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Article

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Review article

Customer-to-customer interaction in tourism experience: Moderating role of nationality

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ABSTRACT

In this research, we examine the effect of extroversion and the perceived similarity on customer to customer interaction (CCI), and the effect of this interaction on the tourists' reactions. We examine also the moderating role of the nationality in CCI and tourists behavior. The study is based on a sample of 519 tourists from different nationalities (Tunisian, French, German, British and Italian tourists) residing in hotels in Tunisia. The results show that extroversion and the perceived similarity contribute to the development of the interactions between customers, and that this type of interaction influences the tourists' behavioral responses (desire of stay, satisfaction and loyalty). Similarly, the results indicate that the tourist's nationality moderates the relation between CCI and tourists' reactions. Managers should have a clear and explicit strategic position in terms of interactions with customers. They can put forward their position by valuing and inciting the relationships between customers in terms of distraction, help or information.

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1. Introduction

In a service experience, not only is the customers' goal to satisfy their practical needs but also their social and psychological ones. So, the clients' behavior is influenced not only by physical stimuli but also by social and human ones. In this context, [Breda \(2004\)](#) defines the service experience as a social experience and a source of social interaction.

The field of investigation of social interaction has evolved in the marketing literature to consider personal/customer interactions in touch mainly and first in point of sale ([Vesel & Zabkar, 2010](#)), and in commercial services ([Varlander & Yakhlef, 2006](#); [Volle & Mimouni, 2003](#)). Compared to this abundant literature, very little research dealt with customer-to-customer (CCI) interaction. However, it is acknowledged that the process of servuction clearly mentions the role of interactions between customers ([Capelli & Sabadie, 2007](#)). CCI is a theme that has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners to the general proposition that the development of a strong interaction between consumers improves the service experience. The application of this phenomenon in the context of services dates back to only twenty years ago ([Martin & Pranter, 1989](#)). Moreover, tourism is a line of research that has not received the attention of researchers in customer behavior compared to other areas such as the Bank and retail, particularly in Tunisia.

[Salvadore \(2015\)](#) stipulates that touristic experience is rarely lived individually but through the meeting with other people. Along the same lines, [Danièle and Thomas \(2015\)](#) show that touristic activities often require distinct social interactions and the establishment of new relations. [Bouchet and Lebrun \(2004\)](#) show that social interaction is an important factor in tourism, since the need of human relations represents one of the driving forces of a tourist vacation. In fact, the post-modern trend evolves on community links ([Breda, 2004](#)). The customer is on an on-going search for social interactions through which the individual has the opportunity to develop relationships with strangers and share their service experiences with other customers. According to [Libai et al. \(2010\)](#), the most noteworthy development in marketing research is the understanding of the antecedents and the consequences of the customer/customer interaction. This phenomenon presents an opportunity and a change for researchers and practitioners who have to identify aspects of the customer/customer interaction they should focus on. Thus, they have to develop new research methods contributing to the customer/customer interaction—a relatively new phenomenon in marketing research.

Therefore, in this article, our main objective is to study the effects of personal variables on the development of the customer to customer interaction such as the extroversion and the perceived similarity among customers. In this context, the paradigm of the similarity-attraction shows that the similarities between consumers in terms of attitudes and values favor interpersonal attraction ([Young & Buchholtz, 2002](#)). Similarly, [Capelli and Sabadie \(2007\)](#) recommend the study of the link between the perceived similarity and CCI. Also, [Barrick and Mount \(1991\)](#) show that people with a high level of extraversion are more assertive, active and sociable. According to [Zarrad and Dabbabi \(2013a, 2013b\)](#) “extroverts have a strong need to protect their side in interpersonal interactions”.

Also, we aim to study the effect of this type of interaction on the satisfaction with the vacation, the desire to stay and the loyalty to the hotel. In fact, the literature review shows that the interaction with other consumers improves the sociability of the hotel, the pleasure, the excitement of visitors as well as their emotions, which motivates consumer desire to stay. In this context, [Goi, Kalidas, and Zeeshan \(2014\)](#) show that when customers share the sense of friendship, intimacy and affection, they desire to spend more time at the hotel. Similarly, some research points out that pleasant interactions reflected by friendly attitudes generate positive consumer emotions leading to the overall satisfaction with service ([Temessek Behi, 2008](#)). In addition, [Moore, Moore, and Capella \(2005\)](#) validated through an empirical study the effect of CCI developed in hair salons on the loyalty of customers and the moderating role of nationality on the relation CCI-behavioral responses.

The results of our research show that the interaction between consumers is dependent on extroversion and the perceived similarity. They also show that this type of interaction positively influences the desire of stay, the satisfaction and the loyalty in the

context of hospitality. And for the moderator, the results show that the nationality of the tourist has a moderating effect on the relation CCI-behavioral responses.

As a first step, we propose a literature review identifying the key variables of our research. Secondly, we examine the role of extroversion and the similarity perceived in the development of the CCI, the role of this type of interaction on the behavioral responses of tourists, and the moderating role in the relation between CCI-behavioral responses. Finally, we will analyze the theoretical and practical implications, underlining the limitations and the future research avenues of this work.

2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

Hospitality is part of tourist activities that benefit the most in the sector. It offers heterogeneous services satisfying various motivations such as leisure, entertainment, business, culture, etc. Tourism is vital for the Tunisian economy. The sector annually generates between 18 and 20 percent of foreign exchange earnings and covers 56% of the trade deficit. The tourism sector has a ripple effect on a lot of areas: communication, transportation, agriculture, trade, etc. Tourism revenue reached 570.2 million dinars during the first quarter of 2015. These revenues rose compared to the same period of 2010, but they declined by 6.8 percent compared to the same period in 2014. Faced with the fragility of the tourism industry following the events of terrorism, those responsible for hotels are aware of the importance of promoting domestic tourism. Domestic tourism when a resident of a given area travel within this area but outside their usual environment. The Tunisian guest can enjoy a wide range of tourism products in Tunisia such as seaside, Saharan tourism, health, Spa, recreational or business.

In the following, we analyze the different concepts deployed in this work.

2.1. The concept of customer to customer interaction (CCI)

Very few studies have focused on the CCI concept in comparison to those conducted on the customer/service provider interaction. It was not until twenty years ago that [Martin and Pranter \(1989\)](#) published the first article in an international journal in which they presented the CCI in a global manner and proposed a program for future research in this domain.

In the context of a service environment, the customers often engage in conversations to exchange information. For instance, they would ask for help from another customer to find an element in the service space, or they would ask for advice or opinion about the suitability of a specific element. This facilitates the service continuity. In the same vein, [Parker and Ward \(2000\)](#) state that, in the absence of the personnel, the CCI becomes imperative to ensure the continuity of the service delivery. In tourist and entertainment services where the CCI is an integral part of the service experience, these interactions reflect a certain social activity in the customer's life. Incentives to interact and the consequences go beyond the level of strict consumption. "CCI structure the service experience lived by the customer and occupy an important place in their daily life" ([Camelis & Llosa, 2011](#)). [Decrop \(2010\)](#) shows that shared entertainment activities put the CCI under the spotlight. Collective games, meetings by the pool or at parties are enough occasions for sharing. He adds that CCI creates memories to be told later as anecdotes or unforgettable moments.

2.2. The extroversion

The extroversion represents an indicator of interpersonal assertiveness, gregariousness and confidence ([Costa & McCrae, 1995](#)). Individuals with high level of extroversion are more likely to develop interpersonal relations, spend more time with people and love to be surrounded with people. The quality level of social interactions is related to the person's personality and particularly to their extroversion. People with high levels of extroversion are more assertive, more active and more social. For them, positive interactions are important ([Leary, Reilly, & Brown, 2009](#)).

2.3. The perceived similarity among customers

Similarity is defined as the degree to which customers seem similar and identify themselves with other customers in the service environment. The customer may feel at ease in the presence of other similar customers. They can even use their presence for their benefit ([Yin & Poon, 2016](#)). Research on this kind of similarity prove that friendship links making up informal social relationships have the tendency to develop among people sharing common attributes, such as the type, the principals, the appearance and the race ([Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990](#)).

2.4. The desire to stay

The friendliness of the service and the multiplicity of physical and social interactions are positively proportional to the time the customer spends in the service experience and, even, to their desire to stay in the service place ([Clauzel & Riché, 2015](#)). [Price and Arnould \(1999\)](#) showed that, when the customers share friendly feelings, affection, and intimacy with the personnel, their desire to spend more time there will increase. [Goi et al. \(2014\)](#) says that if a person develops a positive feeling for another person through the service meeting, they will have positive emotions increasing their desire to stay in the service place.

2.5. *The satisfaction with the Vacation*

In marketing, the definition of satisfaction goes beyond the simple “accomplishment” of what was desired. [Hunt \(1977\)](#), one of the pioneers in this, proposes a definition that reflects well the base meaning of the concept. It is “the satisfaction revealed by the evaluation which considers whether the experience was as good as it was supposed to be”. Global satisfaction with the service is considered as an affective construct that meets a specific consumption experience ([Lloyd & Luk, 2011](#)). A research conducted by [Mohr and Bitner \(1995\)](#) underlines the importance of not only the service result but also of the whole service process, in particular the social interactions in the service meeting which affects the satisfaction. Likewise, many researches show that agreeable interactions manifested by a friendly attitude and recognition generate within the customer positive emotions that lead to global satisfaction with the service ([Temessek Behi, 2008](#)).

2.6. *The loyalty to the hotel*

Marketing researchers assign more importance to social interactions and their roles in loyalty reinforcement ([Gremler & Gwinner, 2000](#); [Imankhan, Fakharyan, & Feyzabadi, 2012](#)). In a lot of research, researchers have studied loyalty as an intentional behavior of re-purchase and recommendations to determine the loyalty to the service ([Capelli & Sabadie, 2007](#); [Price & Arnould, 1999](#)). [Han, Kworntnik, and Wang \(2008\)](#) show that positive social interactions between the occupants of the place can explain the loyalty to the place far beyond traditional factors examined in research on what leads to this loyalty (satisfaction, trust). This explicatory power varies according to the services context ([Han et al., 2008](#)). In this context, [Moore et al. \(2005\)](#) maintain that the customer's loyalty develops in services with high contact where there is a strong probability of social interactions, such as hairdressing salons, hotels, gyms. [Gremler and Gwinner \(2000\)](#) reveal the existence of a positive link between feelings of friendship and loyalty to the service. As such, [Goodwin \(2000\)](#) suggests that the period of a service meeting offer the opportunity to develop a community feeling leading to the loyalty to the service.

2.7. *The tourist's nationality*

[Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck \(1961\)](#) state that “customers coming from different cultures or countries can have expectations regarding a service because cultures are different in terms of the behavior and attitude sets” (cited in [Temessek Behi, 2008](#)). Likewise, many researchers say that the cultural difference leads to different evaluations of the service and significantly affect the customer's behavior ([Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998](#)). In this context, [Lovelock \(1983\)](#) recognizes how any attempt to standardize a service offer is a failing strategy.

Now, we will focus on the research hypotheses and the conceptual model proposed.

3. *The research model and hypotheses*

Before proposing graphic representation of the research model, we present the justification of the hypotheses.

3.1. *The effect of the extroversion and the perceived similarity on the CCI*

[Zajenkovska and Zimmerman \(2013\)](#) state that the quality of social interactions is related to the person's personality, particularly to their level of extroversion. According to [Barrick and Mount \(1991\)](#), people with high levels of extroversion are more assertive, active, and sociable. For them, social interactions seem to be an important element in the service experience. This comes in accordance with the [Furnham's results \(1992\)](#) which show that social contacts have much importance for the extroverts than for the introverts. According to [Zarrad and Dabbabi \(2013a, 2013b\)](#) extroverts having high levels of extroversion are more inclined to develop interpersonal relations, spend more time with others and love to be around people.

Using these observations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. Extroversion directly and positively influences the CCI.

Some researchers have attempted to show that the resemblances influence the quality of social interactions ([Crosby et al., 1990](#)) as well as the customers' purchasing behavior and attitudes ([McNeilly & Russ, 2000](#)). The possible effects of resemblance are explained following the identification with other customers through many variables such as appearance, behavior ([Brocato, Voorhees, & Baker, 2012](#)), attitude ([Smith, 1998](#)), age and gender ([Yin & Poon, 2016](#)).

[Crosby et al. \(1990\)](#) confirmed that the similarity has a positive effect on the communication and perception of the service. In fact, during the first phases of interaction, the customers do not have enough information about each other. Thus, they find themselves compelled to make inferences based on the observed behavior. [Yin and Poon \(2016\)](#) think that customers are unable to

judge other people's attitudes, values and beliefs at first glance. As long as it is difficult for them to discern unapparent attitudes, they resort to visible appearances. Therefore, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H2. Perceived similarity among customers directly and positively influences the CCI.

3.2. *The CCI effect on behavioral reactions*

Some research has stressed that agreeable interactions showing a friendly attitude create within the customers positive emotions that lead to global satisfaction with the service (Temessek Behi, 2008). Imankhan et al. (2012) found a significant link between the CCI and the satisfaction with the service in the context of an airline company. A qualitative research conducted by Camelis, Dano, Goudarzi, Hamon, and Llosa (2013) confirmed this link in the context of a train trip. It seems that functional interactions based on reciprocal help and the exchange of advice between customers lead extra-“communal” interactions to the establishment of friendship ties that contribute to the customer's satisfaction with the service. Fakharyan, Omidvar, Khodadadian, Jalilvand, & Nasrolahi Vosta (2014) confirmed this positive link in the context of hospitality.

H3. The CCI directly and positively influences the Satisfaction with the Vacation.

The literature archive demonstrates that the interaction with other customers leads to the improvement of the hotel's sociability which increases the customer's desire to stay. In this context, Goi et al. (2014) point out that when the customers share their sense of friendship, intimacy and affection, the desire to spend more time in the hotel increases. Selnes and Gronhaug (2000) emphasize the positive influence of affective relations developed between the customers on their intentions to stay longer in the hotel.

H4. The CCI directly and positively influences the desire to stay in the hotel.

Lots of studies testify to the importance of the social dimension in the service meeting and its consequences on the customer's behavior (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000; Price & Arnould, 1999). In hospitality, the CCI are very frequent and intense (long-term interactions). This provides a favorable area for the development of social links leading to positive effects on the loyalty to the service (Temessek Behi, 2008). Decrop (2010) proves that the importance of other customers in the entertainment service and the frequency and duration of the interactions lead us to think that the tie that might develop between customers is likely to create a loyal intention to the service. This leads us to present the following hypothesis:

H5. The CCI directly and positively influences the loyalty to the hotel.

3.3. *The moderating role of nationality between CCI and behavioral reactions*

Stauss and Mang (1999) show that intercultural service meeting is mainly made of CCI. Many researchers believe that the principal international tourism motivation is to get away from the grind of daily life and establish new acquaintances (Johnson & Grier, 2013). Many researchers have adopted the customer's nationality as the moderating variable. Johnson and Grier (2013) affirm that the customer's nationality moderates the relation between the social environment and the customer's satisfaction. Likewise, Menvielle, Menvielle, and Mars (2008) studied the moderating role that the nationality plays between the perception of social variables and behavioral reactions.

These observations make us propose the following hypothesis:

H6. The tourist's nationality moderates the relation between the CCI and the behavioral reactions.

Fig. 1 displays a graphic representation of the proposed conceptual model. Following the presentation of the research hypothesis and the conceptual model, we expose the research methodology (data collection, the measurement of the variable, moderating variable).

4. *The research methodology*

To test the proposed conceptual model, an empirical study (exploratory and confirmatory) has been conducted on tourists. The methodological choices related to data gathering, the implementation of the measurement instruments and the method of analysis take into consideration the different debates on the methodology of measurement (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Hayduk & Littvay, 2012).

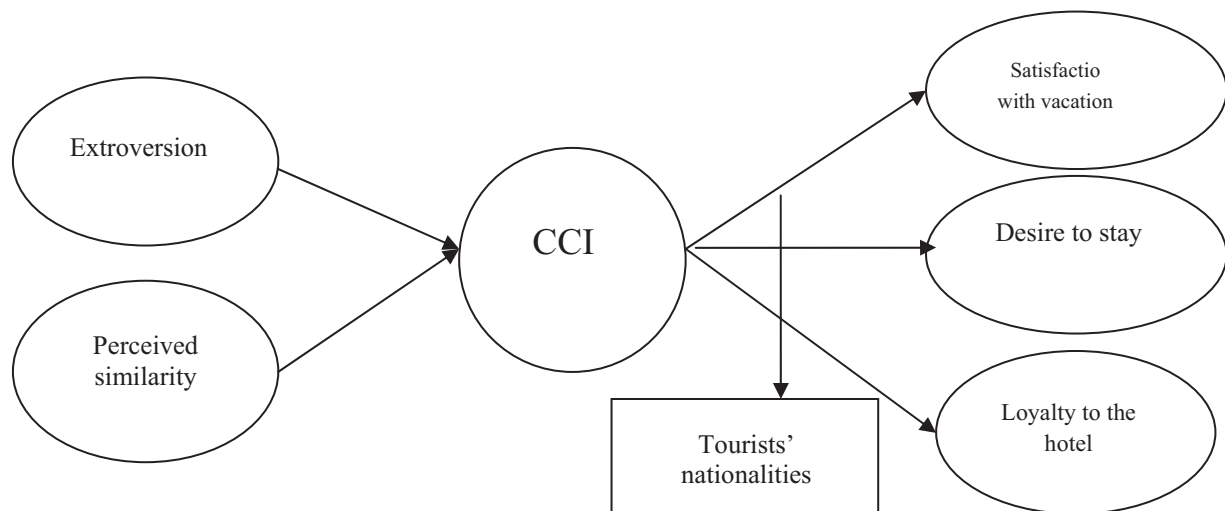


Fig. 1 – Conceptual model proposed.

4.1. Context of the study

Given the general situation in the country (a climate marked by violence and social tensions in many parts of the country), tourism investments have significantly decreased. Since the revolution of 14/01/2011, the tourism sector has experienced a crisis due to the decline in dating of European origin. Following the closure of 24 hotels, about 22 thousand jobs were terminated. Following these events, the Tunisian Minister of tourism announced “exceptional” security measures and stated that it is essential to launch an international promotional campaign to try to save the spring and summer season. These security measures are reinforced especially in airports, buses, circuits and tourist sites all around the country.

Moreover, hotel officials have announced that it has become necessary to give more importance to local tourism which must be developed in order to contribute to the revival of the Tunisian tourism. In Tunisia, domestic tourism deserves more consideration for these reasons:

- Given the overall situation of the country and the urgency of political events, the Tunisian tourist is looking for a getaway in fun places;
- Tunisian customer must be valued by the hoteliers who should not only focus on the summer season but also offer low season holiday offers which would increase the hotel occupancy during hollow period
- Domestic tourism represents a protective solution in bad global circumstance leading to the deterioration of the sector in the international market (Temessek Behi, 2008).

4.2. Data collection

A sample survey conducted via a face-to-face, on-site questionnaire was conducted in 3 and 5 stars hotels in Tunisia. In terms of destination, travel agencies managers informed us that the region of Nabeul-Hammamet is the most popular for Tunisians who they have a strong preference for 4-star hotels, followed by hotels 5 stars because of their very expensive prices. The president of the Tunisian federation of hospitality shows that a development strategy will be implemented in the coming years to promote tourism by improving the quality of service and offering promotions and prices for Tunisian tourists especially in the low season. All this information supports the choice of periods, areas and categories of hotels for the collection of research data.

To collect data, we have opted for the quota method which consists in “developing a reduced model of the population studied, following the criteria that we know its distribution within the population” (Dussaix, 2009). This sampling method allows us to improve our samples representation by giving them a structure similar to that of the parent-population with respect to the chosen variable (the nationality). In this study, our sample is considered as a reduced representation of the tourist population (N=519 Tunisian, French, German, British and Italian tourists) residing in the hotels of Tunisia. Our choice of these nationalities is made on the basis of the last statistics conducted by the office of tourism which presents them as the main nationalities staying in Tunisian hotels during the first quarter of 2015 (January, February and March).

Table 1 shows their repartition.

Using the parent population, we will distribute our samples made of 519 tourists (Table 2).

The final sample (N=519) is diverse in terms of gender, age, socio-professional categories and the level of education: 54% of the Tunisian tourists and 46% of European tourists. In our sample, men and women are represented with a slightly higher percentage

Table 1 – Percentage of each nationality of the sample.

Nationality of tourists	Number of tourists	Percentage of tourists
Tunisian (local tourists)	245501	54.10%
French	87226	19.21%
German	44417	9.78%
British	41263	9.08%
Italian	35761	7.87%
Total	454168	100%

Table 2 – Quotas in our sample.

Nationality	Number of tourists in our sample
Tunisian (local tourists)	281
French	100
German	51
British	47
Italian	41
Total	519

of women (53%). All age groups are included in our sample with mainly the age of [18-30] group. In addition, for the level of education, there is a relatively high percentage of superior level (69.7%). Thus, 519 individuals having been investigated in different units and categories of hotels form a rather heterogeneous group in terms of sex, age and nationality.

4.3. The measurement of variables

Measuring instruments of the constructs have been adapted from previous work taking into account the context of our work for each concept.

- Customer-to-customer interaction (CCI): CCI is measured with four items adopted from [Moore et al. \(2005\)](#) in the context of hairdressing.
- Extroversion: extroversion is basically measured using the personality questionnaire of Eysenck to measure individual level of extraversion (Eysenck Personality Questionnaire). In 2005, SATO proposed a reduced scale of this built in 12 items ([Reniou, 2009](#)). We note that item 10 is reversed to ensure the quality of the answers.
- Perceived similarity: the perceived similarity was developed by [Brocato \(2006\)](#). This scale has been tested in three different contexts such as parks attraction, restaurants, and stores; because in these service environments, the consumer spends enough time to assess other consumers as well as the degree of similarity with them.
- Satisfaction: to measure the satisfaction with the service experience, we have retained the scale of [Aurier and Evrard \(1998\)](#) taken back by [Breda \(2004\)](#) while adopting tested and minor changes in the context of a tourism experience.
- Desire of stay: to measure the desire of stay we borrowed the scale of [Donovan and Rossiter \(1982\)](#) tested in a context of a mall, It has good psychometric qualities. This scale was adopted and resulted in our research.
- Loyalty: in tourism research, the loyalty of the tourist has been measured through their intention to revisit the same destination and plan to its recommendation to others ([Robinot & Giannelloni, 2009](#)). For these considerations, we have the scale of five items of [Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman \(1996\)](#) which allows to take into account the intention of re-stay in the hotel, intending to produce a positive word of mouth and recommend the hotel.

Yet, in conformity with [Rossiter's recommendations \(2002\)](#) of the importance of facial and content validity, we have conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 tourists (Tunisian and European) and obtained appropriate advice from university colleagues in order to check the appropriateness of the measurement instruments.

The realized interviews and the different opinions obtained helped us define and add the items of existent instruments. Once the interview was drafted, a pre-test was conducted on 30 tourists following the debriefing method. This caused us to rephrase certain questions. The constructs measurement items ([Appendix A](#)) were evaluated on Likert 5–echelon– scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”.

We provide now the results of this research regarding the validation of the measurement instruments and the testing of the structured model (research hypothesis).

5. The research results

To examine the measurement model and the structural model, the structural equations method is used as suggested by [Anderson and Gerbing \(1988\)](#). We estimate the parameters by the method of maximum likelihood with the help of Amos 18.

5.1. The validation of measurement instrument

- Results of exploratory factor analysis of control sample
Preliminary analysis has proved the absence of missing values (through face-to-face questionnaire). In order to verify the validity and the reliability of the employed measurement instruments, some exploratory factor analysis (ACP) has been conducted on a control sample ($N=150$ tourist-respondents during their stay at the hotel). This exploratory phase refined the list of the initial items. The selected factorial structures resulted in a correct variance percentage ($>60\%$). Finally, Alphas' Cronbach value ($\alpha > 0.7$) signals a good internal coherence of each scale.
- Results of confirmatory factor analysis on the final sample
Confirmatory factor analysis has been conducted on the factorial structure previously obtained by using the final sample ($N=519$). The models of measurement have been evaluated according to [Jackson, Gillaspay, and Purc-Stephenson \(2009\)](#) recommendations. We have estimated the global measurement model indicating a correct adjustment of the data with the following indices: $\chi^2/ddl=2.090$, $p < 0.00$; $RMSEA=0.052$, $CFI=0.951$; $NFI: 0.919$. [Table 3](#) shows that the results are satisfactory in terms of internal coherence (ρ of Jöreskog is superior than 0.8). Convergent validity has been evaluated by examining the force and the signification of factorial contributions and emphasizing R^2 value (>0.5) ([Fornell & Larcker, 1981](#)).
To demonstrate the discriminant validity, we used the criterion of [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) by comparing the value of R^2 and the square correlation between the constructs. According to these authors, the discriminant validity of a latent variable is confirmed if it shares more variance with its own indicators than with other latent variables ($R^2 > r^2$ between constructs). The results indicate good discriminant validity of the constructs ([Table 4](#)).

5.2. Test of the structural model

The proposed conceptual model fits the data. The following adjustment indices are obtained: $\chi^2/ddl=2.813$, $p < 0.00$; $RMSEA=0.059$. $TLI=0.93$; $CFI=0.94$. The direct effect of extroversion, the perceived similarity in the CCI, as well as the effect of the ICC on the Behavioral responses of tourists are assessed based on the value of the t-test and its associated p-value. [Table 5](#) indicates that these direct effects are positive and significant.

5.3. Test of the moderating variable: the nationality

To study the moderators' links in our research, the analysis of variance (MANOVA) coincides better with our objectives for the following reasons ([Galan, 2003](#)):

Table 3 – Profile of respondents.

	Total cases	N	%
Sex	Man	244	47.0
	Woman	275	53.0
	Total	519	100
Age	18-30	145	27.9
	31-40	139	26.8
	41-50	125	24.1
	51-60	66	12.7
	More than 60 years	44	8.5
	Total	519	100
Nationality	Tunisian	280	54
	French	100	19.2
	German	51	9.8
	British	47	9.1
	Italian	41	7.9
	Total	519	100
Level of education	Superior	362	69.7
	secondary	122	23.5
	Primary	16	3.08
	Uneducated	19	3.66
	Total	519	100

Table 4 – Fiability and validity of measurement scale.

	Items	Alphas' Cronbach	Rh� of Joreskog	Rh�vc (AVE)
Extroversion	12 items	0.957	0.966	0.627
Perceived similarity	5 items	0.932	0.897	0.677
CCI	4 items	0.939	0.937	0.720
Desire to stay	4 items	0.915	0.916	0.695
Satisfaction toward vacation	3 items	0.845	0.859	0.684
Loyalty to the hotel	5 items	0.961	0.951	0.836

Table 5 – Results of the direct relations.

Hypotheses	Direct relations	Structural coefficients	Validation of hypotheses
H1	Extroversion → CCI	0.420	Validated
H2	Perceived similarity → CCI	0.332	Validated
H3	CCI → desire to stay	0.670	Validated
H4	CCI → satisfaction toward vacation	0.300	Validated
H5	CCI → loyalty to the hotel	0.166	Validated

This method allows us to work on multiple dependent variables simultaneously.

The MANOVA is a more reliable method than the ANOVA or the regression method, as it reduces the effects that are due to errors of first species.

Prior analysis has assured the normality of the dependent variable. The kurtosis and skewness do not exceed 1.5 and 1. The moderating effect is confirmed if the interaction effect between the independent variable and the moderating one on the dependent variable is significant.

In order to know the significance of the interaction effects, our results are to be analyzed on the basis of the Pillai trace (Table 6), which is the most powerful test on the constraints violations related to the homogeneity of the co-variances (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & William, 1998).

The intersections between the tourists' nationalities with each of the CCI dimensions significantly contribute to the general model. It is now necessary to check the effect of this intersection of each of the dependent variables (Table 7).

These results lead to accept hypothesis H6.

The diverse tests (Table 7) reveal the significant moderating effect of the nationality in the relation CCI- behavioral reactions. Analyzing these effects requires the consideration of the means of dependent variables (Table 8).

These results are discussed in the next section.

6. Discussion of the results

Concerning the antecedents of CCI, the results validate our hypotheses. The obtained results show that the relation between the extroversion and the CCI are coherent with the literature (Feiler & Kleinbaum, 2015). According to the statistical tests, the extroversion has a positive influence on the CCI ($\gamma=0.420$; $p<0.01$). Sociable, talkative and communicative, extrovert clients are more ready to get in touch with other customers in order to develop more interpersonal connections and to easily make friends (Zgolli & Temessek, 2014). For Shipilov, Labianca, Kalnysh, and Kalnysh (2014), extrovert customers are those who openly express their feelings, their ideas and their beliefs. Extroverts always prefer new experiences and quickly cope with new situations.

Table 6 – Multivariate testing (nationality*dimensions of CCI).

	Test Pillai	Test Fisher	Significance (p)
CCI*nationality	0.034	4.494	$p=0.001$

Table 7 – Univariate tests (CCI*nationality).

	Dependant variables	Test Fisher	Significance
ICC*nationality	Desire to stay	$F=15.243$	$p=0.000$
	Satisfaction	$F=11.243$	$p=0.000$
	Loyalty	$F=11.276$	$p=0.000$

Table 8 – Results of the interaction between the nationality of the tourist and the CCI on behavioral reactions.

	Independent variables: CCI	
	Social ICC (low interaction)	Social CCI (strong interaction)
<i>Desire to stay</i>		
Tunisian	2.983	4.308
European ^a	3.507	4.029
<i>Satisfaction toward vacation</i>		
Tunisian	2.874	2.745
European	2.891	3.041
<i>Loyalty to the hotel</i>		
Tunisian	2.683	4.198
European	3.323	4.210

^a Europeans refer to French, German, British and Italian nationalities.

The positive link between the perceived similarity and the CCI ($\gamma=0.332$; $p<0.010$) confirm the theory of similarity- attraction developed by [Byrne \(1971\)](#) which maintains that the individual interacts and identifies with people with whom they share the same values and attitudes. For [Feiler and Kleinbaum \(2015\)](#), the similitude leads to love and attraction. A high level of similarity spotted between individuals and their friends leads to joy of life. Likewise, our results show that the CCI positively affects behavioral reactions. We have shown that the CCI strongly affects the desire to stay. In fact, these results go along with those of [Wakefield and Baker \(1998\)](#) who found out that the global physical environment has a predictive power over the desire to stay. This supports [Mehrabian and Russell's theory \(1975\)](#) which maintains that the physical environment has a strong influence on approach behavior. In fact, according to [De Nisco and Warnaby \(2013\)](#), the development of the customer's feelings of pleasure achieved through interacting with other customers boosts their desire to stay. They add that social and affective relationships among customers considerably affect the intention to stay.

The results indicate thus, that the CCI positively influences the satisfaction with the vacation. According to [Imankhan et al. \(2012\)](#), the positive effects of the CCI represent an excellent delivery which improves the service experience and customer's future behavior. Likewise, [Price and Arnould \(1999\)](#) believe that oral interactions between customers improve moments of pleasure during the service experience. According to [Camelis et al. \(2011\)](#), the CCI encourages the customer's co-production in the service process. Exchanging ideas, receiving support from other clients and sharing experiences stimulates the customers' collaboration in the service experience which generates their satisfaction. The obtained results of the relationship between the CCI and the loyalty to the hotel are very coherent with the literature ([Moore et al., 2005](#)). According to the statistical tests, the CCI has a positive influence on the customer's loyal intentions. [Decrop \(2010\)](#) stipulates that the force of social ties established during the stay between holiday makers favors future loyalty to the place with the hope of seeing each other again. So hoping to see last year's tourists again, tourists might go back to the same hotel and especially in the same period.

Finally, we notice that the nationality moderates the relationship between the CCI and the tourist's behavioral reactions. We notice that Tunisians display more the desire to stay at the hotel when social interactions are strong. This is attributed to the Tunisian character known by its group spirit, its openness to the other, its warmth, its hospitality to strangers and its Mediterranean culture. The Tunisian tourist is willing to prolong their vacation due to intense positive interactions between customers. Warm and friendly social interactions might make up for the poor service. Nevertheless, results show that Europeans express much more satisfaction and loyalty than the Tunisians when interactions with other customers are strong. Interacting with other customers can be a source for satisfaction for the customer itself (psychological benefit). Because of their lack of knowledge about the country, the Europeans can have utilitarian benefits, such as getting advice and recommendations from Tunisian tourists or receiving information about the vacation or the visited area. Europeans usually need more information and opinions from "expert" customers.

7. Conclusion: implications, limitations, and future venues for research

This article offers a theoretical and managerial contribution.

At the theoretical level, our research has reaffirmed the co-customers' place and active role in the service experience. It appeared that if the CCI happens smoothly, the customers will feel satisfied. As a result, it will create positive behavioral reactions, such as the desire to stay, the satisfaction with and the loyalty to the hotel.

On the managerial level, the problem of the CCI becomes apparent in a context where different nationalities co-exist and strong interactions develop. Managers should have a clear and explicit strategic position in terms of interactions with customers. Many managers can put forward in their position that they value and incite the relationships between customers in terms of distraction, help or information. According to [Camelis et al. \(2013\)](#), exchanging ideas, gaining the support of other clients and sharing experiences encourage collaboration in the service experience which generates the customer's satisfaction. [Decrop \(2010\)](#) explains that customers in hotels should be considered as groups rather than individuals, because social interactions are

motivating for leisure activities and travel. Members of the group would love to enjoy lively evenings and team games in order to meet and share activities. As a consequence, those in charge of hotel units should pay attention to those needs, the expectations, and preferences of the whole group not only of the individual. Likewise, the group's values, such as friendship, confidence, or participation can be used in communication messages.

Our research results show that the perceived similarity has a positive effect on the CCI. Therefore, to avoid customers' incompatibility, managers should adopt a better segmentation strategy that uses operational practices. According to [Zhang, Beatty, and Mothersbaugh \(2010\)](#), in the service areas with high social interactions like restaurants, bars, hotels, managers should concentrate on positive social interactions as they put similar customers together (the separation between families, children, couples and the separation between big and small groups). Moreover, hotel managers should pay close attention to the timing of promotional vacation, by offering family discounts for early- bookers and last-minute offers for couples and groups of friends. This divides the customers according to their preferences. The development of niche tourism has the tendency to increase the CCI pertinence of different nationalities. This type of tourism relies on touristic experiences with particular themes in which the tourist focuses on activities, interests, and common entertainment which encourages positive interactions and conversations between customers. In this context, those in charge of the touristic sector should seriously take the niche tourism strategy.

Like any research in social sciences, our work presents certain limits which need to be improved.

Our research model represents a static vision of the evaluation process and of the loyalty to the hotel. The obtained results are a picture of customers' behaviors on time *t*. Conducting surveys in different times validates the stability of the tested model and helps analyze the customer's intention and their actual behavior of loyalty. Likewise, our conceptual model can be reproduced in different service categories and in particular in services with high degree of interaction. The CCI requires study in different services typologies. In this context, we question the customers' role in a utilitarian service. Hospitals, physician and kinesthetic offices, airline companies offer a good ground for research.

Finally, our survey has been conducted on site at the time of consumption, while new forms of services develop with the emergence of new modes of communication ([Camelis et al., 2013](#)). The development of digital marketing and new technologies make the internet user a major axis on websites and platforms. In the tourism context, we have found out the "tripadvisor" website which makes the tourists' opinions and recommendations accessible to potential tourists.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in this article.

Appendix A.

Original scale measurement

Factors	Scale measurement	Sources
Perceived similarity	I could identify with the other customers in the hotel I am similar to the other customers in the hotel The other customers are like me The other patrons come from a similar background to myself I fit right in with the other customers	Developped by Brocato et al. (2012)
Extroversion	I am a talkative person I am rather dynamic I like to meet new people I can easily integrate to the public I often try to make new acquaintances I can make a cheerful atmosphere in a group I profit from occasions to meet new acquaintances I like to acquaint people whom i didn't know before I like action and excitement around me I am rather quiet when I'm in group ^a My close think i am an extravert I often hold parties	Developped by Sato (2005)
Customer-to-customer interaction	I have developed friendships with other customers i met at the salon I enjoy spending time with other customers at the salon The other customers in the salon make my time there more enjoyable There is a good chance i will run into one of my friends at the salon.	Developped by Moore et al. (2005)
Desire of stay	Spending time at this hotel area was enjoyable I prefer to spend time at this hotel rather than in other hotel of this town Staying at this hotel was well worth my time We hope to prolong our stay to profit from the programs of this hotel	Developped by Donovan and Rossiter (1982)

Satisfaction	The stay pleased me so much Compared with the other stays i made this one is the best This stay is close to my ideal	Developped by Aurier and Evrard (1998)
Loyalty	I would encourage my friends and my close to make a stay in this hotel I would say good things for this hotel to others I would recommend this hotel to anyone who ask me advice If I had to redo a stay, I would consider this hotel as my first choice I would continue to make stays at this hotel over the next years	Developped by Zeithaml et al. (1996)
^a This item is reverse.		

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