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Examining the Relationship Between the Level of Cognitive Dissonance Experienced and Customer Satisfaction: A Management and Marketing Perspective¹

Mehmet İsmail Yağcı² and Onur Başar Özbozkurt³

Abstract

“Cognitive Dissonance” theory refers that a belief, knowledge, or attitude of the individual conflict with the other belief, knowledge, or attitude of the individual. It has a crucial impact on many academic fields, especially in marketing, after being coined to the literature by Festinger (1957). Whilst many studies have been conducted in the literature on the theory that attracts attention all over the world, it has been limited to the examination of the subject with quantitative methods and to handling it from a managerial perspective. On the other hand, customer satisfaction has been exponentially drawn attention upon and signified a key point by service providers especially in the tourism businesses owing to the intensely competitive environment caused by changing new trends in consumer behavior. In this sense, the present study aims to complete this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between customer satisfaction and experienced cognitive dissonance of customers after purchasing accommodation services. In addition to that, it aims to mitigate the dissonance of customers by managers and contributing strategy development to carry out a more valuable accommodation experience. To this end, a questionnaire has been applied to 166 participants who had been accommodated in the tourism business in Mersin, Turkey, and the data has been analyzed by SPSS 26.0. As a result of the analysis, there is a statistically significant relationship between cognitive dissonance level and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Cognition; Cognitive Dissonance; Customer Satisfaction; Mitigating Dissonance*

Introduction

The theory of cognitive dissonance has been a contentious theme debated frequently since it was proposed by Festinger’s (1957) early research. Cognitive dissonance has an impact on the decision-making processes of people and affects the attitudes of consumers towards their purchase decisions and their satisfaction (Soutar and Sweeney, 2003: 228). Almost all major purchases result in cognitive dissonance, or discomfort induced by the post-purchase conflict (Kotler, Bowen, Makens and Baloglu, 2016: 195). In this respect, dissonance is a driven negative state that happens when a person simultaneously holds two psychologically inconsistent cognitions (opinions, ideas, or beliefs). In other words, two cognitions are dissonant if, considering these two cognitions only, one follows the other (Berkowitz, 1969: 2).

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² Mehmet İsmail Yağcı, Mersin University, Turkey. E-mail: yagci@mersin.edu.tr ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7293-4246

³ Onur Başar Özbozkurt, Tarsus University, Turkey. E-mail: onurozbozkurt@tarsus.edu.tr ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2325-2433



Customer satisfaction is a significant keystone for customer-oriented business practices across several companies operating in different industries (Szymanski and Henard, 2001: 16). It is defined as the customer's empathic or emotional response to a perceived difference between expectations and performance appraisal (Hennig-Thurau and Hansen, 2000: 8). It is a core point by service providers especially in the tourism businesses due to the intensely competitive environment caused by changing trends in consumer behavior.

Whilst many studies have been conducted in the literature on the cognitive dissonance theory that attracts attention all over the world, it has been limited to the examination of the subject with quantitative methods and to handling it from the management perspective. Also, there are limited studies related to relationship between cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism sector. In this regard, the current study investigates the questions such as "What kind of relationship exists between cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction?" and "Which strategies should be applied to reduce the cognitive dissonance levels of the customers after the accommodation service and to increase the customer satisfaction levels?". Thus, the present study was carried out within the purpose of completing this gap in the literature via examining the relationship between customer satisfaction and experienced cognitive dissonance of customers after purchasing accommodation services. Additionally, it aims to mitigate the dissonance of customers by managers and contributing strategy development to carry out a more valuable and satisfying accommodation experience. Within this context, a questionnaire has been applied to 166 participants who had accommodated in the hospitality business, Mersin. The collected data has been analyzed using the "SPSS 26.0" program.

Literature Review

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The theory of cognitive dissonance has been a recurring phenomenon of the literature over the last five decades. It was originally introduced by Leon Festinger (1957) within the publication of "A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance". In this sense, a large number of studies (see Table 1) have been conducted related to conceptualization and measurement about the fundamental components of attitudes and beliefs, the results of decisions taken, the effects of disagreement among people, and other significant psychological processes (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019: 6).

People may experience cognitive dissonance after a difficult choice. Cognitions about any negative attributes of the preferred object are dissonant with having chosen it; cognitions about positive attributes of the non-preferred object are dissonant with not having chosen it (Berkowitz, 1969: 3-4). In this respect, cognitive dissonance specifically appears if, an individual experiences uncertainty and doubt after the decision making, that he or she made the most appropriate choice (Sweeney, Soutar and Johnson, 1996: 138). Cognitive dissonance may



Table 1. The Systematic Literature Review of Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Year	Author/s	Title	Source	Definition
1957	Festinger	A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance	Stanford University Press	“The term of cognitive dissonance refers to the psychologically uncomfortable state following the act of choosing between a set of alternatives, each of which has some desirable attributes”.
1969	Oshikawa	Can Cognitive Dissonance Theory Explain Consumer Behavior?	Journal of Marketing	“Post-decision dissonance is an unavoidable result of decision-making process because decision making requires the situation of alternatives’ rejection. The magnitude of cognitive dissonance relies on the significance of the decision and the relative attractiveness of the rejected alternative(s). Thus, the more significant the decision or the more affirmative the rejected alternative(s), the greater the cognitive dissonance”.
1969	Zimbardo	Division of Psychology: The Cognitive Control of Motivation	Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences	“Cognitive dissonance supposes a basic tendency (within an individual) toward consistency of cognitions about oneself and the environment”.
1996	Shultz and Lepper	Cognitive Dissonance Reduction as Constraint Satisfaction	Psychological Review	“Cognitive dissonance can be defined as a psychological situation of tension that individuals can be well-motivated to mitigate it. Namely, any two cognitions are dissonant when considered by themselves, one of them follows from the obverse of the other”.
2000	Sweeney, Hausknecht, and Soutar	Cognitive Dissonance After Purchase: A Multidimensional Scale	Psychology and Marketing	“Cognitive dissonance may occur when an opinion is formed or a decision taken when cognition and opinions direct us in different directions”.
2008	Fischer, Frey, Peus and Kastenmüller	The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance: State of the Science and Directions for Future Research	Clashes of Knowledge	“Cognitive dissonance is described as the subjective perception of incompatibility between two self-relevant cognitions. Cognition can be any element of knowledge, belief, attitude, value, emotion, interest, plan, or behavior. In other words, cognitions are dissonant when one specific cognition implies the opposite of another cognition”.
2009	Tompkins and Lawley	Cognitive Dissonance and Creative Tension — The Same or Different?	The Developing Group	“The theory of cognitive dissonance states that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, or by justifying or rationalizing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors”.
2011	Harmon-Jones, Schmeichel, Inzlicht and Harmon-Jones	Trait Approach Motivation Relates To Dissonance Reduction	Social Psychological and Personality Science	“The original theory of cognitive dissonance predicted that when an individual holds two or more elements of knowledge that are relevant to each other but inconsistent with one another, a state of discomfort is created”.
2011	Metin and Camgoz	The Advances in The History of Cognitive	Journal of Marketing	“It suggests that when people experience dissonance (psychological discomfort), they endeavor to mitigate it via either turning into

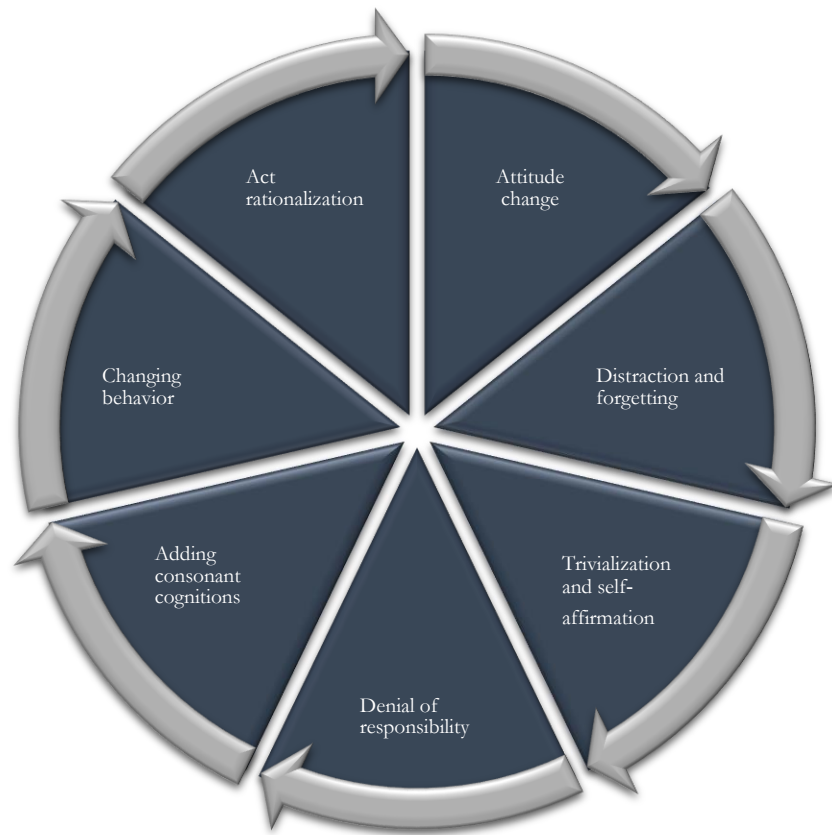
		Dissonance Theory		behaviors and cognitions or adding new cognitive components”.
2014	Sharma	The Impact on Consumer Buying Behaviour: Cognitive Dissonance	Global Journal of Finance and Management	“The term cognitive dissonance is used to describe the feeling of discomfort that results from holding two conflicting beliefs”.
2018	Dwivedi, Shareef, Mukerji, Rana and Kapoor	Involvement in Emergency Supply Chain for Disaster Management: A Cognitive Dissonance Perspective	International Journal of Production Research	“Cognitive dissonance represents the requirement of consistency between behavior and attitude because individuals strive to remove any inconsistency and therefore discrepant beliefs and thoughts in terms of their significance”.
2019	Harmon-Jones and Mills	An Introduction to Cognitive Dissonance Theory and An Overview of Current Perspectives on The Theory	American Psychological Association	“... cognitive dissonance refers to the discrepancy between cognitions and psychological discomfort”.

Source: Created by the authors.

occur after making critical and tough decisions, after being forced to share or do something which contrasts with private beliefs, attitudes, or opinions and after being exposed to incompatible information (Oshikawa, 1969: 44; Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019: 9). Therefore, cognitive dissonance may arise from logical inconsistency. Also, it may arise because one specific opinion is sometimes included, by definition, in a more general opinion and it may arise because of experiences (Festinger, 1957: 14). However, it may affect not only by the existence and the degree of discrepancy between cognitions but also by other factors such as cultural mores of people (Cooper, 2007: 8).

People could add consonant cognitions, subtract dissonant cognitions, increase the significance of consonant cognitions, or decrease the significance of dissonant cognitions to mitigate the cognitive dissonance (Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones, 2007: 8). The specific strategies of cognitive dissonance reduction is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Reduction Strategies of Cognitive Dissonance

Source: Adapted from McGrath (2017: 4-6).

Attitude change is one of the most often considered methods of mitigating cognitive dissonance. It tends to cognition that is most resistant to change. In the theory, it has been proposed that the knowledge about last attitude and behavior generally reflects the most resistant to change, since if an individual acted in a certain way, it is typically tough to undo that attitude. Therefore, attitude change is related to the last behavior of an individual (Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones, 2007: 8). Distraction provides people to change their interest away from their discrepant cognitions and avoid the negative affective situation due to the cognitive dissonance (McGrath, 2017: 4). Trivialization is one of the usual and efficient ways of cognitive dissonance reduction such as attitude change. Commonly, it may be easier to trivialize individuals' attitudes and behaviors rather than changing their actions. There are two circumstances under which trivialization is likely: when the preexisting attitude is noticeable and when the opportunity to trivialize is made available before the opportunity to express individuals' attitudes (Simon, Greenber and Brehm, 1995: 252).

Denial of responsibility as a method of cognitive dissonance reduction can be highlighted as a defensive response following an act. People do not want to be responsible for while seeking other responsible agents because it is a more complicated and elaborate cognitive operation.

People may be addicted in later to justify the denial of responsibility (Gosling, Denizeau and Oberlé, 2006: 723). Rationalizing discrepant attitude and behavior by adding behavior-consonant cognitions to the individual's belief system is a comparatively simple way of mitigating cognitive dissonance. Individuals do this when they look for new information to promote their position. While it is not the most appropriate method to mitigate cognitive dissonance, it is a major solution because changing an individual's behavior is more difficult and needs more effort. Lastly, act rationalization represents an optimal behavioral reduction way and new action, one that is consistent with a previous, but problematic, behavior, may mitigate the cognitive dissonance (McGrath, 2017: 5-6). From this point of view, cognitive dissonance reduction, by bringing cognitions into line with behavioral commitments, serves the function of facilitating the execution of effective and unconflicted action (Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones, 2008: 76).

Customer Satisfaction

Organizations specifically focus on providing a strong financial performance, making effective and efficient business planning processes, raising productivity, reducing operating costs, and succeeding organizational goals to increase customer satisfaction (İnce and Özbozkurt, 2019: 106). In this sense, customer satisfaction is a multi-period issue where a firm (or its employees) takes actions that impact on purchasing behavior in the future (Hauser, Simester and Wernerfelt, 1994: 330).

Organizations must take this into consideration and satisfy customers for being successful in the long term. It can be stated that the fundamental obligation of the organization is satisfied customers. Therefore, customer satisfaction is an appropriate and defensible organization goal the glue that holds different corporate functions together and directs corporate resource allocation (Peterson and Wilson, 1992: 61). Furthermore, it is a significant element of future profit potential (more satisfied customers can buy more and, more often, buy at a higher price, and/or express their satisfaction to others) and provides a better management tool (Hauser et al., 1994: 330). Taking into consideration this, the fundamental definitions related to customer satisfaction, has been indicated in Table 2.

From this point of view, the degree of customer satisfaction is intimately related to how well the customer's expectations and needs are fulfilled. These, respectively, are affected by several factors, such as previous personal experience of the company, the reputation of the company or product, what the company has promised for and, to some extent, the price of the good or service (Bergman and Klefsjö, 2010: 327-329). Precisely, customer satisfaction is established when the brand fulfills customers' desires, needs and expectations (Hanif, Hafeez and Riaz, 2010: 44). In this frame, being aware of these expectations is critical for addressing them and achieving a satisfied and loyal customer base (Cheng, Gan, Imrie and Mansori, 2019: 191). Moreover, consumers assimilate satisfaction levels to expectation levels to avoid the cognitive dissonance that would occur when expectations and satisfaction levels diverge (Szymanski and Henard, 2001: 17). In this respect, the researches carried out in the field of cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction have been shown in Table 3.

Customer satisfaction is vital to the success of organizations especially in the hospitality field and has been widely examined in the recent times thanks to its increasing significance to



Table 2. The Systematic Literature Review of Customer Satisfaction

Year	Author/s	Title	Source	Definition
1983	Bearden and Teel	Selected Determinants of Consumer Satisfaction and Complaint Reports.	Journal of Marketing Research	“Customer satisfaction has been remarked as a specific consequence of consumer attitude; it is a post-purchase theme regarding consumer likes or dislikes about the service after experiencing it”.
1984	Day	Modeling Choices Among Alternative Responses to Dissatisfaction	Advances in Consumer Research Volume	“The concept of satisfaction refers to attitude as a separate construct outside the immediate evaluative process with measures of brand attitude both before and after the consumption event of interest. It includes attitude toward the brand purchased (or store where purchased) as a separate construct”.
1996	Hallowell	The Relationships of Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, And Profitability: An Empirical Study	International Journal of Service Industry Management	“Customer satisfaction is the consequence of a customer’s perception of the value experienced in a transaction or relationship”.
1999	Oh	Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Value: A Holistic Perspective	International Journal of Hospitality Management	“Customer satisfaction states that customers form their attitude with desired service or product as a consequence of subjective (or direct) comparisons between their perceptions and expectations”.
2000	McDougall and Levesque	Customer Satisfaction with Services: Putting Perceived Value into The Equation.	Journal of Services Marketing	“Customer satisfaction can be accepted as the overall appraisal of the service provider whereas future intentions are the stated likelihood of returning to the service provider”.
2000	Hennig-Thurau and Hansen	Relationship Marketing: Gaining Competitive Advantage Through Customer Satisfaction and Customer Retention	Springer	“Customer satisfaction is emphasized as the customer’s empathic or emotional response to a perceived difference between expectations and performance appraisal”.
2002	Jamal and Naser	Customer Satisfaction and Retail Banking: An Assessment of Some of The Key Antecedents of Customer Satisfaction in Retail Banking	International Journal of Bank Marketing	“Customer satisfaction is the attitude or feeling of a customer towards a service or product after it was experienced”.
2006	Helgesen	Are Loyal Customers Profitable? Customer Satisfaction, Customer (Action) Loyalty and Customer Profitability at the Individual Level	Journal of Marketing Management	“The degree of meeting customers’ needs, desires and requests that are offered product or services by the organizations”.

2011	Angelova and Zekiri	Measuring Customer Satisfaction with Service Quality Using American Customer Satisfaction Model	International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences	“Customer satisfaction is the outcome felt by those that have experienced a company’s performance that has fulfilled their expectations”.
2015	Oliver	Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Consumer	Routledge	“Customer satisfaction is asserted as the consumer’s fulfillment reaction. It is an assessment that a service or product feature, or the service or product itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, containing levels of under or over fulfillment”.
2017	Kasiri, Guan Cheng, Sambasivanand Sidin	Integration of Standardization and Customization: Impact on Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, And Loyalty	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	“Customer satisfaction is explained as a consumer's thoughts regarding pleasure that results from comparing a product or service's perceived performance or outcome with his/her expectations”.
2019	Afthanorhan, Awang, Rashid, Foziah and Ghazali	Assessing the Effects of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction	Management Science Letters	“Customer satisfaction is described as “the levels of quality of service performances that reach the customer expectations”.

Source: Created by the authors.

managers (Anderson and Fornell, 2004: 172; Chi and Gursoy, 2009: 246; Slevitch and Oh, 2010: 559; Chen, 2015: 54; Cheng et al., 2019: 186; Bi, Liu, Fan and Zhang, 2020: 1). Owing to the intense competition within the hospitality sector, it increases the possibility of higher dissonance and a lower level of satisfaction. In this sense, the correlation between dissonance and satisfaction is predicted to be a negative relationship. People with a high level of dissonance have a lower level of customer satisfaction or vice versa (Graff, Sophonthummapharn and Parida, 2012: 36).

Managerial Attempts to Cope with Dissonance and Improve Satisfaction

A company’s reason for existence or a firm’s development and success are directly linked to the creation of value for customers (Slater, 1997: 166; Khadka and Maharjan, 2017: 14). In other words, creating values for customers has become a principal phenomenon in strategic management for all organizations, especially hospitality firms (Kim and Oh, 2004: 65). Hence, development and maintenance of a genuine relationship requires a high degree of interaction between the hospitality firms as service providers and the customers (Crandall and Crandall, 2014: 182), thereby creating a bond between the two parties (Barnes, Dunne and Glynn, 2000: 96).

Subsequently, creating solutions for a potential source of problems is vital for companies to prevent customer dissatisfaction caused by cognitive dissonance. Considerably, it is possible with having well trained, skilled, and motivated staff that will deliver the immaculate service necessary to create positive guest experiences. In other words, the creation of a positive environment by managers is important to attract, recognize and keep the customers (Kusluvan, 2003: 433; Ferizi and Kruja, 2018: 18). Otherwise, guests or customers will be



more likely to experience uncertainty, stress, and, ultimately, dissatisfaction (Namasivayam and Hinkin, 2003: 28).

Taken into account that services provided cannot be tasted, felt, seen, heard, or smelled, to reduce uncertainty caused by service intangibility, customers look for tangible evidence that will provide information and confidence about the service (Hudson and Hudson, 2012: 8; Kotler et al., 2016: 73). In other words, since customers tend to seek, gather, and process the selective information that complies with their attitude, implementing more effective involvement management practices that enhance customers being emotionally aroused is considered as a strategic instrument for success. From this point of view, providing easy access to information remains at the core of creating an excellent dissonance mitigating technique for managers because it reduces uncertainty and risk perceptions. Namely, the perception of appropriate information might reduce consumers' perceived risk and help clarify their purchases.

Consequently, a low level of cognitive dissonance and a high level of satisfaction is a precondition for the customer to become a good ambassador for the company and repeat buying (Graff et al., 2012: 36). In short, each effort for mitigating cognitive dissonance contributes to the customer's overall satisfaction and willingness to do business with the organization again (Hudson and Hudson, 2012: 9).

Methodology

Hypothesis

Based on the theory and comprehensive literature review, the hypothesis of the study is proposed below:

H₁: There is a negative correlation between cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction.

Table 3. Cognitive Dissonance and Customer Satisfaction

Years	Author/s	Sample	Title	Source	Findings
1996	Sweeney et al.	Over one thousand consumers	Are Satisfaction and Dissonance the Same Construct?	Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior	"Cognitive dissonance and satisfaction were suggested to be inversely related when satisfaction is low and unrelated otherwise. Namely, dissonance is likely to happen when satisfaction decreases or when consumers are dissatisfied, but is unlikely to happen when satisfaction increases".
2000	Sweeney et al.	-	Cognitive Dissonance After Purchase: A Multidimensional Scale	Psychology and Marketing	"... dissonant consumers often display anxiety", or "Dissonant consumers may experience low levels of expected satisfaction".
2009	Clark and Das	-	Exploring the Use Of E-CRM Elements and Effective Website Design as Tools	Journal of Technology Research	"Since the cognitive dissonance literature proposes that high levels of dissonance can reduce customer satisfaction..."

			for Reducing Consumer Post- Purchase Cognitive Dissonance		
2010	Salzberger and Koller	125 consumers who purchased consumer electronics or household goods	Investigating the Impact of Cognitive Dissonance and Customer Satisfaction on Loyalty and Complaint Behavior	Brazilian Journal of Marketing	"There is an inverse relationship between dimensions of cognitive dissonance on one hand and customer satisfaction on the other could be empirically substantiated".
2012	Graff et al.	-	Post-purchase Cognitive Dissonance: Evidence from the Mobile Phone Market	International Journal of Technology Marketing	"... cognitive dissonance influences the degree of satisfaction in the post-purchase period is confirmed".
2016	Hassan, Shabbir and Imran	-	Effect of Word of Mouth on Customer Pre- Purchase Dissonance, Customer Satisfaction and Brand Trust: A Study of Household Appliances Industry in China	Science International	"... as the dissonance leads to confusion in the customers' minds to buy a different brand, so this dissonance can cause customer dissatisfaction".

Source: Created by the authors.

Measures

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. In the first part of the questionnaire included the demographic characteristics of the participants such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, and household income. To collect demographic information allows us to better understand certain background characteristics of the respondents.

The second part of the questionnaire was prepared for measuring the cognitive dissonance level of the participants. In this sense, cognitive dissonance level was measured with the "Cognitive Dissonance Scale" introduced by Sweeney et al. (2000). Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Yücel and Çizel (2019). The scale has 12 items and three-factor structure including "Emotional Dissonance, Rationality in Buying, and Anxiety of Being Defrauded". It includes the items such as *"I felt disappointed after coming to this hotel"*, *"After I came to this hotel I wondered if I'd been fooled"*. Cronbach's Alpha was found ,937 in the Turkish adaptation. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree).

The last part of the questionnaire involved the customer satisfaction level of participants. To measure of this, it was used "Customer Satisfaction Scale" which was developed by Çubukcu (2016). The scale has 11 items and one-factor structure. The scale contains satisfaction items such as *"This hotel and its services are reassuring"*, *"The services I received at this hotel fully met my*



expectations and needs". Çubukcu (2016: 85) found that the Cronbach's Alpha level was ,953. Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree).

Statistical Power

The population of the study included 307 customers who were accommodated at least for three days between the period of November 13, 2019 and January 03, 2020 in a hospitality business, Mersin. Since the questionnaire was distributed to participants after their accommodation, they were informed that their participation was voluntary and responses would remain anonymous. Within the scope, the amount of number of the participants was identified via accepting the significant coefficient of the relationship between the total points of the two scales as 0,30 (Mukaka, 2012). In other words, the minimum correlation of 0,30 between customer satisfaction and cognitive dissonance scale was approved significant for the statistics and the study, the minimum sample was estimated as 139 with a 95% confidence level and type 1 error ($1.0-0.95=0.05$) and 166 participants were seen to be adequate in case of involving maximum 20% of participants.

Data Analysis

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient test was used in this study to identify the reliability and internal consistency of scales and scales' dimensions via using the "SPSS 26.0" program. Factor analysis was used to describe variables of the scales, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett Test of Sphericity were estimated to explore adequate samples. Also, pearson correlation analysis and spearman correlation analysis were used to examine the relationship between scales and scales' sub-dimensions. In this sense, p values that are quite less than $p \leq 0,05$ were accepted as statistically significant for the study.

Findings

Descriptive Statistics

In the study, Table 4 implies the demographic variables' frequency belonging to the participants of the sample taken from the population in terms of age group, gender, marital status, educational qualification reached, and household income.

Table 4. Description of Participants Demographic Characteristics

Descriptive Statistics		Frequencies (n)	Percentage (%)
Age group	Below 25 years	39	23,5
	26-35	82	49,4
	36-45	31	18,7
	Over 46 years	14	8,4
	Total	166	100,0
ender	Female	70	42,2
	Male	96	57,8
	Total	166	100,0
Marital Status	Married	88	53,0
	Single	78	47,0
	Total	166	100,0
	High School Degree	90	54,2

Educational Qualification	Bachelor's degree	60	36,2
	Postgraduate Degree	16	9,6
	Total	166	100,0
Household Income	Below 2.020 TL	52	31,3
	2.021-3.000 TL	50	30,1
	3.001-4.000 TL	45	27,1
	Over 4.001 TL	19	11,5
	Total	166	100,0

The results are as reported in Table 4, 23,5% (n= 39) of participants were below 25 years, 49,4% (n= 82) of participants were between 26 and 35, 18,7% (n=31) of participants were between 36 and 45, and 8,4% (n=14) of participants were over 46 years. Also, 42,2% (n=70) of participants were female and 57,8% (n=96) of participants were male. Moreover, 53,0% (n=88) of participants were married and 47,0% (n=78) of participants were single. Additionally, 54,2% (n=90) of participants had high-school degree, 36,2% (n=60) of participants had bachelor degree, and 9,6% (n=16) of participants had postgraduate degree. Lastly, 31,3% (n=52) of participants had household income below 2.020 TL, 30,1% (n=50) of participants had household income between 2.021 and 3.000 TL, 27,1% (n=45) of participants had household income between 3.001 and 4.000 TL, and 11,5% (n=19) of participants had household income over 4.001 TL.

Factor Analysis of the Scales

Within the study, factor analysis was used to identify variables of the scales. Subsequently, KMO and Bartlett Test of Sphericity were calculated to explore adequate samples. Then, Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis has been tested to explore participants' degree of cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction reliability and internal consistency coefficients. Table 5 below shows the validity and reliability coefficients and factor analysis of the cognitive dissonance scale in this regard.

Table 5. The Factor Analysis of Cognitive Dissonance Scale

Items of the Scale	Emotional Dissonance	Rationality in Buying
Item1	,879	
Item2	,844	
Item3	,813	
Item4	,795	
Item5	,658	
Item6		,626
Item7		,711
Item8		,715
Item9		,723
Item10	,811	
Item11	,873	
Item12	,870	
(α)	(α)	(α)
,743	,942	,882
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
KMO	Chi-Square	p
,914	1529,216	<0,001



The results in Table 5, which demonstrates, the KMO value via using factor analysis has been identified as ,914 and the results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity that has been used to explore the samples' equal variances, have shown the sample taken from the population was suitable for the factor analysis ($p < ,001$). Additionally, as a result of the factor analysis applied to 12 items remaining in the scale, a two-factor structure emerged. Regarding to this, there were eight items in the first factor that is emotional dissonance and four items in the second factor which is rationality in buying. Also, the validity of cognitive dissonance scale has been identified as ,743 and it represents that the scale is highly reliable for the study. Furthermore, the reliability coefficient of the emotional dissonance has been identified as ,942 and rationality in buying has been revealed as ,882. In this frame, the sub-dimensions of the scale have a high level of reliability for the study. On the other hand, Table 6 below designates the validity and reliability coefficients and factor analysis of the customer satisfaction scale.

Table 6. The Factor Analysis of Customer Satisfaction Scale

Items of the Scale	Customer Satisfaction	Meeting Expectations	
Item1	,723		
Item2	,795		
Item3	,696		
Item4	,791		
Item5	,766		
Item6	,764		
Item7	,727		
Item8	,772		
Item9	,606		
Item10	,626		
Item11		,612	
(α)	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
		Chi-Square	p
,898	,900	907,969	<0,001

As shown in Table 6, KMO value through using factor analysis has been identified as ,900 and the results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity that has been used to explore the samples' equal variances, have identified the sample taken from the population was adequate for the factor analysis ($p < ,001$). Within this context, as a result of the factor analysis applied to 11 items remaining in the scale, a two-factor structure emerged. There were ten items in the first factor which was customer satisfaction and one item in the second factor named meeting expectations. From this point of view, Cronbach Alpha Analysis result demonstrates that the validity of the customer satisfaction scale has been found as ,898. It has been assumed that the scale has a high level of reliability for the study.

Hypothesis Testing

After ensuring the factor analysis, validity and reliability of the scales, Table 7 below indicates the relationship between cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction via using the pearson correlation analysis.

Table 7. The Pearson Correlation Analysis Results Related to the Relationship between Cognitive Dissonance and Customer Satisfaction

Scale/Sub-dimensions		Customer Satisfaction	Cognitive Dissonance	Emotional Dissonance	Rationality in Buying
Customer Satisfaction	r	1			
	p				
Cognitive Dissonance	r	-,165*	1		
	p	,034			
Emotional Dissonance	r	-,362**	,821**	1	
	p	,000	,000		
Rationality in Buying	r	,347**	,234**	-,363**	1
	p	,000	,002	,000	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results demonstrated in Table 7, there is a weak negative correlation between the cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction ($r=-,165$; $p=,034$, $p<,05$). Also, there is a weak negative correlation between emotional dissonance and customer satisfaction ($r=-,362$; $p=,000$, $p<,01$). Regarding to this, it has been seen that the decrease of participants' cognitive dissonance and emotional dissonance levels has an impact on increasing the level of customer satisfaction.

Besides, there is a weak positive correlation between rationality in buying and customer satisfaction ($r=,347$; $p=,000$, $p<,01$). Within the scope, the increase of participants' rationality in buying level has an impact on increasing the level of customer satisfaction. On the other hand, Spearman Correlation Analysis has been used to estimate the relationship between the sub-dimension of customer satisfaction that is meeting expectations and cognitive dissonance and its sub-dimensions since meeting expectations had included only one item (see Table 8).

Table 8. The Spearman Correlation Analysis Results Related to the Relationship between Cognitive Dissonance and Meeting Expectations

Scale/Sub-dimensions		Meeting Expectations	Cognitive Dissonance	Emotional Dissonance	Rationality in Buying
Meeting Expectations	r	1			
	p				
Cognitive Dissonance	r	-,111	1		
	p	,153			
Emotional Dissonance	r	-,122	,761**	1	
	p	,118	,000		
Rationality in Buying	r	,178*	,201**	-,401*	1
	p	,022	,009	,000	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 8, there is no significant relationship between cognitive dissonance and meeting expectations ($r=-,111$; $p=,153$, $p>,05$). Similarly, there is no significant relationship between emotional dissonance and meeting expectations ($r=-,122$; $p=,118$, $p>,05$). However, it has been determined that there is a weak positive correlation between rationality in buying and meeting expectations ($r=,178$; $p=,022$, $p<,05$) alongside the increase of participants'



rationality in buying level has an impact on increasing the level of meeting expectations. From this point of view, the fundamental hypothesis of the study has been partially accepted.

Conclusion

Cognitive dissonance which is a remarkable theme originally introduced by Festinger (1957) reflects the discrepancy between cognitions and psychological discomfort (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019: 3). Each effort for mitigating cognitive dissonance contributes to the customer's overall satisfaction and willingness to do business with the organization again (Hudson and Hudson, 2012: 9).

On the other hand, taking into consideration that purchasing hospitality services is generally nonrefundable (Tanford and Montgomery, 2015: 601) and requires high-involvement decisions owing to its emotional and material significance, risk and uncertainty are crucial components for the sector. Regarding to this, especially for hospitality services (since a high degree of interaction between customers and service providers), building and maintaining relationships with customers are essential for success (Hudson and Hudson, 2012: 8). For this reason, creating solutions for a potential source of problems via creating a positive environment with well-trained staff, is pivotal for companies to prevent customer dissatisfaction led by cognitive dissonance. In other words, taking into account that an accommodation service begins in the front office department with reservation, followed by guest check-in procedures, and ends with check-out (Sayın and Karaman, 2019: 186), communication strategies build on solid basis plays a crucial role for active and effective interaction with customers after check out processes (Yeşilkuş, 2020: 148). Thus, it may reduce cognitive dissonance and increase satisfaction.

Moreover, the intense competition within the hospitality sector increases the possibility of higher dissonance and a lower level of satisfaction. In this frame, the correlation between dissonance and satisfaction is expected to be negative. Individuals with a high level of dissonance will have a low level of satisfaction and vice versa (Graff et al. 2012: 36-39). From this point of view, the results of this study showed that there is an inverse relationship between cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction. Also, it was seen that findings are similar to the related literature as expected (Sweeney et al., 1996; Sweeney et al., 2000; Clark and Das, 2009; Salzberger and Koller, 2010; Graff et al., 2012; Hassan et al., 2016). In this frame, it is presumed that post-purchase cognitive evaluations of customers create customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction; and it is emphasized that customer satisfaction increases with the decrease in cognitive dissonance. Also, concentrating on whether customers-perceived value is different from other competitors or not, and it plays a crucial role in formulating dissonance mitigation strategies. Within this context, today's competitive climate hotels/accommodation service providers should place a greater emphasis on gathering information related to external environment and competitors (Türkay, Solmaz and Şengül, 2011: 1060). Also, managers should formulate and implement strategies that may create doubts in the customer's mind related to the competing services that others provide. Thereby, it will be possible for them to reduce their customers' dissonance level experienced while increasing it at the same time for others.

Additionally, it has been revealed that the increase in attitudes related to rationality in buying post-purchase, the degree of meeting expectations and customer satisfaction also increase. In this regard, rational customers are more likely to look for selective information that complies

with their attitude and they decide in the light of information gathered from different resources. Therefore, once the information gathered and experiences are consistent, cognitive dissonance may reduce and satisfaction may increase.

Finally, further researches should concentrate more on quantitative studies related to cognitive dissonance, have the studies examining the relationship between cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction increased. Lastly, it is recommended to carry out similar studies in different destinations with different variables.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our findings contribute to the existing literature by extending the inverse relationship between cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction. Also, it has practical implications for practitioners especially aimed at mitigating the negative effect of cognitive dissonance which appears post-purchase by customers for the hospitality sector. Reducing dissonance while increasing customer satisfaction and creating loyalty plays a vital role in organizations' long-term sustainability. Undoubtedly, the way organizations treat their customers undoubtedly gives them a competitive edge. Additionally, it is a key success factor being preferred and distinguished by the customers in the sector. In this regard, organizations should concentrate more on sharing information that supports customers' choices which are related to services provided by the organizations. Also, organizations should prioritize post-purchase communication by appropriate methods with the awareness of the importance of customers in today's highly competitive and rapidly changing environment.

Moreover, the findings of our current study are of extensive interest to organizations that provide hospitality services in terms of being evaluated the service quality perceptions and expectations by customers. It includes a long-term period about the measurement of actual service quality related to the customers' perceptions of service experience. In this regard, the study advocates that the managers should pay more attention to service quality and customers' assessments via reducing cognitive dissonance to enhance actual customer expectations. Indeed, an awareness of the possible impacts of customers' expectations towards cognitive dissonance is an impetus factor to the organizations for creating a more satisfied and loyal customer base.

On one hand, whilst cognitive dissonance is linked with post-purchase, on the other hand, it is thought to be linked with pre-purchase. Taking into account that the intangibility brought by the service sector and refers to the lack of opportunity to try the service before the purchase, it may lead to increase uncertainty and risk perceptions of customers about the organizations and end up with cognitive dissonance. Since, the services described as intangible or immaterial products received by the customers, cannot be mostly returned in the hospitality sector. For this reason, developing the appropriate strategies such as reducing the possibility of facing negative surprises via allowing trying the service by the customers and eliminating concerns and anxiety of the customers, may mitigate cognitive dissonance and increase customer satisfaction level. Organizations may have an opportunity to be preferred in the future again by providing customer satisfaction and reducing the level of cognitive dissonance experienced. In contrast, the dissatisfaction, which may appear as a result of a high level of the cognitive dissonance experienced, induces to the reconsideration of the choices and not to be preferred the same organization again in the next service purchase by the customers.



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