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Impact of the perceived importance of a hotel's corporate responsibility on tourists' complaints behaviour

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Abstract

This work is centred on the study of the Corporate Responsibility (CR) of hotel firms and its influence on tourists' complaints behaviour. The methodology of the empirical study, carried out among 629 customers lodging in hotels in the city of Seville, is based on structural equations modelling (PLS). The results obtained show that there is a significant relation between the perceived importance of CR and the tendency to complain. The latter also significantly affects the number of complaints a person files. Likewise, a significant and negative effect of the tourists' satisfaction on the complaints filed is noted. The main contributions stem from a better knowledge about the antecedents of complaints behaviour. This comes from having incorporated the variable of the importance of CR, which has not been studied before. On the other hand, the work means to offer a contribution to the field of CR research as, despite the growing interest in the topic, the effects of this construct on customers still remain little known.

Keywords: Corporate responsibility, complaints behaviour, satisfaction, hotels, PLS.

JEL codes: M14, M31.

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades a growing interest in social problems has been seen in society. This results in the preference of consumers¹ for buying products which contribute to helping a group in need (Bigné *et al.*, 2005). The academic literature has echoed this interest and has centred its attention on the so-called “responsible consumer” (Crane and Matten, 2004). This new type of consumer, who has appeared recently, values the consequences of his/her purchasing behaviour and takes into account aspects such as “the product’s origin, its production, its manufacturing, oppressive regimes, human rights, labour relations, the arms development of countries, the experimental use of animals and political donations” (Newholm and Shaw, 2007, p. 255). Therefore, responsible consumers do not adopt an instrumental perspective in the short term, in which they only consider the benefits which the product gives them, they especially value the repercussions that this product can have on society and the environment (Barber, 2004). This social commitment turns them into more informed and educated customers who are more selective and demanding and who have a greater capacity of choice. They know their rights and demand that firms fulfil them. They are demanding customers who are critical and rational, and who demand a higher level from firms to respond to their expectations.

This need to adapt to the demands of the new consumer and the competitive environment in general is generating a trend oriented at fostering CR in the organisation as one of the critical elements to contribute value for the customer and for society, and to differentiate it from its competitors. Once CR has been incorporated into the firms’ management, it becomes a powerful way of creating value for the different interest groups and will likely have a positive effect on their results. We should not lose sight of the fact that a commitment to society enables organisations to obtain a more exact knowledge of customers’ preferences. This commitment results in offers which better suit these preferences. On the other hand, it generates an increase in the motivation of the employees, which enables an increase in productivity.

The perceived advantages of CR are motivating numerous firms to incorporate different social practices into their marketing management, with the aim of attracting and retaining potential customers (Fernández *et al.*, 2008). As such, it has been noticed that in recent years there has been a growing interest in the academic literature to seek links between CR and marketing, though the majority of articles published adopt an instrumental perspective, investigating the impact of CR variables on marketing results: brand value, firm reputation and sales.

On the other hand, the development of the services literature has paid growing attention to customers’ complaints behaviour, convinced that the customers who

(1) Adopting the posture of Blodgett *et al.* (1995) we will use consumer and customer interchangeably.

complain to the organisation become an important asset for it. Indeed, these customers enable the organisation to be aware of its weaknesses, which helps the continuous improvement of the value proposal that they offer its markets. Likewise, they grant the firm the opportunity to defend itself from an imminent threat, as customers who complain do so because they have had an unsatisfactory experience and have a negative predisposition to maintaining their relationship with the firm. This way, if the firm manages to settle the complaint favourably, it will have achieved three important advantages: 1) To obtain information about errors in its value proposal; 2) To retain customers who have shown themselves to be dissatisfied and who probably had the intention of breaking their relationship with the firm, and 3) To avoid the negative word-of-mouth effects on current and potential customers and on the corporate image in general.

To sum up, to understand the factors which affect a customer's complaints behaviour is a relevant matter for the firm, as it helps to develop effective strategies to evaluate customer dropout and improve retaining them.

Based on the arguments set out, this work means to achieve a double aim. Firstly, to know if socially responsible customers, being more aware and better informed, are more likely to complain and if this likelihood to complain becomes complaints de facto. Secondly, and taking into account that the main trigger of filing a complaint is a state of low satisfaction, the study seeks to determine if the satisfaction with the service received affects the complaints behaviour, measured from the real number of complaints filed.

To try and respond to these aims, an empirical study centred on the hotel sector is proposed. The study's framework is justified by the current situation of the hotel industry: under constant competitive pressure, faced with customers who are increasingly more demanding, in a globalised environment and having continuous technological changes. These factors bring about new challenges and mean that firms are obliged to take advantage of new market opportunities in order to maximise their results. (Ireland et al., 2001). Knowledge of the factors which can affect this competitiveness – amongst which are Corporate Responsibility (CR) and the active participation of the customer in the improvement of the service through a behaviour of public complaints – can help to face these challenges in better conditions. On the other hand, the hotel activity is set in a context of maximum personal interaction, in which these contacts are key to the service provision. Finally, within the framework of carrying out CR, and at both an administrative and an institutional level, it should be emphasised that the nature of the sector involves a major interaction and involvement between the different stakeholders, a premise that is apparently not perceived in other industries.

2. Review of the literature and proposal of hypotheses

2.1. Corporate responsibility and the responsible consumer

The study of Corporate Responsibility (CR) has been the object of many investigations in recent decades (De los Salmones *et al.*, 2005). Bowen (1953) is considered by many as the forerunner of academic research on the topic. It was in the 1960s when a greater development of the concept took place, passing beyond the limits of the legal implications imposed by the market.

Many definitions of the concept have arisen since then. Carroll (1999) found more than twenty in the academic literature at the end of the 90s. An evolution in the classic conception then took place. This had been based on the sole responsibility of the firm being to obtain profit for its shareholders (Friedman, 1962). What followed was a broader social and abstract viewpoint of the concept, according to which firms should take part in the improvement of the conditions of society through the minimum requirements established by economic and legal responsibilities (De los Salmones *et al.*, 2007). They must also anticipate the governments' frameworks of norms, explore opportunities stemming from increasing the levels of cultural, environmental and social concern, and differentiate their products from the offer of less responsible competitors (De la Cuesta, 2005).

In spite of CR seeming to be a prominent concept in the literature, it is difficult to formulate a precise and complete definition of the term. After reviewing the variety of definitions of CR, we highlight three aspects which the majority of the axioms gather together 1) A concern for both responsible and irresponsible actions; 2) The consideration of ethical, social and environmental questions; and, 3) The figure of the stakeholders.

This is why the proposal of Vaaland *et al.* (2008, pp. 931), which defines CR as "the management of the concern of the stakeholders about responsible and irresponsible actions related to environmental, ethical and social phenomena on a path which creates competitive advantage" enables the nature, content and meaning of CR to be well understood, considering the three characteristics commented on beforehand.

CR does not differentiate between firms and sectors. It has become the art of all firms, whether they are small, medium or large corporations. However, the fast expansion of the hotel industry, boosted by tourism, attracts our attention. The reasons which justify this interest are shown in:

- 1) Tourism is one of the most important economic activities in the world in terms of volume and the generation of employment and, in spite of the current crisis, it is one of the sectors which is more quickly showing signs of recuperation (Golja and Nizic, 2010). Also, researchers have been displaying a renewed interest in analysing this sector in recent years.
- 2) Research on CR in the tourist and hotel sector, though insufficient, has experienced a slight growth in the last five years and it is estimated that it will

grow exponentially in the next five years (Eun Kyoo Kima et al., 2012). In the words of Lee and Park (2009), the hotel industry can be more sensitive to CR questions due to the “bi-directional” relation that exists between the touristic product and its natural, economic, social and cultural environment.

- 3) Spain is the tourist destination with the greatest degree of loyalty among its visitors. The data of 2012 show that of the almost 58 million tourists who visited the country, 80.2% said that they had visited it before and 48% of them had come ten times or more (Frontur, 2013).

To date, the research on CR in the tourist sector presents the following characteristics: 1) It is descriptive and transversal; 2) It takes place at a national level, Spanish and Asian researchers being those who have contributed most to the development of this research line; 3) It demands a greater conceptual support, and 4) It is centred first and foremost on showing that CR positively influences economic, social and environmental results and on detailing, from CR reports and the information contained in Web sites, the CR commitments, practices and activities that hotel firms carry out, as well as analysing the motives which facilitate and hinder its implementation.

In the business field, CR activities have been oriented to facing the concerns of the social customers (these being understood as those purchasers committed to the environment and society) with the aim of increasing their trust, creating a favourable corporate image and developing a positive relation with these and other partners. The CR activities have been adopted on the basis of growing evidence that customers are willing to “return” incentives (loyalty, amongst others) to responsible firms (Brown and Dacin, 1997).

The analysis of the reaction of the different interest groups in the light of CR practices is key, insofar as it affects the communication strategies of firms concerning their CR commitment (Maignan and Ferrell, 2004). Focusing on customers as the target population of this research, the recognition of CR practices seems to have a positive influence on their attitudes towards the firm (Brown and Dacin, 1997), its image and their loyalty (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Consumers expect organisations to show congruence with social values (Bigné et al., 2005).

On the other hand, the appearance of the responsible consumer, who takes into account both questions related to the environment and those which are ethical, has had a repercussion on the purchasing process, affecting the way in which consumption decisions are made. This new consumer values aspects of the firm which transcend its products and services, especially in what concerns the social responsibility practices of the firms and the strictly commercial information (Webb et al., 2008).

The Nielsen global survey on CR (2013), carried out among 29,000 users of Internet from 58 countries, endorses these comments. Its results make it known that 50% de consumers in the world (31% in Spain) are willing to pay a higher price for those products or services which originate from firms which are considered to be responsible. However, it also points out that the percentage of Internet users

who have indeed paid a differential for this type of products is around 20-25%, and that this percentage, unlike that regarding the purchasing intention, is on the decrease. These “socially responsible” consumers have, in the Spanish case, social concerns related mainly to environmental questions (69% of socially responsible Spanish consumers), an interest in supporting the creation of firms and the fostering of self-employment initiatives (69%), in creating well paid employment (68%), and in gender equality (66%).

The relation between tourism and CR could shape the management strategies to be developed as an innovative element in a very competitive tourist market. Hence the interest from the economic-social viewpoint of developing a sustainable and socially responsible management of the firms linked to this sector.

Logically, the analysis of CR can be developed about any firm, whatever sector it belongs to. Nevertheless, in Andalusia the tourist sector stands out and, in particular, hotel establishments, given the economic, social and environmental impact of this type of activity. A very close firm-customer relationship is seen in this industry, as this relationship is a fundamental element of the process of elaborating or supplying the service. This is why we consider that CR is very important in this context and that it is becoming a strategic aim of firms and an essential aspect of competing.

2.2. Public complaints behaviour

Although the study of complaints behaviour began in the 70s, it remains relevant these days both for firms and for academic research (Moliner *et al.*, 2010). This importance is due to an increasingly more competitive environment, as knowing the decisive factors and consequences of customer complaints behaviour is key, helping the firm to introduce a marketing philosophy oriented towards management and dealing with complaints stemming from dissatisfaction (Plymire, 1991).

The most relevant aspects related to this construct are: the attitudes that customers can adopt regarding a complaint and the level of information they have about this situation (Moliner *et al.*, 2008).

- Firstly, and in agreement with Singh (1988), consumers adopt different actions when they decide to complain: some complain privately to their family or friends, others are more inclined to complain directly to the offending party and some use a mediator or file a complaint with the authorities. In this sense, Alexander (2002), in research carried out on the hotel and catering sector, shows that filed complaints and complaints made directly to the hotel are more usual. The more recent study of Chien-Jung *et al.* (2014) is in the same line.
- Secondly, another aspect to be considered as decisive in complaints behaviour is the customer’s level of information and degree of knowledge. There are

authors who confirm that those consumers who have more information of the product or service are more inclined to present behaviour changes than those who lack it (Hirschman, 1970).

Within the hotel sector, although mistakes, failures and complaints are frequent events in service encounters, very little research has studied complaints in this area (Karatepe and Ekizim, 2004). Settling complaints are essential actions to turn dissatisfied customers into loyal customers, given that the cost of losing a customer is huge compared to that of rectifying. If these complaints are not appropriately handled or settled, the consequences could be vital. Unsatisfied customers not only will have to revoke their relationship with the firm, they will also spread harmful messages which could put the firm's image in danger (Lewis, 1983).

The study carried out by Ngai et al. (2007) evaluated differences in the complaints behaviour of a hotel's Asian and non-Asian guests, also examining the relation between the demographic factors (age, gender and educational level) and the complaints behavior. The results showed that the older complainant tended to recur to "public actions", but people with a higher educational level did not usually complain publicly. Moreover, Asian customers are less likely to complain to the hotel for fear of "losing control" and are less familiarised with the complaints channels than non-Asians. They are more apt to carry out private complaints than non-Asians, such as making negative word-of-mouth comments. The results also indicated that there is a significant relation between the "encouraging complaint factor" and the nationality of the respondents, as well as between the "efficient method of processing complaints" and the nationality of the respondents.

Likewise, Ajzen (1985) states that the intention of adopting a specific behaviour (in this case the intention of filing a complaint) conditions later behaviour (actually filing a complaint). According to the Technical Assistance Research Program of the USA (TARP, 1986), 70% of the consumers who had problems with the products or services acquired did not complain to the company and around 50% of these consumers did not make any effort to complain, given that the expected cost of the complaint surpassed the benefit expected.

In the catering sector, Namkung et al. (2011) found that the customers showed a high propensity to complain.

Chen and Lam (2008) show that the intention of filing a complaint will be conditioned by personal and situational factors (the consumers' demographic and psychographic characteristics, their capacity to complain, their personal attitude towards complaints, their experience with complaints in the past, their personality and their educational level).

On the other hand, among the situational factors mentioned in the literature, Chen and Lam (2008) refer to the relationship between customers and suppliers, social pressure and the degree of dissatisfaction, the costs in the barriers against complaints, the likelihood of successfully settling the complaint and the consumers' perception of the firm's CR level.

In this sense, Carvalho *et al.* (2010) conclude that the Brazilian consumers' perceptions of CR is a significant predictor of the customers' personal satisfaction, their purchasing intention, their intention to change suppliers and their intention of filing a complaint, in such a way that the better the perception of the CR, the less the intention of filing a complaint will be.

Indeed, it is worth highlighting a series of questions which support the previous statement, such as the huge maladjustment between the intention of the consumers who show that they are in favour of CR and the practice of the shopping behaviours (De la Cuesta, 2004), the lack of empirical works which analyse the consequences of CR (Fernández *et al.*, 2008) and the perception of the stakeholders, among others.

Based on the previous considerations and with the aim of testing if consumers who value a firm's practice of responsible actions will have a greater tendency to file public claims against it, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Customers' perceived importance of CR has a direct and positive influence on their propensity to file complaints.

H2: The customer's propensity to complain has a direct and positive effect on the number of complaints filed.

2.3. The satisfaction of the hotel customer

Customer satisfaction has been considered as a central concept in marketing research (Luo and Homburg, 2007) and the decisive factor for success in the markets (Gil *et al.*, 2005). The analysis of the literature shows that there is not unanimity when conceptualising satisfaction (Maloles, 1997), although all the perspectives from which the concept is tackled have in common the idea that satisfaction involves an evaluation of certain characteristics regarding some kind of standard. A very common way of defining it follows the disconfirmation paradigm. From this perspective, satisfaction is an evaluation of the extent to which the supplier could meet or surpass the customers' expectations (Kursunluoglu, 2011). The customers compare the level of performance after using the product or service with their level of expectation before using it. Though satisfaction has been fundamentally understood as an individual judgment of performance versus expectation (Hunt *et al.*, 2012), a growing number of works suggest that the judgments of satisfaction are social (Fournier and Mick, 1999). This proposal represents a change in the approach, from tangible resources to intangible resources.

Kelley and Davis (1994), among others, differentiated satisfaction into two constructs: the satisfaction of a service encounter (referring to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of a low-key service encounter) and the total or accumulated satisfaction (based on all the encounters and experiences with a particular organisation, including the accumulation of evaluations regarding sales people, the establishment's atmosphere, the products and other factors, Garbarino and Johnson, 1999).

Within the hotel sector there is much research which has studied satisfaction. The theories of customer satisfaction have been developed through the behaviours of customers in the areas of lodging (Ekinici and Riley, 1998). This is in order to investigate the applicability of customer satisfaction in hospitality and tourism. There have been numerous studies which examine the attributes which travellers can come across about satisfaction. Based on these works, the factors which determine greater customer satisfaction are: the quality of the staff and their friendliness, the location, cleanliness and comfort of the room, and safety (Markovic et al., 2010). Choi and Chu (2001) showed that the satisfaction of the guests of seven hotels in Hong Kong was determined by the customer evaluation of seven factors: the quality of service of the employees, the quality of the rooms, the services which made up the offer, the service aimed at business, the value of the hotel, its safety and ease of access. In the study of Kim and Cha (2002), direct measures of the guests' satisfaction were used with proposals such as: "I think that the hotel is good in general"; "I'm satisfied with the hotel's employees"; and "I'm satisfied with the products offered by the hotel".

To sum up, customer satisfaction is a key factor in the forming of the customer's wishes for a future purchase (Mittal and Kamakura, 2001). Moreover, satisfied customers will probably speak about their good experiences, thus bringing about a potential impact on loyalty, positive word-of-mouth communication, the repurchasing of the goods or service and profit (Zemke and Shaaf, 1989).

In the literature about consumer satisfaction, Moliner and Fuentes (2012) study complaint behaviour as a study area which arises from an unsatisfactory purchasing and/or consumer experience. In the services area, there has been a special interest in understanding the relations between satisfaction and future intentions (Choi et al., 2002) and behaviours (Onyeaso, 2007). Customers' dissatisfaction decreases the repurchase intention and their loyalty towards a brand and increases the negative word-of-mouth comments (Mittal et al., 1999; Mittal and Kamakura, 2001; Moliner and Fuentes, 2012), the same as an increase in satisfaction reduces the occurrence of complaints (Johnson et al., 2001). This can be observed in the works of Hirschman (1970), which indicate leaving, voice and loyalty as the options of open response that customers can experience after dissatisfaction. Other research adds the concepts of public or private action and the action of communicating to third parties (Richins, 1987; Singh, 1990; Kolodinsky, 1995).

In the context of dissatisfaction and complaints behaviour, research has centred on the study of the variables which influence the choice of responses to dissatisfaction (Crié, 2003), such as intentions of private responses, of complaints and to third parties (Liu and McClure, 2001). More specifically, consumers who have complained to third parties tend to be younger, more educated, better informed, more politically active and to have higher incomes (Mason and Himes, 1973; Warland et al., 1975).

In spite of the literature insisting on a complaint being a response to dissatisfaction, the opposite can also take place: that there are satisfied consumers who express some kind of complaint (Jacoby and Jaccard, 1981).

Marketing scientists have paid growing attention to services firms' way of handling complaints. A basic supposition in this area is that firms are able to compensate the anger and discontent which has led to a customer filing a complaint by handling that complaint competently (Hennig-Thurau, 2001). In this area, satisfying the complaint plays a central role as it tends to mean that the customer's satisfaction with the way the firm has dealt with the complaint has had a significant influence of later purchase and on communicative behaviour (Hennig-Thurau, 2001).

Considering all these contributions, a third hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Satisfaction has a direct and negative influence on the intensity of filing complaints.

3. Empirical study

3.1. Methodology

The target population is made up of people staying in 4-star hotels in the city of Seville. These establishments are the ones which receive a greater number of overnight stays (INE, 2014), as well as showing a greater commitment to CR (Hosteltur, 2012). On the other hand, there is a historic tendency (which will predictably be projected towards the future) of a progressive increase in the demand of services which will be mainly adjusted to the standards of 4-star establishments (García and Armas, 2007). The statistical programmes SPSS 22 and SMART PLS 2.0 M3 have been used in the data analysis. The hotels selected for this study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Hotels included in the study

HOTELS	N° ROOMS
Hotel AC Torneo	81
Hotel Meliá Sevilla	365
Hotel Meliá Lebreros	437
Hotel Sevilla Center	233

Source: own elaboration.

The data gathering method chosen was personal interviews, supported by a structured questionnaire, handed out by interviewers trained in the matter. At the end of the field work there was a total of 629 duly filled out questionnaires. Table 2 summarises the study's technical data.

Table 2. Technical data of the study

Target population	Tourists lodging in Seville hotels
Geographical area	Seville
Collecting method	Personal interview
Optimum sample size	384
Questionnaires collected	702
Valid questionnaires	629
Absolute sampling error (629)	0.039
Confidence level (629)	95%

Source: own elaboration.

As regards the description of the socio-demographic variables of the sample extracted (Table 3), the profile of the respondent was: Female (more than half belonged to this gender), aged between 35 and 44 years old, Spanish, employed, married and having a family unit made up of a minimum of two members.

Table 3. Characteristics of the sample

VARIABLE	VALID PERCENTAGE (%)
DISTRIBUTION BY GENDER	
Men	45.6
Women	54.4
DISTRIBUTION BY AGE	
18-25	10.9
26-34	28.3
35-44	29.4
45-54	21.1
55-64	8.8
65 or more	1.6
DISTRIBUTION BY NATIONALITY	
Spanish	78.6
Others	21.4

VARIABLE	VALID PERCENTAGE (%)
DISTRIBUTION BY MAIN JOB ACTIVITY	
Student	9.1
Self-employed	33.0
Employee	50.2
Unemployed	2.4
Retired	1.6
Homemaker	3.7
DISTRIBUTION BY MARITAL STATUS	
Single	23.4
Married	59.5
Couples	15.2
Separated	1.0
Widowed	1.0
DISTRIBUTION BY SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD	
Individual	11.7
2 members	35.4
3 members	26.9
4 members	18.9
5 or more members	7.2

Source: own elaboration from the results of the research.

3.2. Measurement scales

Corporate Responsibility (CR)- To measure the perceived importance of CR, a scale is used composed of eleven indicators, adapted from Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008) and validated in previous studies. This scale encompasses all the activities which make up CR: philanthropic, protecting the environment, defending consumers and respecting workers' rights.

Satisfaction- The disconfirmation approach is the measure most used by researchers to calculate satisfaction. To do so, and taking into account that this study is centred on total satisfaction, the scale proposed by Maloles (1997) is used, appropriately adapted to the hotel sector.

Table 4. Scale selected to measure CR

CODE	ITEM	TYPE OF ACTIVITY
	I prefer a hotel which:	
G.1.	Helps developing countries	
G.2.	Supports social and cultural activities (art, culture, sports) in the region where it operates	Philanthropy
G.3.	Supports humanitarian causes	
G.4.	Reduces its consumption of natural resources	
G.5.	Makes its reduction process more respectful of the environment	Environment
G.6.	Makes its products as ecological as possible	
G.7.	Cares for customers' rights (in terms of guarantees, information, etc.)	
G.8.	Treats customers fairly	
G.9.	Treats its workers without prejudices of gender, race, religion	
G.10.	Creates jobs	Employees
G.11.	Guarantees the health and safety of its workers	

Source: Adapted from Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008).

Table 5. Scale selected to measure satisfaction

CODE	ITEM
C.1	I was right to choose to stay at this hotel
C.2	I am very satisfied with this hotel
C.3	This hotel is very coherent with its promises
C.4	This hotel offers excellent service
C.5	In general, my experience with this hotel has been positive

Source: Adapted from Maloles (1997).

Tendency to file complaints- To evaluate people's tendency to file complaints when the service that they get is inappropriate, a measure was used which combines the customers' attitude towards a complaint (item F1), the degree of information they have (indicators F.2 and F.5), and the degree of sophistication (F.3 and F.4). This scale is an adaptation of the proposals of Blodgett et al. (1993), Camarero et al. (1996) and Singh (1990).

Table 6. Scale selected to measure the tendency to complain

CODE	ITEM
E.1	When I have a service problem, even if it is cheap, I tend to complain, to ask for my money back or an improvement of the service
E.2	I'm concerned about knowing my rights (as a citizen, as a customer, as a consumer, etc.)
E.3	I know about the complaints procedure
E.4	I'm interested in knowing about all the alternatives of products and services
E.5	When I have a problem with a hotel, I will claim to external bodies (Association of Consumers)

Source: Singh (1990); Blodgett *et al.* (1993) and Camarero *et al.* (1996).

Intensity in filing complaints- To measure the degree of experience or the intensity in filing complaints, a single indicator is used, measured in a scale of ratios, where the customers are asked how many times they have complained (Singh and Wilkes, 1996).

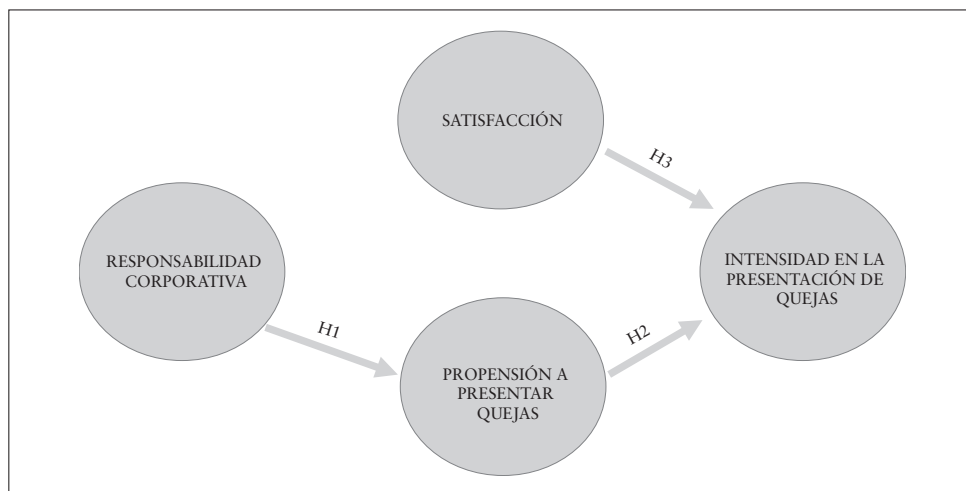
Table 7. Scale selected to measure the number of complaints

CODE	ITEM
E.6	How many times have you complained?

Source: Singh and Wilkes (1996).

The constructs *corporate social responsibility, satisfaction and tendency to file complaints* are measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = “strongly disagree” a 5 = “strongly agree”), where the value 3 is interpreted as a point of indifference. The construct *intensity of filing complaints* is measured with a scale of ratios in which an interval of answers is offered. The model proposed is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model proposed



3.3. Data analysis

The data analysis begins with a valuing of the measurement model which leads to the refining of the scales. The evaluation of the model involves an analysis of the individual reliability of the item, the internal consistency or reliability of the scale, and its convergent validity and discriminant validity. The following tables gather the values of all these measures for the model proposed, totally made up of reflective indicators.

Table 8. Individual reliability

	TENDENCY TO COMPLAIN	INTENSITY OF COMPLAINTS	CR	SATISFACTION
C1	0	0	0	0.85
C2	0	0	0	0.89
C3	0	0	0	0.86
C4	0	0	0	0.80
C5	0	0	0	0.90
F1	0.74	0	0	0
F2	0.83	0	0	0
F3	0.84	0	0	0
F4	0.83	0	0	0

	TENDENCY TO COMPLAIN	INTENSITY OF COMPLAINTS	CR	SATISFACTION
F5	0.77	0	0	0
F6	0	1	0	0
G1	0	0	0.70	0
G10	0	0	0.75	0
G11	0	0	0.76	0
G2	0	0	0.72	0
G3	0	0	0.75	0
G4	0	0	0.77	0
G5	0	0	0.82	0
G6	0	0	0.80	0
G7	0	0	0.77	0
G8	0	0	0.73	0
G9	0	0	0.71	0

Source: own elaboration from the results of the research.

All the indicators attain the recommended values and, as can be noted in the following table, the Cronbach alpha coefficient values, variance extracted and composite reliability comfortably surpass their acceptance limits. This is why it can be stated that the reliability and validity of the measurement model is suitable.

Table 9. Reliability and convergent validity

	AVE	Composite Reliability	R Square	Cronbach's Alpha
INTENSITY COMPLAINTS	0.65	0.90	0.054	0.86
TENDENCY TO COMPLAIN	1	1	0.037	1
CR	0.57	0.94	0	0.92
SATISFACTION	0.74	0.94	0	0.91

Source: own elaboration from the results of the research.

To finish with the validity measures, the model's discriminant validity is tested. To do so, it is necessary to revise the matrix of standardised correlations between the latent variables. Observing Table 10 we can state that there is also discriminant validity.

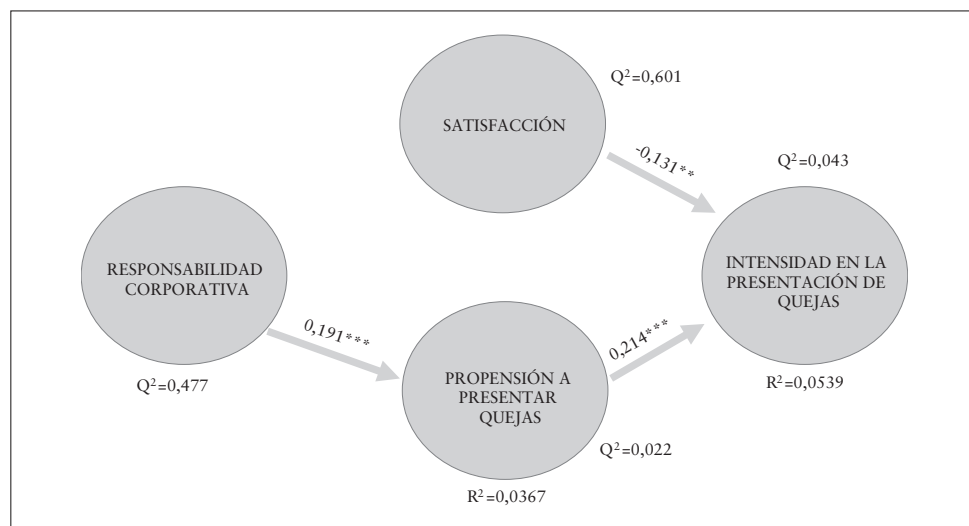
Table 10. Correlations matrix. AVE squared in the main diagonal

	INTENSITY COMPLAINTS	TENDENCY COMPLAINTS	CR	SATISFACTION
INTENSITY COMPLAINTS	0.80	0	0	0
TENDENCY COMPLAINTS	0.19	1	0	0
CR	0.19	0.03	0.97	0
SAT	0.16	-0.09	0.23	0.86

Source: own elaboration from the results of the research.

To conclude the analysis of the measurement model, we present the results of the structural model. As can be noted in Figure 2, the relation proposed in the three research hypotheses is corroborated, as the values of the structural coefficients are significant.

Figure 2. Analysis of structural model



t(0.05; 4999) = 1.964726835; t(0.01; 4999) = 2.58711627; t(0.001; 4999) = 3.310124157.
 * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant relation between CR and the tendency to file complaints. Likewise, the relation between the tendency to file

complaints and the number of complaints filed is confirmed. Lastly, there is a negative and significant relation between the global satisfaction with the service and the number of complaints filed.

4. Discussion of the results

The discussion of the results is organised on the basis of the aims proposed in this work. In this context, it is to be pointed out that the results validate and corroborate the conceptual model proposed. The conclusions from estimating the model have firstly shown that the relation between CR and the tendency to file complaints is confirmed (H1). CR explains 3.67% of the variance of the tendency to file complaints, and has a high statistical significance. This finding is novel, as it is the first time that a hypothesis in this sense has been proposed. There are evidently many factors analysed in the literature regarding the antecedents of complaints behaviour, such as an unsatisfactory experience, the level of competence and even cultural and/or the individual's personal characteristics (Moliner and Fuentes, 2012), but the customer's perceived importance of CR has never been studied as a possible decisive factor. This leads us to argue that all actions carried out by the firm, either to improve its image or to contribute to society is open to criticism and complaints. This is why it is very important for the firm, after incorporating CR into its strategic management, to correctly communicate what it really wishes to transmit, thus creating value for the different interest groups.

Secondly, it is noted that customers are not indifferent when they have a problem with the service offered. Customers generally know what the procedures and rights are before filing a complaint. Furthermore, and in agreement with Barlon and Moller (2005), although many firms do not nurture cultures which are receptive to complaints, hotels foster them most by presenting them in a written form on printed forms, and the customers normally have more time to fill the forms out when they are in their rooms than when they return home. They thus facilitate less satisfied customers with an opportunity to file a complaint with the Management. This fact can become an advantage, as a complaint means an attempt for the firm to improve. In line with this, in our research this relation is corroborated: the intensity of filing complaints is conditioned and explained by the tendency to file complaints by 5.39% ($R^2 = 0.0539$), hence confirming hypothesis H2.

Thirdly, the effect that satisfaction has on the intensity of filing complaints (H3) plays an important role due its involvement in the firm's management, as less customer satisfaction can entail a complaint, in this case of the guest. Often, the people who write out the complaints are loyal customers who wish to give organisations a chance to improve matters. Filing a complaint is not always linked to an unsatisfactory situation, but simply to less satisfaction. In our research, this relation suggests what is proposed: in the light of less satisfaction with the service received, the number of complaints filed will be greater, no matter the cost in time that this involves.

To sum up, this work significantly contributes to filling part of the gap that exists in the literature about the consequences of CR. There are few, not to say no, studies which are centred on the impact of CR on complaints. This research enables the displaying of the very important role that knowledge of the tourist customer's perceptions in this area has, due to its influence on complaints behaviour. Lastly, it also shows the importance of satisfaction in complaints behaviour, affecting not only the intention of complaining but the actual filing of the complaint.

5. Limitations and future research lines

This present research has a series of limitations which should be dealt with in order to be overcome in the upcoming works. These are the future research lines.

Firstly, the research has a transversal perspective. In the light of the results attained, in the short term there is a positive impact of CR on complaints behaviour. Nevertheless, the time horizon would have to be broadened to know if over time the importance of CR in this process is maintained, increased or is reduced and what consequences this has on filing complaints. In this sense, it would be desirable to carry out new research to know the variation not only of customers regarding CR actions undertaken by the hotel, but also observe others such as the customer's loyalty or trust.

Secondly, the study is proposed uniquely from the customer's point of view, hindering the dissemination of the discoveries to other groups of stakeholders who are relevant for organisations, such as, for example, employees. In this sense it would be interesting to replicate the questionnaire in other areas to be able to validate it externally and thus know its prospective usefulness for measuring the perception that other groups of stakeholders have of CR. This way, a questionnaire model could be elaborated to periodically and systematically measure the satisfaction of all those involved in CR and establish, where appropriate, measures which correct and/or improve matters, making possible the supplying of a service adapted to the needs of our current society.

Thirdly, the data compiled refer to one geographic area, and a single sector and category. With respect to the former, the study was carried out in Seville. It would be desirable to have carried it out at a national level, considering not only inland hotels but also those on the coast and spanning different categories for their later comparative analysis. This question is a serious inconvenience when it comes to generalising the results. Nevertheless, regarding the latter question, future research could broaden the study to other services sectors and not only the hotel sector, as both the dimensions and the items proposed are easily adaptable to other contexts.

For the future, new hypotheses could be proposed in which differences in perceptions for diverse segments of the hotel are set out. For example, to find out if there are significant differences between the perceptions of leisure customers and business customers, or between national customers and those from abroad, and

even according to gender. Moreover, noting that two of the three chains of our sample (AC and Meliá) have hotels out of Spain, another possible future work would be to carry out a cross-cultural study to check if the hotels of the same chain abroad transmit in the same way as those located in Spain, more specifically in Seville.

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