experience construct, questions 13–25 measured the emotional gratification construct, and questions 26–29 measured guest loyalty. The second section asked hotel guests for their data (i.e., gender, age, education, and marital status).

### Procedures

Guest hotels were the sample, especially guests in resort hotels in Sharm El-Sheikh. Thus, the sample included different guests who had recreational activities experience. A self-administrated survey was developed and distributed to 350 guests and 286 valid responses were used for analysis. The survey tool ensured the confidentiality of guest’s data.

**Table 1**

Construct measurement and sources

| Construct  | Factors                  | Items   | Measure  | Source   |
|------------|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Experience | Entertainment Experience | E1  | Recreational activities at the resort were captivating to perform      | Yuan <i>et al.</i> (2008); Ali <i>et al.</i> (2014); Hosany <i>et al.</i> (2016); Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2016); Ryu and Park (2019); |
|            |                          | E2  | The recreational activities at the resort were entertaining to watch   |  |
|            |                          | E3  | The recreational activities at the resort were entertaining to perform |  |
|            |                          | E4  | I enjoyed the resort activities  |  |
|            |                          | E5  | The resort had a special event   |  |
|            | Education Experience     | EE1   | The experience has made me more knowledgeable                          |  |
|            |                          | EE2   | I learned a lot during my experience                                   |  |
|            |                          | EE3   | It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things                         |  |
|            | Esthetics                | ES1   | I felt a real sense of harmony   |  |
|            |                          | ES2   | The recreational activity program was lovely                           |  |
|            | Escapism                 | EC1   | I felt like I was living in a different place or time                  |  |
| EC2        |                          | The experience here let me imagine being someone else |  |  |
|            |                          |   |  | Continued  |

|                         |                              |     |  |                |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----|--|----------------|
| Emotional Gratification | Contemplative experiences    | CE1 | Recreational activities inspire me to think about significant issues                               | Bartsch (2012) |
|                         |                              | CE2 | Recreational activities make me think about myself   |                |
|                         | Fun                          | F1  | Recreational activities make me laugh  |                |
|                         |                              | F2  | Recreational activities put me in a good mood  |                |
|                         |                              | F3  | Recreational activities amuse me   |                |
|                         |                              | F4  | Recreational activities are funny  |                |
|                         | Thrill                       | T1  | I like the happiness I feel from the activities  |                |
|                         |                              | T2  | I like the tension associated with the activities  |                |
|                         | Vicarious release of emotion | VE1 | Recreational activities allow me to experience feelings that I cannot act in everyday life         |                |
|                         |                              | VE2 | Recreational activities allow me to experience emotions that I avoid in everyday life              |                |
|                         | Social sharing of emotion    | SE1 | Recreational activities inspire me to talk to others   |                |
|                         |                              | SE2 | Recreational activities stimulate the exchange of comments while participating in those activities |                |
|                         |                              | SE3 | Recreational activities encourage me to discuss issues with others                                 |                |
|                         | Guest Loyalty                |     | GL1  |                |
| GL2                     |                              |     | I will come back to this resort  |                |
| GL3                     |                              |     | I would continue coming to this hotel even if the prices increase a little                         |                |
| GL4                     |                              |     | I will visit other hotels that offer better prices when I return to Sharm El-Sheikh                |                |

### Data Analysis

The study applied data processing techniques using the SmartPLS version 8.80 program system as software for structural equation modeling (SEM), apart from using SPSS version 20. The choice of SmartPLS has been deemed the best statistical software to estimate structural equation models (Hair, 2017). First, (CFA) was used to test the measurement model of guest loyalty. Second, to test the reliability of constructs composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha and were used. The Cronbach alpha coefficient achieved minimum value of 0.7, referring to the reliability of the instruments (Bujang *et al.*, 2018). Third, two variance analysis tests (i.e., the Mann–Whitney U and Kruskal–Wallis tests) were used to test the differences between gender,

age, education, and marital status. Moreover, the study has found no outlier; missing value problems were excluded from the data.

## Results

### Respondents' demographics

Table 2 shows that of the total number of respondents, 156 (54.5%) were male, and 130 (45.5%) were female. In addition, 87 (30.4%) respondents are between 36 and 45 years old; meanwhile, 68 (23.8%) respondents are between 26 and 35 years old; 70 (24.5%) are between 18 and 25, and 12 (4.2%) are older than 55 years. For the educational level, most of the respondents (66.8%) have bachelor's degrees and the remaining have master's degrees (9.8%) and Ph.D. degrees (3.8%). Moreover, more than half of the respondents are married with children (53.8%), whereas 26.6% were married without children, and 19.6% were single

**Table 2**

Demographic data of the respondents (N = 286)

| Variables             |                          | Frequencies | Percentage |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>         |                          |             |            |
|                       | Female                   | 130         | 45.5       |
|                       | Male                     | 156         | 54.5       |
| <b>Age (years)</b>    |                          |             |            |
|                       | 18–25                    | 70          | 24.5       |
|                       | 26–35                    | 68          | 23.8       |
|                       | 36–45                    | 87          | 30.4       |
|                       | 46–55                    | 49          | 17.1       |
|                       | Older than 55            | 12          | 4.2        |
| <b>Education</b>      |                          |             |            |
|                       | Bachelor's degree        | 191         | 66.8       |
|                       | Master's degree          | 28          | 9.8        |
|                       | PhD                      | 11          | 3.8        |
|                       | Other                    | 56          | 19.6       |
| <b>Marital Status</b> |                          |             |            |
|                       | Single                   | 56          | 19.6       |
|                       | Married with children    | 154         | 53.8       |
|                       | Married without children | 76          | 26.6       |

### Descriptive analysis

SmartPLS was used to analyze recreational experience, emotional gratification, and guest loyalty items (i.e., 29 items). First, the 29 items were calculated by means, standard deviation, and factor loading, as demonstrated in Table 3. All items have passed the acceptable level of 0.7, confirming the suitability of the items for the analysis (Lin *et al.*, 2015).



**Table 3**

A descriptive analysis of the factors influencing guest loyalty

| Items                                    | Mean | St. deviation | Factor loading |
|--|------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Entertainment Experience (E)</b>      |      |               |                |
| E1                                       | 2.50 | 1.602         | 0.905          |
| E2                                       | 2.66 | 1.494         | 0.913          |
| E3                                       | 2.80 | 1.476         | 0.914          |
| E4                                       | 2.98 | 1.453         | 0.864          |
| E5                                       | 3.08 | 1.356         | 0.846          |
| <b>Education Experience (EE)</b>         |      |               |                |
| EE1                                      | 3.10 | 1.375         | 0.774          |
| EE2                                      | 3.28 | 1.384         | 0.768          |
| EE3                                      | 3.34 | 1.386         | 0.785          |
| <b>Esthetics (ES)</b>                    |      |               |                |
| ES1                                      | 3.41 | 1.423         | 0.806          |
| ES2                                      | 3.44 | 1.420         | 0.847          |
| <b>Escapism (EC)</b>                     |      |               |                |
| EC1                                      | 3.39 | 1.437         | 0.886          |
| EC2                                      | 3.41 | 1.453         | 0.880          |
| <b>Contemplative Experience (CE)</b>     |      |               |                |
| CE1                                      | 3.35 | 1.433         | 0.841          |
| CE2                                      | 3.41 | 1.438         | 0.883          |
| <b>Fun (F)</b>                           |      |               |                |
| F1                                       | 3.47 | 1.406         | 0.877          |
| F2                                       | 3.39 | 1.494         | 0.878          |
| F3                                       | 3.24 | 1.441         | 0.884          |
| F4                                       | 3.31 | 1.514         | 0.881          |
| <b>Thrill (T)</b>                        |      |               |                |
| T1                                       | 3.21 | 1.386         | 0.860          |
| T2                                       | 3.18 | 1.449         | 0.880          |
| <b>Vicarious release of emotion (VE)</b> |      |               |                |
| VE1                                      | 3.20 | 1.326         | 0.844          |
| VE2                                      | 3.26 | 1.410         | 0.854          |
| <b>Social sharing of emotion (SE)</b>    |      |               |                |
| SE1                                      | 3.27 | 1.340         | 0.871          |
| SE2                                      | 3.23 | 1.339         | 0.874          |
| SE3                                      | 3.26 | 1.365         | 0.832          |
| <b>Guest loyalty</b>                     |      |               |                |
| GL1                                      | 3.24 | 1.413         | 0.897          |
| GL2                                      | 3.26 | 1.307         | 0.948          |
| GL3                                      | 3.06 | 1.406         | 0.862          |
| GL4                                      | 3.05 | 1.438         | 0.784          |

## **Variance analysis**

### **Statistical analysis of variance between genders in terms of guest loyalty**

The Mann–Whitney U test was utilized to test differences between men ( $n = 156$ ) and women ( $n = 130$ ) regarding their loyalty to the resort hotel. For example, do men and women differ in hotel loyalty? The Mann–Whitney U test resulted no statistically significant difference between male and female guests; however, a significant difference existed on five items: “I learned a lot during my experience,” “I felt a real sense of harmony,” “The recreational activity program was lovely,” “I felt like I was living in a different time or place,” “The recreational activities allow me to experience emotions that I avoid in everyday life.” The results demonstrated that male guests had higher expectations toward the following items: “I learned much during my experience” ( $M = 109.12$ ) and “I felt a real sense of harmony” ( $M = 109.72$ ). Meanwhile, for female customers, they had higher expectations toward the following: “Recreation activities at the resort were captivating to perform” ( $M = 126.30$ ); “Recreational activities at the resort were entertaining to watch”; ( $M = 129.10$ ) and “Recreation activities at the resort were entertaining to perform” ( $M = 129.77$ ).

### **Variance across age, education, and marital status in terms of guests’ loyalty**

The Kruskal–Wallis test was used to test differences across age, education, and marital status regarding loyalty to resort hotels. A significant difference is observed for age group (e.g., “Recreational activities at the resort were entertaining to perform”; “I enjoyed the resort activities”; “The experience has made me more knowledgeable”; “I learned a lot during my experience”; “It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things”; and “I felt a real sense of harmony”). In addition, for the education group, the results revealed a significant difference in several items (e.g., “Recreational activities at the resort were captivating to perform”; “Recreational activities at the resort were entertaining to watch”; “Recreational activities at the resort were entertaining to perform”; “I enjoyed the resort activities”; “I felt a real sense of harmony”; “It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things”; “Recreational activities amuse me”; “Recreational activities are fun”; and “I like the happiness I feel from the activities”).

Moreover, the results indicated a significant impact of the following items on the loyalty among the marital status group: “Recreational activities at the resort were captivating to perform”; “Recreational activities at the resort were entertaining to watch”; “Recreational activities at the resort were entertaining to perform”; “I enjoyed the resort activities”; “The experience here let me imagine being someone else”; “Recreational activities inspire me to think about significant issues”; “I will recommend this resort to others”; and “I will come back to this resort.”

### **Measurement model—convergent validity (outer loading)**

Validity and reliability for all factors have been tested to assess the measurement model of guest loyalty. Constructs’ reliability was evaluated (see Table 4). Similarly, to assess the constructs’ validity, the factor loadings have been used (Table 3) and average variance extracted (AVE) for convergent validity (see Table 4) and the square roots of AVE for discriminant validity (see Table 5). As demonstrated in Table 6, both Constructs’ reliability and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients meet the required value of 0.7

for good instruments' reliability (Taber, 2017). Moreover, Tables 6 and 7 show a good validity for all factors. All AVEs have the minimum of (0.5) for convergent validity; moreover, all factors' loadings passed the 0.5 thresholds (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2017). As for discriminant validity, Table 5 presents that the AVE square root of all measured variables exceeds the other correlations involving that factor (Kock, 2015). Thus, the different measures of the model's overall goodness-of-fit recommend that a satisfactory model fit with a value of 0.542. Moreover, T-values for all parameter guesstimates were all significant at the 0.1% level.

**Table 4**

Measurement model tests

| Latent/Measured variables    | Loading | AVE   | CR    |
|------------------------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Experience                   |         |       |       |
| Entertainment Experience     | 0.956   | 0.878 | 0.973 |
| Education Experience         | 0.946   | 0.905 | 0.966 |
| Esthetics Experience         | 0.953   | 0.906 | 0.951 |
| Escapism Experience          | 0.960   | 0.922 | 0.959 |
| Gratification                |         |       |       |
| Contemplative experiences    |         | 0.937 | 0.968 |
| Fun                          | 0.939   | 0.866 | 0.963 |
| Thrill                       | 0.955   | 0.953 | 0.953 |
| Vicarious Release of Emotion | 0.947   | 0.892 | 0.943 |
| Social Sharing of Emotion    | 0.938   | 0.887 | 0.959 |
| Guest Loyalty                |         | 0.765 | 0.928 |
| GL1                          | 0.897   |       |       |
| GL2                          | 0.948   |       |       |
| GL3                          | 0.862   |       |       |
| GL4                          | 0.784   |       |       |

**Table 5**

Variable correlation of the square root of AVE

| Latent Variable correlation |                         |               |              |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|
|                             | Recreational Experience | Gratification | Loyalty      |
| Recreational Experience     | <b>0.818</b>            |               |              |
| Gratification               | 0.708                   | <b>0.855</b>  |              |
| Loyalty                     | 0.597                   | 0.852         | <b>0.902</b> |

### Analysis of structural model

The evaluation of the measurement model proved the validity and reliability of all items. Table 6 shows the path coefficients and the p-values. Results indicated that among the four types of experience, only entertainment, education, and escapism experiences had a significant positive effect on guest loyalty.

In contrast, esthetics experience had no significant influence on guest loyalty. Hence, H1a, H1b, and H1d are all accepted, whereas H1c is rejected. Moreover, fun, the vicarious release of emotions, and social sharing of emotion significantly impacted guest loyalty among the five types of gratification. Conversely, contemplative

experience and thrill had no significant impact on guest loyalty. Therefore, H2b, H2d, and H2e are accepted, whereas H2a and H2c are rejected. Finally, we can conclude that the recreational experiences included in this study explained 75% of achieving guest loyalty, whereas gratification explained 60% of achieving guest loyalty. Besides, the R2 of the endogenous latent variable has been tested, which shows a high result (Table 7). The R2 values exceeded 0.67 are high; those ranging from 0.33 to 0.67 are moderate, and those between 0.19 and .033 are weak. Moreover, any R2 values less than 0.19 are unacceptable (Henseler *et al.*, 2009)

### **Results of hypothesis testing**

The standardized coefficient ( $\beta$ ) and P-value (Table 8 and Fig. 1) were used to verify the study hypotheses:

For the first hypothesis, the study evinces that the entertainment experience significantly affects guest loyalty ( $\beta = 0.25$ , P-value = 0.00), thereby supporting H1a. In other words, the entertainment experience is one of the key factors to achieve guest loyalty. Moreover, the results indicate that guest loyalty can be achieved through education experience ( $\beta = 0.20$ , P-value = 0.016), thus supporting H1b. However, the result of the SEM rejected H1c. This means that esthetics experience has no significant impact on guest loyalty ( $\beta = 0.14$ , P-value = 0.090). Finally, this study reveals that the escapism experience significantly affected guest loyalty ( $\beta = 0.29$ , P-value = 0.000), thus supporting H1d.

Meanwhile, the results of the second set of hypotheses indicate that contemplative experience had no significant effect on guest loyalty ( $\beta = 0.088$ , P-value = 0.302), thereby rejecting H2a. In contrast, the results reveal that experiencing fun emotions significantly affects guest loyalty ( $\beta = 0.19$ , P-value = 0.001), thus supporting H2b. Moreover, no significant relationship exists between thrill and guest loyalty ( $\beta = -0.048$ , P-value = 0.491), thereby rejecting H2c. However, a significant relationship exists between the vicarious release of emotion and guest loyalty ( $\beta = 0.30$ , P-value = 0.000), thereby supporting H2d. Finally, the results demonstrate that social sharing of emotion significantly impacts guest loyalty ( $\beta = 0.57$ , P-value = 0.000), thus supporting H2e.

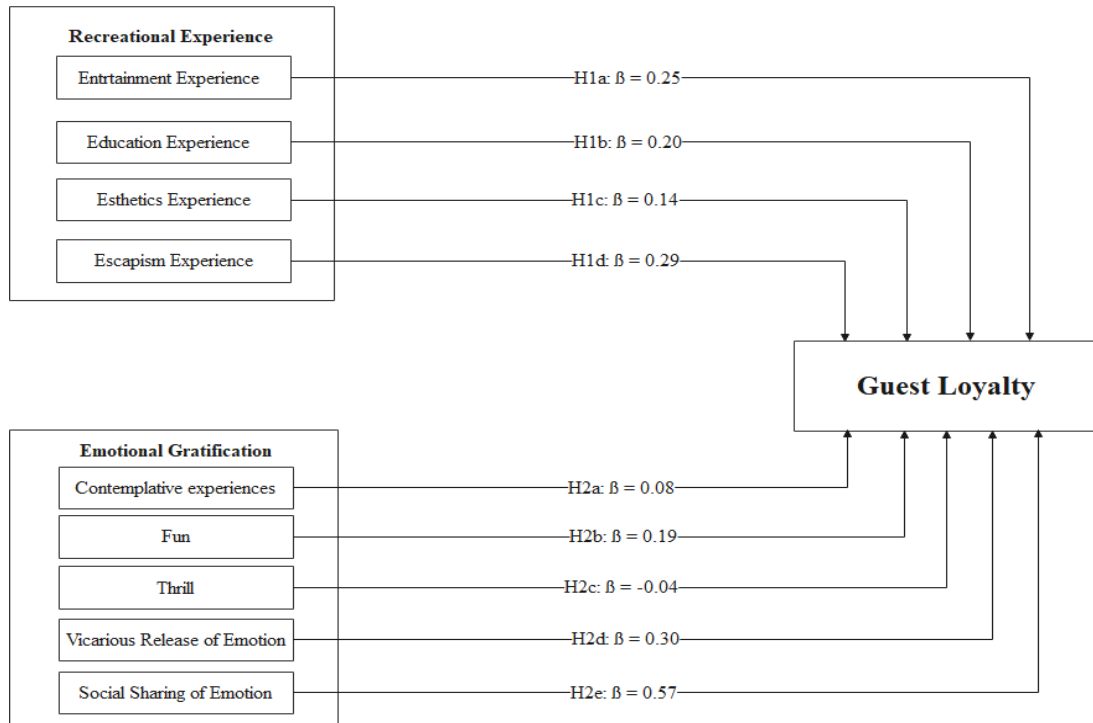


Fig.2. Final structure equation model

Table 6

Path coefficient of research hypotheses

| Hypotheses | Relationship | Std. Beta | Std. Error | T-value  | P-value | Results   |
|------------|--------------|-----------|------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| H1a        | E → GL       | 0.254     | 0.058      | 4.365*   | 0.000   | Supported |
| H1b        | EE → GL      | 0.201     | 0.083      | 2.427*   | 0.016   | Supported |
| H1c        | ES → GL      | 0.147     | 0.087      | 1.697*   | 0.090   | Rejected  |
| H1d        | EC → GL      | 0.295     | 0.058      | 5.093*** | 0.000   | Supported |
| H2a        | CE → GL      | 0.088     | 0.086      | 1.132*   | 0.302   | Rejected  |
| H2b        | F → GL       | 0.191     | 0.083      | 2.397*   | 0.001   | Supported |
| H2c        | T → GL       | -0.048    | 0.070      | 0.689*** | 0.491   | Rejected  |
| H2d        | VE → GL      | 0.304     | 0.049      | 4.285*** | 0.000   | Supported |
| H2e        | SS → GL      | 0.572     | 0.072      | 7.962*** | 0.000   | Supported |

Table 7

R-square of the endogenous latent variables

| Construct     | R <sup>2</sup> | Result |
|---------------|----------------|--------|
| Guest Loyalty | 0.718          | High   |

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The study examines the recreational experience and emotional gratification and their effects on guest loyalty in a sample of Sharm El Shiekh resort hotels. This study has tested different components of recreational experience, entertainment experience, education experience, esthetics experience, and escapism, and their effects on guest loyalty. Moreover, the study tests emotional gratification and its impact on guest loyalty

through the following components: contemplative experience, fun, thrill, the vicarious release of emotions, and social sharing of emotion. The study developed and tested a model using theoretical background through previous studies and practically through the questionnaires distributed to guests staying in resort hotels in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt (N = 286). The findings supported the suggested model as it indicates a positive influence of recreational experience and emotional gratification on guest loyalty. Consistent with some previous studies (Khan, 2015; Gogan *et al.*, 2018; Xu & Takai, 2018), The study determines that entertainment, education, and escapism experience are the key factors that significantly influence guest loyalty. Thus, these factors will develop and increase guest loyalty. This result aligns with previous research studies (e.g., Cole and Chancellor, 2009; Garg *et al.*, 2012; Khan, 2015).

On the contrary, esthetics experience does not affect guest loyalty, which is contrary to the study of Anderson (2007), who demonstrated that the physical and existing environment please the guests. Moreover, emotional gratification factors, such as fun, vicarious release of emotion, and social sharing of emotions, positively impact guest loyalty. Emotional gratification increases guest loyalty when guests experience these emotions. These findings align with Gogan *et al.* (2018) and Xu and Takai (2018). Nevertheless, contemplative experience and thrill hold no significant influence on guest loyalty. This result suggests that customers do not develop loyalty by experiencing these two kinds of emotions. Overall, testing the recreational experience yields a result revealing a significant positive influence on guest loyalty. In addition, emotional gratification demonstrated a positive and direct influence on guest loyalty.

Regarding guest profiles, the frequency varies by gender, age, education, and marital status. First, the study finds no difference between males and females in terms of their loyalty to the resort hotels. However, in both education experience and vicarious release of emotion, a significant difference exists. In esthetics experience, a significant difference exists among the three items. Therefore, this study suggests that hoteliers should increase their efforts to attract female guests' active participation in recreational activities to increase their loyalty. Second, younger guests, particularly those between 26 and 35 years, are more loyal to resort hotels when participating and using recreational activities. Younger guests tend to have more add-on experience and emotional gratification than older guests.

The study has suggested and tested a conceptual model of recreational and emotional factors and their effect on guest loyalty as a competitive advantage for resort hotels. The study hypotheses were tested by using a self-administered questionnaire. The SEM results revealed entertainment, education, and escapism as a recreational experience that significantly positively affected guest loyalty. Additionally, emotional gratification factors, fun, thrill, the vicarious release of emotion, and social sharing significantly impacted guest loyalty.

### **Study implications**

The study presented some essential implications. **Theoretically**, the study contributes to the limited literature on emotional gratification in the tourism industry, such as contemplative experiences, fun, thrill, the vicarious release of emotion, and social

sharing. Most of the studies related to the emotional gratification impact have been conducted in the media and psychology fields (Bartsch & Viehoff, 2010; Bartsch, 2012; Gogan *et al.*, 2018; Xu & Takai, 2018). Based on previous studies (Yuan *et al.*, 2008; Bartsch, 2012; Ali *et al.*, 2014; Hosany *et al.*, 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2016; Ryu & Park, 2019), this research paper proposed and tested a conceptual model (Figure 1) that discussed the influence of recreational experience and emotional gratifications on guest loyalty. In this vein, the study has shown that entertainment experience ( $\beta = 0.25$ ), escapism experience ( $\beta = 0.29$ ), and social sharing of emotions ( $\beta = 0.57$ ) have the most significance on increasing guest loyalty.

**Practically**, the study holds important implications to resort hotels. Firstly, resort hotel managers should give more attention to the recreational activities performed inside the hotel. For example, hiring professional teams or relays on companies specialized in recreational activities. Secondly, the study suggests that hotels should motivate guests to use recreational activities to enhance their experience and increase their loyalty. For example, the animation team should design special activity programs that fit senior tourists to participate, improve their emotional attachment to the resort, and increase their loyalty. Thirdly, the study results demonstrated that higher educated guests are more loyal than others; this finding is consistent with the study of Hussien and Mansour (2020). In this vein, the recreational activities team should design activities that attract this category of guests (knowledge competitions, theatre plays, innovative games). Finally, the study results found that the guests with children tend to be more loyal than the single ones and those without children. Therefore, the study recommends that the hotel managers exert extra marketing efforts toward unmarried and married couples without children. For example, a recreational team can allocate a specific time for singles and married couples to participate in different activities.

### **Limitations and future research**

Guest loyalty is an essential factor to resort hotels especially the effect of recreational facilities, this study tried to evaluate the most important factors despite this the study has some limitations. The study sampled those guests who had stayed in five-star resort hotels. Therefore, the study results cannot be applied to other hotel categories. Future studies may include four-star resort hotels to survey those who stayed in and contributed to the recreational activities provided by this category. Moreover, the study tested the effect of two variables on one dependent variable (guests' loyalty). Finally, this study used self-reported questionnaires. Future studies should considerate factors improving guest loyalty to resort hotels by using qualitative methods.

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## تأثير التجربة الترفيهية والإشباع العاطفي في ولاء النزلاء في المنتجعات

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### معلومات المقالة

#### الكلمات المفتاحية

التجربة الترفيه؛  
الإشباع العاطفي؛ ولاء  
النزلاء؛ فنادق  
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### الملخص

تهدف الدراسة إلى تقييم التجربة الترفيهية للنزلاء في فنادق المنتجعات ودراسة تأثير التجارب المختلفة والإشباع العاطفي على ولاء النزلاء. تم تحقيق هدف الدراسة من خلال استخدام نموذج تكاملي باستخدام SmartPLS. كما تم استخدام أسلوب أخذ العينات المناسب لاختيار العينة. تم توزيع عدد 400 استمارة استقصاء على نزلاء فنادق المنتجعات في شرم الشيخ، تم استلام 305 استمارة، والقابل للتحليل 286 استبيانًا إحصائيًا (بمعدل استجابة 71.5%). تم استخدام اختبارات Mann-Whitney U و Kruskal-Wallis وتحليل العوامل المؤكدة لتحليل استمارات الاستبيان التي تم جمعها من نزلاء فنادق المنتجعات. توضح نتائج الدراسة أن معظم عوامل الخبرة (الترفيه، والتعليم، والهروب من الواقع) أثرت بشكل كبير على ولاء النزلاء. ووضحت الدراسة ان هناك ثلاثة عوامل للإشباع العاطفي (المتعة، التعبير الغير مباشر للمشاعر، والمشاركة الاجتماعية للعاطفة) ضرورية لولاء النزلاء. تحمل الدراسة أثر أكاديمي للبحث العلمي المستقبلي في مجال السياحة والضيافة. وأوصت الدراسة بقيام إدارة فنادق المنتجعات بتعيين فرق محترفة للترفيه وتقديم برامج تدريبية متنوعة لهم. كما ينبغي على مدراء المنتجعات تحفيز كبار السن على استخدام الأنشطة الترفيهية لتعزيز تجربتهم وزيادة ولائهم للمنتجعات. ويوصي فريق الترفيه بتنظيم أنشطة متنوعة لجذب النزلاء.

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