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Encouraging brand attachment on consumer behaviour: Pet-friendly tourism segment

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to study the factors that influence consumer behaviour through brand attachment, in the pet-friendly segment in Portugal. Pet-friendly tourism has stood out as a very recognized and valid tourism and marketing segment, growing worldwide, urging the complex needed advances on tourism practices performance.

Methods: The application of the model to a group of 190 respondents carried out in order to analyse the relationships between brand attachment, trust, satisfaction, commitment, loyalty and quality of service. To test our measurement model, data was analysed using the SmartPLS 3.2.

Results: Results reveal that quality of the service, satisfaction, trust and commitment had a strong relationship with the loyalty of the respondents. As for the brand attachment, the variables that showed the most influence were satisfaction, trust and commitment.

Implications: The research still needs to be empirically applied in pet-friendly tourism settings to enrich their robustness in a cross-cultural tourism experiences, covering a wider spread of abroad tourism destinations and products. This study thus contributes to a better clarity at the theoretical level of brand attachment and consumer behaviour, as well as making it possible to understand from the consumers' side, which characteristics are part of their decision-making process, granting relevant data that can cooperate in the definition of better marketing strategies.

Keywords: Pet-friendly, brand attachment, consumer behaviour, decision making, niche marketing, SmartPLS.

JEL Classification: Q18, D11, P36

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1 INTRODUCTION

Several sectors of activity decided to shape themselves to receive pets and thus become “pet-friendly”. These services typology has been progressing in a positive way, with several hotels and accommodation services already allowing animals to enter and stay, as well as restaurants and some shopping centers. The understanding in the definition of “pet-friendly” varies between “vacation destination where family pets are permitted” and “accommodation property which may allow certain types of pets to accompany guests during their stay or some may permit animals inside the accommodation or have appropriate fencing to contain animals” (Ksenia et al., 2015). Nowadays, it is notorious the multiplication of people who choose to travel or to be accompanied by their animal during the holidays, on trips or even on short walks, such as trips to restaurants or shopping at the mall or other stores (Valeri, 2022a; 2022b).

In fact, the number of consumers looking for and enjoying services available that are pet-friendly is increasing, due to the impact and importance that have been given to animals, as well as their care and well-being. Therefore, there has been a notorious increase in sensitivity on the part of the population towards four-legged beings.

According to Anjo et al. (2021), within the tourism sector, one of the most popular forms of travel is cultural tourism, in which tourists travel to historical sites, cultural landscapes, events or festivals related to culture and visit museums, among many other activities. In this context, travel with pets sometimes involves more uncertainties and constraints than other forms of tourism, because pets are incapable of self-management and it can be a challenge for pet owners to do tourism activities with them (Ying et al., 2020; Valeri, 2021), as an example: pet's lack of agility, other participants resentments and destination restrictions. The institution speculates that longer daylight hours and struggling to find someone to pet sit while families go on vacation could be big contributing factors as well. Pets will never be able to

understand why they've been abandoned by the ones they love. Thus, social marketing success relates to the success of the influence of desired behaviour. The chosen target public is free to accept, reject, modify or abandon behaviour in favor of society and individual good (Soares & Sousa, 2021).

This research analyses the brand attachment in the context of the pet-friendly segment in Portugal, focusing on the opinions, attitudes and habits of Portuguese consumers. Thus, the key question for the study is: What is the impact of the brand attachment on consumer affectivity in relation to pet-friendly services in Portugal? The main goal of this study is to analyse and evaluate the impact of brand attachment on consumer behaviour, in the specific context of pet-friendly in Portugal, using the affective and emotional relationship established between consumers and existing services for the segment under study.

Brand attachment allows, in this context, to understand and examine how the affective relationship that consumers develop, conditions their decision making, in the specific case of pet-friendly services in Portugal. the main objectives of the investigation are fourfold: (1) to understand the decision-making process of choosing consumers in view of the pet-friendly services existing in Portugal; (2) analyse the propensity of consumers in relation to the variables under study and the existing relationship with the brand attachment; (3) to investigate a possible market expansion in Portugal and what services could be developed in this area; and (4) identify and analyse consumers' monthly and annual spending on pet-friendly services.

This paper is structured in four sections: (1) the literature background on brand attachment, pet friendly segment and hypothesis development; (2) the methodology approach; (3); results and discussion. Finally, (4) conclusions, including managerial implications, limitations and suggestions for future research, are presented.

2 BACKGROUND LITERATURE

2.1 Brand attachment

In the context of brands, consumers have innate connections that allow them to connect and establish links with brands. Attachments occur only when the brand is able to develop a strong connection with the “I”, and this connection progresses with the evolution of time and based on real or imagined experiences of the individual, of a personal character that originate in turn, autobiographical memories, personalized meanings and trust (Park et al., 2006). Talking about a brand is bringing together elements crucial to its composition, from image, notoriety and loyalty, to customers. A brand is characterized as a symbolic entity that represents cultural (Cardoso & Sousa, 2020), emotional and historical elements with meaning for individuals (Santos et al., 2021; Sousa et al., 2020). In recent years, the brand has managed to become an interpretation of the total consumer experience that the company offers its customers (Kotler et al., 2017; Rossi et al., 2022). Semprebon and Prado (2016) found that the relationship established between brands and consumers results from a basis of trust and commitment, mostly of an affective and emotional nature, thus contributing to the preference for a particular brand. Brands perform numerous functions for consumers, which result in benefits for the strengthening of the brand-consumer relationship (Santos et al., 2021).

In a particularly affective context, the term brand attachment, it is difficult to confine this concept to just one definition, since there were several already presented by several authors, however, in general it is possible to say that the term suggests the development of a “love” between the consumer and the brand (Chinomona, 2013, p. 1305). According to Belaid & Behi (2011), the brand attachment as a construct is considered fundamental in the representation of the affective components in the consumer-brand relationship (Belaid & Behi, 2011; Malar et al., 2011; Sousa & Rocha, 2019; Vieira & Sousa, 2020). Park et al. (2006) refers that the term brand attachment can be defined as “the cognitive and emotional attachment that connects a given brand to the self” (Park et al., 2006, p. 5).

Brand attachment triggers intentions whose intention will be to perform behaviours using consumer resources, namely time, money and reputation (Park et al., 2010). For instance, Santos et al. (2021) concluded that the role of emotion and attachment in tourism has received increasing recognition in the field of tourism and marketing (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020), affirming itself as a good predictor of some types of behaviour: “emotions establish a strong importance in the comprehension of consumer behaviour and even the definition of experiences and also enhance consumer reactions and on tourist” (Prayag et al., 2013, p. 119). Emotions have a crucial role and impact in memorable tourism experiences, from travel planning to the recall of their memorable tourism experiences, in overall representations of tourism experiences (Nella & Christou, 2016; Baggio and Valeri, 2020; Valeri, 2016; Valeri and Baggio, 2020). According to Thomson, Macinnis and Park (2005), the attachment varies essentially through strength, that is, stronger attachments are related to stronger feelings as well, namely at the level of connection (emotions of

attachment and attachment), affection (emotions like love, friendship and passivity) and passion (emotions of enchantment, fascination and attraction). However, Park et al. (2010) adds that in the measurement of attachment, joy, excitement, pride, contentment, relief, nostalgia, or other element that identifies with the individual's memories must also be included. In this way, it can be inferred that the attachment, through the evidenced components, manifests an emotional connection in the individual similar to love.

Regarding the growing importance in the development of the connection between the consumer and the brand, it is essential that marketers know and understand which factors affect the brand attachment (Japutra et al., 2014). In their study, the authors realized that the brand attachment can be defined based on three dimensions: emotions, self-connection and importance, which allowed the definition of six determinants of brand attachment: self-congruence, experience, responsiveness, quality, reputation and trust. In this way, the more affection the consumer is to a brand, the more he will be able to transform and control the relationship with the brand (moving from an egocentric to a reciprocal way), in such a way that allows the sharing of resources with brand (Park et al., 2010).

Tsai (2011, p.523), attests four assumptions that make up the brand-consumer relationship: (1) the existence of physical attraction between the consumer and the brand; (2) the brand and the consumer were made for each other; (3) the brand encompasses the ideal image that the consumer has of himself; and (4) the consumer feels desolate if the brand is not available.

2.2 Pet-friendly segment

The pet-friendly concept was initially created to designate the “holiday destination where pets are allowed” and later, it was adapted and generalized to all services dedicated to this segment, thus conceptualizing “accommodation properties that may allow certain types of animals pets to accompany owners during their stay or some places may allow animals inside the housing or have appropriate fences to protect animals” (Kirillova et al., 2015, p. 26). The number of services that accept the presence of pets worldwide is increasing, and go beyond the accommodation service, so it can be seen that a pet-friendly service can be any that is intended to allow the presence of the animal in a given space. These places can be shopping centers, shops, restaurants, cafes, leisure parks, beaches, owners' workplaces, airports and air travel, among others. Pets have become significant in human lives, as the numbers of pet owning population are continuously growing, this fact occurs because they provide companionship, friendship, love and affection in a sense of family members.

This relation between animals and humans, has shown that holidaying with dogs or cats can provide a variety of benefits for owners and their pets (Dashper, 2020). As the traditional image of vacations for humans with pets, was going somewhere and leave the pets with family or friends, but as the world changed, so as the definition of vacation with pets. Pet-friendly tourism is a new trend that has been developed along the years and since it is also recent, is constantly changing and growing into different groups of services inside the big tourism idea.

“People have more attention and care when it comes to their pet's health and well-being, just as they do with a family member or yourself” (Daneshvary & Schwer, 1993, p.25). According to Belk (1988, p.155), the pet segment (animals) is usually considered as an important part of their owner's life, in such a way that they interfere in their emotions as much as a person, a brand or an object. Holbrook (2008) states that pets are remarkable creatures, which should not be seen as a material asset in the sense of ownership and possession for humans, but as a faithful companion with whom it is possible to share and experience activities consumption (such as walking, running, watching TV, listening to music, playing, traveling, eating and sleeping), identical to those that are shared in the relationship between people. Thus, there is an increasing concern for the welfare of animals, hence there are currently numerous adoption campaigns, associations and people willing to contribute monetarily with food or even with a home for an animal in need. In this perspective, the multiplication of people who choose to travel or to be accompanied by their animal during holidays, on trips or even on short walks, such as trips to restaurants or shopping at the mall or other stores, is notorious.

In fact, the number of consumers looking for and enjoying services available that are pet-friendly is increasing, due to the impact and importance that have been given to animals, as well as their care and well-being. Therefore, there has been a notorious increase in sensitivity on the part of the population towards four-legged beings. It is common for owners to call animals, feed and care for them, photograph them, spend money on goods and accessories, talk to them, protect them, play and even sleep with them (Holbrook, 2008). In light of this, Holbrook and Woodside (2008) argue that these attitudes, especially monetary expenditures (sometimes excessive), are very much related to investment in the affective relationship. People spend more and more time, money and affection with animals (Toloni & Duque-Estrada, 2017).

Animals play a variety of roles in the daily lives of individuals, whether at family or social level. In addition to transmitting attachment, affection and loyalty, animals can exercise functions of partnership and help for the human being, while guard or hunting dogs, also performing police and rescue work, even as guides for people with special needs (Alves & Sousa, 2022). As a consequence of the development of the human-pet relationship and in view of its repercussions, since individuals tend to attribute some characteristics and/or behaviours typically human to animals (Kielser, 2006).

The pet friendly market segment is very comprehensive, as it encompasses all the content related to animals and the concept pet-friendly, namely the locations, companies and pet-friendly services. For the context of this research, the existing pet-friendly services in Portugal were addressed, which also include some locations and companies, dedicated to the sector under analysis, which remain in constant evolution, given that the segment is still recent and little studied in Portugal.

The travel and tourism industry has seen an influx of accommodations to support pet-friendly travel, from pet bathrooms in the airport to pet-friendly rental cars and more – traveling with your pet is only getting easier. And when it comes to the latest trends in hospitality and beyond, savvy

hoteliers are realizing that the benefits of pet-friendly hotels far outweigh the possible disadvantages or limitations (Dashper, 2020; Alves & Sousa, 2022).

Figure 1: Rules and restrictions of the pet-friendly services

Pet-friendly Service	Rules & Regulations	Restrictions
Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Size - Small pets only - under 15lbs ▪ Maximum 2 pets ▪ Pets must be fully trained and appropriately restrained and comply with local legislation requirement. ▪ Guests are responsible for cleaning up after their pets on hotel property and in the neighborhood and responsible for all property damages and/ or personal injuries resulting from their pets. ▪ The hotel reserves the right to charge guest's account commensurate to the cost of such damages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pets must not be left unattended, pet-sitter is available upon request. ▪ Not allowed in any food and beverages outlets, health club and pool area, except guide dogs. ▪ Any disturbances must be curtailed to ensure other guests are not inconvenienced.
Sheraton Hotels & Resorts (176 of 196 hotels within North America welcome dogs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weigh limit of 80 pounds, but GM's decision is discretion for dog with over weight limit. ▪ Luxurious custom pet services and amenities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional restrictions may be applied
Travel by plane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some Airlines allow guide and assistance dogs to travel in cabin with owners ▪ Animals usually travel in plane's hold meaning, so owners won't have access to them until arrival ▪ Pets must be microchipped ▪ They must have valid pet passport provided by animal's vet and microchip number must be recorded (e.g. certificate). ▪ For international travel, dogs must have tapeworm treatment (between 1 and 5 days before travel and it should be recorded on the pet passport/ veterinary certificate detailed). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any animal that enters in UK from outside of EU, must stay four-month in quarantine ▪ Some Airlines have limited number of pets to travel ▪ Pugs and snub nose breeds (i.e. Persian cats and Pekingese dogs) aren't accepted by some Airlines because they have breathing issues when travelling in altitude ▪ Many carriers require owners to use a designated pet travel agent

Source: Adapted from Kongtaveesawas & Namwong (2020); Penson (2013)

In general, the inclusion of animals in families and the proportion they took in terms of affection, dedication and importance for humans, revolutionized the markets in such a way that pets began to be seen as customers and included in various services, many developed especially for this new sector and others adapted to new pet customers. However, the most recent data dates back to 2015 through a study of GfK (GfK Track.2Pets) carried out by GfK 4 in Portugal, which states that “Portugal is a pet-friendly country”. This study allowed us to analyse that the number of pets in Portugal has been increasing. According to GfK data, it was found that 54% of homes have at least one pet, which in 2015 represented about 2 million Portuguese homes, out of the total of 3,869 million homes in Portugal that year. Compared to 2011 (44%), there was a gradual increase over a 4-year period, which represents about 9%, according to the consultancy GfK and the study carried out in 2011. GfK estimates that these values were at the base changes in family nuclei and the fact that the population perceives that animals can make a positive contribution to improving their physical and psychological well-being.

The study carried out by GfK in 2015 shows the population more emotionally connected with the animal as a member of the family, both dogs (47%) and cats (49%). GfK also states that there is another trend that stands out: the more humanized treatment of dogs and cats, which culminates in the establishment of a connection that is much more emotional and affective than functional. To sum up, the GfK (2015) also presents, in another complementary study, the ranking of European countries with more pets. Portugal is in

the 12th place in the ranking, with Russia at the top, followed by France, Italy, Germany and the UK. To sum up, worldwide, the USA (United States of America) emerges as the most pet-friendly country, given that they have a greater number of pets, about 65% of homes have at least one animal, on average.

2.3 Formulation of hypotheses

Brand satisfaction is the culmination of the consumer's initial expectations and the brand's performance after purchase. Satisfaction is a function of consumer expectations (Sharma, 2020). Also Levy and Hino (2016), state that consumer satisfaction comes from the result between their expectations before using the product, the performance of the product and their level of satisfaction after the initial expectations. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) state that satisfaction corresponds to a cognitive judgment that results as a specific consequence of a transaction. Although satisfaction and quality of service are similar concepts, there are factors that distinguish them, since the quality of the service represents the result of the consumer's perception of a service and its respective provision in accordance with the aspects defined for the service by the consumer (Levy and Hino, 2016). Belaid and Behi (2011) explain satisfaction through a cognitive and affective response; as well as, a consequence of product evaluation, through product characteristics and/or product consumption experience; and it occurs before or after the choice, after consumption (transactional satisfaction) or after a long experience (relational satisfaction). Thus, an individual who is emotionally connected to a brand is likely to be satisfied with it (Pereira et al., 2021; Pina & Dias, 2021; Thomson et al., 2005).

Trust of consumer in a brand is considered a key aspect in the development of the brand attachment (Chinomona, 2013; Levy & Hino, 2016). The trust is influenced by consumer satisfaction and, in turn, by consumer loyalty (Levy & Hino, 2016). In the view of Belaid and Behi (2011), the concept of trust in the theory of the relationship between the consumer and the brand, may go beyond satisfaction (functional performance). The author explains that trust should not be perceived as a prerequisite for brand attachment, however, it plays an important role in extolling this affective bond.

Commitment presents solidity, robustness and stronger stability in relation to a brand, than an attitude in general (Caceres & Paparoidamis, 2007). According to Hess and Story (2005), the term commitment is used to describe the consumer's final disposition in relation to the brand, namely their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in relation to the brand. Commitment plays an important role, as it stabilizes behaviour over time, thus becoming an indispensable component of loyalty (Caceres & Paparoidamis, 2007).

Loyalty is described as a behavioural and attitudinal concept, and is also referred to as a repetition in the consumer's behavioural buying attitude towards a given brand (Belaid & Behi, 2011). Consumer loyalty to a service can be defined as "the degree to which the customer has repeated buying behaviour towards a company, has a positive attitude towards the brand or service provider, in such a way that it commits itself to use this brand whenever you need this service" (Gremler & Brown, 1996, p. 173). Therefore, customer loyalty allows companies to understand and analyze which

elements of the company's marketing mix the customer values most when purchasing (Othmana, et al., 2019).

Drawing on the previous findings, the set of hypotheses is as follows (table 1):

Table 1: Postulated hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a	Brand attachment has a positive relationship with consumer confidence
Hypothesis 1b	Brand attachment has a positive relationship with the consumer's commitment
Hypothesis 1c	Brand attachment has a positive relationship with consumer loyalty
Hypothesis 1d	Brand attachment has a positive relationship with consumer satisfaction
Hypothesis 2a	Consumer confidence has a positive relationship with consumer loyalty
Hypothesis 2b	Consumer confidence mediates the relationship between brand attachment and consumer loyalty
Hypothesis 3	Consumer commitment has a positive relationship with consumer loyalty
Hypothesis 4a	Service quality has a positive relationship with consumer loyalty
Hypothesis 4b	Service quality has a positive relationship with consumer satisfaction
Hypothesis 5	Satisfaction has a positive relationship with consumer loyalty

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Procedures and sampling

The questionnaire was carried out online to respondents between 1 and 31 May 2020, through the use of a random sample and targeted at the national population in general. The construction of the conceptual model used in this study resulted in the adaptation of two models previously studied and tested in the studies of Belaid and Behi (2011) and Levy and Hino (2016). The questionnaire was structured within four parts. In the first part, two initial questions were asked, which sought to find out if the respondent has any pets, in order to be able to answer the remaining questions continuously or, if the answer is negative, he was asked to proceed to the last part of the survey, referring only to the profile of the respondent. In the second part, all variables under study of the conceptual model and their respective mediation scales were aggregated. For this purpose, the Likert-type scale was used, designed to measure multiple items in relation to a service. In the third part, questions were asked related to the behavioural aspect of the consumer vis-à-vis the pet-friendly service, and finally, the fourth and last part of the questionnaire presented questions related to the sociodemographic profile of the respondents.

3.2 Sample

Regarding the comparison of gender and individuals who claim to have pets. It was found that 104 (68%) are female and 49 (32%) are male and, of those who claim not to have pets, 22 (59.5%) are female and 15 (40, 5%) are male. Thus, it can be concluded that there are no differences with regard to gender, between individuals who have pets, from those who claim not to have.

As for the age group of the 190 respondents, there can be a diversity of responses for the stipulated age groups, with the majority of respondents, 59, aged between 36 and 45 years (31.1%). It follows the age group between 26 and 35 years of age, to which 56 respondents (29.5%) refer, 36 (18.9%) of the respondents represent the age group of 46 to 55 years, followed by the age group from 18 to 25 years old, composed of 27 (14.2%) and, finally, 12 respondents are older than 55 years old (6.3%). On the other hand, the number of respondents who do not have pets in the majority is between

26 and 35 years old, which may be related to the factor of personal and professional stability and independence.

As for the educational qualifications of the respondents, it can be seen that, in general, 3 (1.6%) have studies up to the 9th grade, 49 (25.8%) are those with only secondary education and 20 (10.5%) of the respondents have vocational education. It is also observed that the majority of respondents, 71 (37.4%) have a degree and 47 (24.7%) hold a postgraduate degree, a master's degree and / or a doctorate. With regard to the respondents' housing, it appears that only 50 (26.3%) claim to live in an apartment and the majority, 140 (73.7%) stand out to live in houses.

Respondents who claim to have pets, live mostly in houses making up 123 (80.4%) of the total, while only 30 (19.6%) live in apartments. However, those who claim to have no animals, are distributed evenly in housing, 17 (45.9%) and apartment, 20 (54.1%).

With regard to the respondents' job, it is possible to see, that there is a predominance between the health and well-being sector with 30 (15.8%) respondents, education with 41 (21.6%) and other professions 31 (16.3%). It is also verified that 22 (11.6%) belong to the hotel and restaurant sector, 10 (5.3%) to commerce, 5 (2.6%) are from domestic services, 23 (12.1%) operate in public administration, 15 (7.9%) in financial services, 11 (5.8%) in the textile sector, and only 2 (1.1%) are unemployed. 153 of the 190 respondents claim to have a pet (80.5%) and 37 claims to have no pet (19.5%). In view of this, there were several reasons given by individuals who claim not to have pets, of which they stand out mainly: the lack of space at home, mostly in the case of those who live in apartments; the lack of time to dedicate to the animal; health problems of household members, such as asthma; difficulties in the family budget; and also, the fact of living in a rented house and not being allowed to have animals, among others. In turn, of the 153 respondents who claim to have pets (80.5%). In addition, 56 respondents have 1 pet (36.6%), 51 respondents have 2 animals (33.3%), 22 are those who have 3 animals (14.4%), 10 respondents have 4 animals (6.5%), 4 are who have 5 animals (2.6%), as are 4 who have 6 animals. Then there are 2 respondents with 7 animals (1.3%), as 2 respondents have 8 animals and finally, 1 of the respondents has 9 animals (0.7%) and 1 of the respondents has 10 animals (0.7%). In view of this, it can be concluded that, mostly and on average, respondents have 1 or 2 pets.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test our measurement model, data was analysed using the SmartPLS 3.2 (Ringle et al., 2015). The assessment of the model involves calculating the reliabilities of the individual items as well of each latent variables, internal consistency (Cronbach alpha and composite reliability), convergent validity through average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion (Hair et al., 2017).

Regarding the individual items, the results revealed that the standardized factor loadings were above 0.6 (with a minimum value of 0.867; $p < 0.001$) as suggested by Hair et al. (2017). By estimating the values of Cronbach alpha and

composite reliability (Table 2) we verified that these indicators surpassed the threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2: Composite reliability, average variance extracted, correlations, and discriminant validity checks

Latent Variables	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Brand attachment	0,850	0,900	0,699	0.836	0,887	0,885	0,883	0,764	0,824
(2) Consumer confidence	0,956	0,968	0,882	0,835	0.939	0,882	0,829	0,866	0,855
(3) Consumer commitment	0,913	0,938	0,792	0,798	0,847	0.890	0,853	0,837	0,887
(4) Consumer loyalty	0,948	0,962	0,865	0,826	0,885	0,891	0.930	0,886	0,823
(5) Service quality	0,961	0,972	0,895	0,728	0,830	0,788	0,847	0.946	0,832
(6) Consumer satisfaction	0,944	0,960	0,857	0,857	0,907	0,846	0,874	0,793	0.926

Note: α -Cronbach Alpha; CR -Composite reliability; AVE -Average variance extracted.

Bold numbers are the square roots of AVE. Below the diagonal elements are the correlations between the constructs. Above the diagonal elements are the HTMT ratios. Convergent validity was assessed by calculating the AVE for each constructs which were higher than 0.5, thus proving support for convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The discriminant validity followed a two-step approach. First, we used the Fornell-Larcker criterion requiring that the square root of AVE (corresponding to the diagonal in Table 2) is superior to the biggest correlation with any construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Second, we estimated the HTMT criterion which was inferior to 0.9 (Gold et al., 2001). All the HTMT values were below this value, assuring the discriminant validity of the constructs.

To assess the quality of the structural model several tests were conducted. First, we tested the collinearity by estimating the VIF values, which ranged from 1.00 to 3.52, below the cut-off value of 5 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating no collinearity. Second, the R2 value was calculated for each endogenous variable: consumer confidence, consumer commitment, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty. The values were 69.8%, 63.7%, 79.6%, and 87.9%, respectively, surpassing the threshold value of 10% (Falk and Miller, 1992). Third, we also estimated the Stone-Geisser's Q2 values for the four endogenous variables (0,599, 0,469, 0,740, and 0,657 respectively) which appeared all positive revealing the model's predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2017).

To test the hypotheses, we conducted a bootstrapping test with 5,000 subsamples to evaluate the significance of the parameter estimates (Hair et al., 2017). The results in Table 3 show that brand attachment has a significantly positive effect on consumer confidence, consumer commitment, and consumer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.835$, $\beta = 0.798$, $\beta = 0.594$, respectively, all significant at $p < 0.001$). However, the relationship between brand attachment and consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.111$, n.s.) was not supported.

These results provide support for H1a, H1b and H1d, respectively. Consumer commitment has a significantly positive relation with consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.358$, $p < 0.001$), which supports H3. H2a was not supported since the relationship between consumer confidence and consumer loyalty is not significant ($\beta = 0.177$, n.s.).

Table 3: Structural model assessment

Path	Path coefficient	Standard errors	t statistics	p values
Brand attachment → Consumer confidence	0,835	0,034	24,637	0,000
Brand attachment → Consumer commitment	0,798	0,043	18,764	0,000
Brand attachment → Consumer loyalty	0,111	0,070	1,572	0,117
Brand attachment → Consumer satisfaction	0,594	0,068	8,728	0,000
Consumer confidence → Consumer loyalty	0,177	0,124	1,426	0,154
Consumer commitment → Consumer loyalty	0,358	0,087	4,130	0,000
Service quality → Consumer loyalty	0,234	0,058	4,058	0,000
Service quality → Consumer satisfaction	0,361	0,072	5,045	0,000
Consumer satisfaction → Consumer loyalty	0,130	0,098	1,332	0,184

Service quality has a significantly positive relation with consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.234$, $p < 0.001$) and consumer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.361$, $p < 0.001$). These results provide support for H4a and H4b, respectively. The relationship between consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty has no significance ($\beta = 0.130$, n.s.), thus H5 was not supported.

To test the mediation hypothesis (H2b), we followed the recommendations of Hair et al. (2017; p. 232). Thus, we used a bootstrapping procedure to test the significance of the indirect effects via the mediator (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Table 4 presents the results of the mediation effects.

Table 4: Bootstrap results for indirect effects

Indirect effect	Estimate	Standard errors	t statistics	p value
Brand attachment → Consumer confidence → Consumer loyalty	0,286	0,074	3,879	0,000

The indirect effects of brand attachment on consumer loyalty via the mediator of Consumer confidence is significant with $\beta = 0.286$ ($p < 0.01$). This result provide support for the mediation hypothesis H2b.

5 CONCLUSIONS

It has been proven that the brand attachment plays a crucial role in the performance of the affectivity created by the consumer in relation to specific pet-friendly services. This new segment in tourism industry can be benefited by the potential lucrative market of pet-owning population, specifically in hotel accommodation and this fact can be an obvious advantage for hotels to become pet-friendly, because booking showed the increasing in reservations for this market. When it comes to hospitality, accept pets and being a pet-friendly unit, became a customization strategy in some big chains hotels, due to their potential influences in on the industry service pattern (Kongtaveesawas & Namwong, 2020).

The results obtained in this study allowed us to understand that the decision-making process of choosing consumers in relation to pet-friendly services in Portugal is considered and is based on some characteristics related to the available offers and what the consumer is looking for, namely in terms of safety, quality, comfort hygiene, among others. In turn, the variables under study made it possible to understand and

determine that the brand attachment has a major contribution in the decision-making of consumers, given that it has an influence on trust, satisfaction and commitment in greater weight than in relation to loyalty. However, it was found that consumer loyalty results from the influence of the variables satisfaction, trust, commitment and the quality of the service that had the greatest weight on this variable, which allows us to realize that consumers feel more loyal to a given service, if it is of higher quality and care when it is provided. Considering the possible services to be developed in this segment in Portugal, the following stand out: libraries and gyms that allow animals to enter, more beaches and more adapted to animals, public outdoor training parks.

The main limitation of the investigation falls on the sample used, since of the 190 respondents, only 153 said they have pets, the applicability of the model was made based on this number. Conversely, the number of respondents who reported not having pets was also reduced ($N = 37$). Another limitation concerns the way in which the survey was made available, since initially the intention would be to physically distribute the survey in stores and pet-friendly services, this was not possible due to the situation of the pandemic crisis COVID-19, during data collection was collected. Thus, the survey was only made available online. Even so, a larger sample could allow a greater number of responses in both situations described. Regarding future research, in the scope of comparison, it is suggested to develop the study in comparison to two pet-friendly countries, for example between Portugal, where the concept is still new and growing, and France, which is one of the countries more in vogue with regard to the pet-friendly segment.

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