

## Expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes as predictors of American tourists' attitudes and booking intentions toward hotels in Egypt

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore American tourists' expectations of hospitality practices and hotel attributes focusing on hotels in Egypt and to examine the impact of expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes on potential tourists' attitudes and booking intentions. A questionnaire survey was designed and administered among potential tourists. Based on valid data from 300 participants, structure equation modelling SEM using smart PLS 3.0 was performed to examine the hypothesized model. The results indicated that hospitality practices and intangible hotel attributes were highly expected by participants. Hypotheses testing results revealed that both expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes did not directly influence booking intentions, yet they have negatively affected guests' attitudes toward hotels which confirmed the significant mediation effect of guests' attitudes.

### 1.Introduction

Exploring guests' expectations of hospitality practices–hospitable behaviors of hotel frontline employees–and preferred hotel attributes (i.e. tangible and intangible hotel characteristics) is a key aspect of managing a successful hotel business. Specifically, from an operational perspective, understanding travelers' preferences enhances business operations through designing and providing adequate products and services that satisfy customers' desires as well as enables better strategic planning and decision making (Rong et al., 2012). Financially, it is important to clearly identify guests' preferences of hotel features due to the high costs associated with providing such attributes (Dolnicar & Otter, 2003). From a marketing standpoint, preferred hotel attributes can affect guests' purchasing intentions and influence hotel selection (Chow et al., 2005).

Despite the significance of investigating hospitality expectations and desired hotel attributes, relatively few studies have investigated these concepts, particularly within Egyptian hotel settings. Precisely, no published studies have investigated expected hospitality practices or hotel attributes within Egyptian hotel settings or from the standpoint of major international tourist segments in Egypt (to the author's best knowledge and through reviewing major databases including: Egyptian Knowledge Bank EKB; Egyptian Universities Libraries Consortium EULC; Google Scholar), which creates a substantial gap in knowledge and potential area for further investigation and improvement. In line with this, Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) noticed that customer expectations of hospitality services have received limited academic attention and suggested conducting further investigation of hospitality practices in commercial settings. Dolnicar and Otter (2003) also argued that studies on hotel attributes provided inconsistent results that did not enable drawing generalizable conclusions due to heterogeneity in relation to methodology and definition of hotel attributes. Caber and Albayrak (2015) added that studies on hotel attributes are scarce and focused on certain market segments or specific settings which is not sufficient to produce proper implications.

American tourists represent a significant proportion of international tourist arrivals to Egypt. According to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism (2018), international tourist arrivals from USA came at the eighth rank in 2016 among the top ten international tourists in Egypt with a total of 138 thousand tourists and this number exceeded 226 thousand in 2017 spending more than 323 thousand tourist nights. In 2018, American tourists provided the highest percentage (about 60%) of tourist arrivals from both North and South America with a total of 275 thousand which counted for about 2.5% of the total international tourists in Egypt. Moreover, American tourists have recorded the highest average length of stay in 2018 at 12.9 compared to the general average of 10.2 (The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, 2018). Given the economic importance of American tourist arrivals in Egypt and the influence of cultural differences on their perception, preferences, and expectations of hotel services (Cho, 2001; Hsieh & Tsai, 2009; Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012), very limited studies have explored their expectations of hospitality practices and preferred hotel attributes and the possible impact of these expectations on their attitudes and booking intentions.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore American tourists' expectations of hospitality practices and hotel attributes, and to examine the impact of expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes on tourists' attitudes and booking intentions. This study is based on the pre-travel stage as, according to Bryson et al. (2015), customer expectations can strongly influence their buying intentions or purchasing decisions during the pre-purchase stage. In this case, expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes can potentially impact American tourists' attitudes toward hotels in Egypt which in turn can influence their booking intentions. Through achieving its aims, this study contributes to theory through addressing a gap in knowledge. It also contributes to practice through providing insights for hotel managers, particularly in Egypt and in similar settings, to understand and deliver preferred hotel attributes and expected hospitality behaviors for international hotel guests.

## **2.Literature review**

### **2.1. Hospitality practices**

Lashley (2008) suggested three main domains for hospitality that may sometimes overlap or influence each other including: cultural/social, private/domestic and commercial. The cultural/social domain of the hospitality involves the social obligation to provide food, drink and protection for strangers as part of human decency, culture, or religious beliefs. Private/domestic hospitality includes hosting and entertaining friends, relatives and family members in accordance with the shared social norms. Meantime, commercial hospitality refers to the hospitable behaviors such as showing empathy and compassion and providing food, drinks and entertainment for people in commercial settings such as hotel or restaurants. Hence, the term hospitality in hotel settings refers to the hospitable behaviors and hosting practices toward hotel guests (e.g. friendliness, caring, generosity) and the act of entertaining guests during their stay through meeting their physiological and emotional needs to create a memorable accommodation experience (Hemmington, 2007; Lashley, 2008; Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012).

The literature suggested a number of hospitable practices within the commercial domain of hospitality. For example, Hemmington (2007) suggested five main aspects of commercial hospitality, including host-guest relationship, generosity, theatre performance, lots of little surprises, and safety and security of guests. More recently, Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) proposed slightly different dimensions for the commercial hospitality, including personalization, warm welcoming, special relationship, straight from the heart (authenticity), and comfort. Each of these dimensions involve a number of practices that reflect the essence of their predominant dimension. According to Grandey et al. (2005) and Ariffin and Maghzi (2012), genuine behaviors and authentic display of positive emotions by hotel frontline

personnel in addition to atmosphere settings and friendly interaction between hotel employees and guests are essential components of the commercial hospitality that create value for guests.

## **2.2. Hotel attributes**

Kim and Perdue (2013) explained that hotel attributes refer to a combination of tangible/sensory and intangible (cognitive and affective) hotel characteristics that are desired by guests and determine their hotel choice. Exploring preferred hotel attributes by hotel guests is an important managerial and operational issue. Qu et al. (2000) explained that identifying the desired hotel attributes for guest enable hoteliers to adjust their services and facilities to meet the changing needs and expectations of their guests. Shanka & Taylor (2004) discussed that hotel accommodation experience involves both tangible and intangible aspects thereby hotels need to provide appropriate mixture of both elements to meet or exceed guests' expectations and satisfy their needs. Rhee and Yang (2015) argued that exploring the important hotel attributes for guests enable managers to determine what attributes should be kept at optimal levels and what attributes to be overlooked.

Previous studies revealed a number of hotel attributes that were perceived to be important for guests when selecting a hotel, such as cleanliness, prices or value for money, room size and furniture, service quality, safety and security, employees' attitudes and professionalism, hotel reputation, brand name, recreation facilities, convenient hotel location, well-lit public areas, and reasonable prices (Callan et al., 2000; Chu & Choi, 2000; Qu et al., 2000; Shanka & Taylor, 2004; Chow et al., 2005; Poon & Low, 2005; Rhee & Yang, 2015). Interestingly, prior studies reported inconsistent rankings for hotel attributes, which can be attributed to the varied investigated settings or guest segments. However, Chow et al. (2005) explained that among the various hotel characteristics and selection criteria, safety and security of the hotel and its environment represent the top priority of hotel guests.

Hotel attributes have been the focus of many studies from several aspects. For example, some studies have compared the importance of a set of hotel attributes among different segments of hotels' guests (Callan et al., 2000; Chu & Choi, 2000; Cho, 2001; Shanahan & Hyman, 2007; Hsieh & Tsai, 2009; Albayrak & Caber, 2015) or across some hotel segments ( Dolnicar, 2002; Chow et al., 2005; Qu et al., 2005; Rhee & Yang, 2015). Other studies have investigated hotel attributes in varied cultural contexts or settings ( Qu et al., 2000; Poon & Low, 2005; Li et al., 2013). In addition, some studies (Dolnicar & Otter, 2003) have thoroughly investigated desired hotel attributes to develop a comprehensive list of determinant attributes for hotel selection. Nevertheless, very few studies examined hotel attributes as predictors of guest attitudes and intentions.

## **2.3. Attitudes and intentions**

Hsu et al. (2010) explained that a person's attitude toward an object is determined by his or her expectations of this object and the value of its attributes. Attitude refers to a mental state or perception of something (e.g. person, product, place, etc.) and includes three aspects: (1) cognitive–knowledge and beliefs about an object; (2) affective– feelings toward the object; (3) conative–behavioral intentions toward this object (Casaló et al., 2015).

## **3. Hypotheses development**

### **3.1. Expected hospitality practices, attitudes and booking intentions**

Expected hospitality practices can influence guests' attitudes and behavioral intentions during the pre-purchase stage. Bryson et al. (2015) discussed that customer expectations of services attributes play a significant role in the pre-purchase stage of the decision-making process of service consumption. During this stage, customers gather information and form a set of expectations to evaluate different services before purchasing. Hsu et al. (2010) explained that

attitude is the belief about an object and involves spontaneous evaluative responses associated with this belief. Thus, attitude toward an object can be affected by one's expectations about this object. Therefore, a significant influence of expected hospitality practices on both guests' attitudes and booking intentions can be anticipated and the following hypotheses are postulated:

Hypothesis 1: expected hospitality practices significantly impact guests' booking intentions

Hypothesis 2: expected hospitality practices significantly impact guests' attitudes toward hotels

### **3.2. Expected hotel attributes, attitudes and booking intentions**

Preferred hotel attributes can impact guests' attitude toward a hotel and their booking intentions. Chu and Choi (2000) explained that certain key hotel attributes can stimulate customers' purchase intentions and influence their hotel choices. Shanka and Taylor (2004) argued that hotel attributes are key determinants in purchase intentions. In a similar vein, Chow et al. (2005) explained that travelers depend on both tangible and intangible hotel attributes to develop opinions and attitudes toward service provider as well as to build expectations and determine purchase decisions. Rhee and Yang (2015) also argued that hotel attributes involve a large number of elements and aspects that represent attractions or even distractions for hotel guests. Consequently, the subsequent hypotheses can be argued:

Hypothesis 3: expected hotel attributes have a significant influence on guests' booking intentions

Hypothesis 4: expected hotel attributes have a significant influence on guests' attitudes toward hotels

### **3.3. Attitudes and booking intentions**

People's attitudes toward an object can be positive and thereby arouse favorable responses or can be negative and stimulate undesirable intentions toward this object (Casaló et al., 2015). Therefore, customers' attitudes toward products/services have been considered a predictor for several consequences such as purchase intentions, satisfaction, loyalty, and return intentions. In the context of this study, expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes can influence travelers' attitudes toward hotels and therefore stimulate or discourage their booking intentions toward these hotels. Hence, the study anticipated that guests' attitudes toward hotels are influenced by their expectations of these hotels and such attitudes can influence their booking intentions. Thus, the following assumptions are hypothesized:

Hypothesis 5: guests' attitudes toward hotels significantly influence their booking intentions

Hypothesis 6: guests' attitudes toward hotels mediate the linkage between expected hospitality practices and booking intentions

Hypothesis 7: guests' attitudes toward hotels mediate the linkage between expected hotel attributes and booking intentions

Based on the above discussed literature review, the study suggests the following conceptual model (Figure 1).

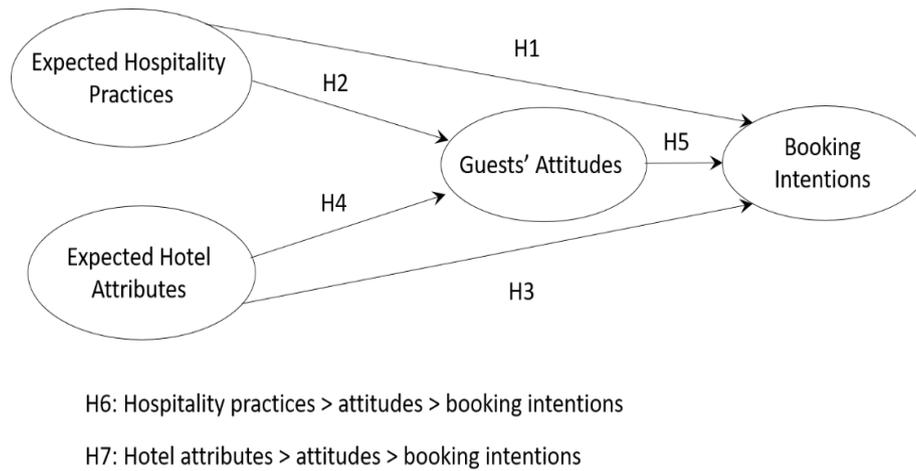


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Research instrument

A questionnaire form with five sections was developed to measure the examined constructs in this study. Section one was the introduction of the survey and presented its aim and ensured anonymity and confidentiality. Section two captured the demographic characteristics of the participants including age, gender, income, job, and marital status. Section three explored the expected hospitality practices. Section four was assigned to measure expected hotel attributes and, lastly, section five addressed guest's attitudes and booking intentions, as well as additional comments and suggestions.

Expected hospitality practices were formatively measured using 17 items imbedded in five dimensions as suggested by Ariffin and Moghazi (2012). The scale was anchored by the statement: *"Imagine you are booking a hotel accommodation for a trip in Egypt, how important to you are the following hospitality practices?"* and measured the indicators on five-point Likert scale (*1= not important at all; 5= very important*). To measure expected hotel attributes, the study adapted 25 items that capture the hotel attributes proposed by previous studies (Callan et al., 2000; Qu et al., 2005; Albayrak & Caber, 2015). Similarly, a five-point Likert scale (*1= not important at all; 5= very important*) was utilized and the scale was headed by the statement: *"If you are booking a hotel accommodation for a trip in Egypt, how important to you are the following hotel attributes?"*. Attitudes toward hotels were reflectively measured using four statements adapted from (Wu & Chen, 2005; Hsu et al., 2006) and booking intentions were also reflectively measured by four statements that were adapted from (Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Li et al., 2017). Both attitudes and booking intentions were measured on five-point Likert scale (*1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree*) and anchored by the statement *"Considering your expectations of hospitality practices and hotel attributes, how do you think about booking hotels in Egypt?"*

### 4.2. Participants and procedures

The questionnaire form was designed using the online survey services of Google Forms. The link of the survey form was sent to the targeted participants via e-mail, WhatsApp, Facebook personal accounts and group pages. A total of 500 questionnaire forms were sent to potential participants whom were targeted through adopting a convenience sampling technique. Out of the targeted participants, 300 responded and filled out the form with a response rate of approximately 60%. According to Hair et al. (2014), this sample size is considered sufficient for producing valid statistical results using PLS software. Also, various segments of potential tourists were involved in the survey to assure that the sample is demographically

representative. Specifically, out of the 300 participants involved in this study, roughly 65% were males and 35% were females; around 49% were single and 21% were married. Regarding the age groups, the majority of the participants (67%) were middle age (between 20 to 39 years) followed by grownups (between 40 to 59 years). As for the annual income segments, the sample was dominated (about 60%) by participants who belonged to the income group between 25,000 and 50,000 US dollars per year and mainly were either self-employed, public sector employees, or students.

### **4.3. Data analysis**

Using Smart PLS 3.0, Partial Least Square Structure Equation Modelling PLS-SEM was performed to examine the proposed associations among the investigated constructs and verify the postulated hypotheses. This process was undertaken through two main steps. The first step involved evaluating the measurement model by examining the validity and reliability of both formative and reflective constructs through considering criteria such as weights/loadings, VIF, Alpha, Composite Reliability CR, and Average Variance Extracted AVE. In the second step, the author examined the direct and mediated paths among the variables and their significance. Further details of data analysis are discussed in the results part.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1. Exploring expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes**

The descriptive results of the survey, as shown in Table 1, revealed that participants have slightly higher expectations of hospitality practices where all the five dimensions of hospitality scored approximately 4 as a mean of importance on the five-point Likert scale with some variations among the practices of each dimension. Specifically, in the "*warm welcoming*" dimension, the most important practices was handling guests' luggage (mean of 4.04) while in the "*special relationship*" dimension both understanding guests' special needs and entertaining guests with various hotel services were considered to be more important practices (with mean score of 4.00 each). Ensuring guests' security and providing good quality food were highly rated among the practices of the "*comfort*" dimension with slightly higher expectations of security assurance. Participants had somewhat lower expectations of the practices of both "*authenticity*" and "*personalization*" dimensions where all these practices scored a mean of importance below 4.

The "*intangibles*" category of the expected hotel attributes was considered to be more important (mean score 4.00) than the "*tangibles*" category (mean 2.75). Precisely, out of the 17 intangible hotel attributes, 9 attributes were highly expected and score a mean of importance higher than 4. On the other hand, the expected tangible attributes have recorded lower levels of importance with mean score below 2.5 except for convenience of the hotel location and the atheistic view of the hotel and its design.

### **5.2. The measurement model**

#### **5.2.1. Common method bias**

Common method bias (CMB) can be a serious issue that threaten the integrity of the data particularly in cross-sectional studies. CMB occurs when the measurement method influence the responses of the participants causing the indicators to share some amount of common variations (Kock, 2015). To ensure that the data is not contaminated with CMB, a full collinearity test was performed as suggested by Kock (2015). The results showed that the outer values of variance inflation factor VIF were below threshold of 3.3 ( $1.93 \leq VIF \leq 2.94$ ) which, according to Kock (2015), indicated that CMB does not contaminate the results.

### 5.2.2. Reliability and construct validity

The first step in performing PLS-SEM is to evaluate the measurement model (outer model) through examining its reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2011). Since evaluating reliability and validity of formative constructs differ from reflective ones (Hair et al., 2014), this study has considered several criteria to assure the reliability and validity of both types as discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

First, to evaluate the reliability and convergent validity of formative constructs (i.e. expected hospitality practices and expected hotel attributes), the study examined three criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2014) which include convergent validity, collinearity, and statistical significance (Table 1). Convergent validity of formative constructs is established when they explain at least 50% of variance in the reflectively measured constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Thus, convergent validity of formative constructs is confirmed as they explained approximately 66% of the variance of both reflective constructs (66% of guest's attitudes and 67% of booking intentions). Collinearity was examined through observing the inner values of VIF for all indicators and they were below the cut-off value of 3.3 suggested by Kock (2015). Statistical significance was established through examining indicators' outer weights and their corresponding *t*-statistics and *p*-value. All indicators had reasonable weights on their intended constructs and all weights were significant ( $t > 1.96$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 1**

Descriptive statistics, reliability and convergent validity of formative constructs

Constructs and indicators	Mean	SD	Weights	<i>t</i> -value	VIF
<b>Expected hospitality practices</b>					
<i>Warm Welcoming</i>	3.98	0.56			
Giving me a warm welcome upon my arrival	3.98	0.71	0.702	18.45*	1.96
Presenting me a welcome gift/drink	3.99	0.67	0.729	20.33*	2.14
Escorting me to my room after check-in	3.93	0.68	0.691	17.07*	2.15
Handling my luggage (if any)	4.04	0.66	0.777	25.90*	2.40
<i>Special relationship</i>	3.97	0.67			
Developing friendly relationship with me	3.86	0.72	0.712	18.69*	2.15
Understanding my special needs	4.00	0.71	0.719	19.56*	2.09
Entertaining me with different hotel services	4.00	0.71	0.754	23.92*	2.31
Giving me a warm "goodbye" after checking out	3.98	0.67	0.725	19.50*	2.20
<i>Comfort</i>	3.98	0.57			
Providing good quality food services	4.01	0.72	0.701	20.15*	2.07
Ensuring my safety and security	4.20	0.70	0.745	25.84*	2.28
Ensuring that my room is comfortable for me	3.92	0.74	0.715	17.34*	1.98
Helping me to solve my problems (if any)	3.98	0.71	0.781	24.09*	2.56
<i>Authenticity</i>	3.81	0.63			
Showing genuine hospitable behaviors	3.76	0.73	0.683	17.90*	2.01
Showing authentic desire to help and please	3.85	0.69	0.743	23.14*	2.32
<i>Personalization</i>	3.90	0.59			
Displaying authentic smile	3.82	0.73	0.686	16.53*	1.77
Knowing my name and/or nationality	3.94	0.69	0.741	21.36*	2.23
Making an eye contact during conversations	3.96	0.73	0.440	5.91*	1.25

Followed

<b>Expected Hotel Attributes</b>					
<i>Intangibles</i>	4.00	0.45			
High star rating	3.93	0.71	0.461	8.390*	1.63
Ambience of the hotel	3.92	0.66	0.474	7.35*	1.61
Hotel brand name prestige and reputation	3.67	0.69	0.354	5.18*	1.62
Security of the hotel and its surrounding area	3.87	0.66	0.512	9.63*	1.69
Courtesy internal transportation	4.06	0.68	0.518	8.76*	2.51
VIP treatment and first-class services	4.06	0.68	0.561	10384*	2.85
Convenience of reservation procedures/system	4.06	0.70	0.592	11.89*	2.35
Quietness of the hotel and its surrounding area			0.526	10.67*	2.11
	4.15	0.69			
Responsiveness and empathy of hotel staff	3.93	0.77	0.601	12.43*	2.21
Friendliness and honesty of staff	4.09	0.72	0.556	11.12*	2.43
Speed and accuracy of hotel services	4.08	0.68	0.609	11.65*	2.65
Reasonable prices (rooms, food, etc.)	4.08	0.74	0.552	10.30*	2.04
Availability of organized entertainment in hotel			0.654	13.02*	2.14
	3.95	0.72			
Variety of accommodation packages/plans	4.02	0.76	0.654	13.07*	2.43
Availability of special dietary menus	4.19	0.71	0.397	6.60*	1.89
Appearance and professionalism of hotel staff			0.556	10.87*	2.08
	4.08	0.64			
Sympathetic and efficient handling of complaints	3.80	0.71	0.456	6.59*	1.55
<i>Tangibles</i>	2.75	0.32			
Aesthetic view of the hotel and its rooms	3.72	0.95	0.336	5.45*	1.36
Convenience of the hotel location	3.94	1.00	0.467	5.36*	2.78
Aesthetic design and décor of the hotel	3.95	0.94	0.477	5.24*	2.87
Modernity of hotel furniture and equipment	2.00	0.62	-0.703	17.83*	1.97
Availability of various recreational facilities	2.05	0.66	-0.768	20.10*	2.19
Availability of various food and beverage facilities	2.11	0.67	-0.621	10.66*	1.81
Availability of accessible rooms and facilities	2.05	0.66	-0.653	12.15*	2.57
Elegant dining and luxurious food service	2.14	0.66	-0.790	25.55*	1.70

Notes. SD refers to standard deviation; \*  $p < 0.001$

Second, to evaluate the reliability and validity of the reflective constructs (i.e. guests' attitudes and booking intentions), the author examined indicators' outer loadings,  $t$ -value, Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) (see Table 2). All outer loadings of the indicators were above the threshold of 0.7 and significant ( $t > 1.96$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) which assures indicators' reliability. Also, both Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability (CR) were above 0.7 confirming the internal consistency reliability. Convergent validity was established through looking at the AVE of the endogenous variables. A minimum of 50% of the variance in endogenous variables should be explained by exogenous ones (Hair et al., 2014). The AVE of both guests' attitudes and booking intentions were above 0.5 (i.e. 0.56 and 0.69 respectively) which confirmed the convergent validity. Lastly, discriminant validity of reflective constructs was confirmed through considering the threshold of the HTMT which should be less than 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). The results showed a HTMT of 0.83 confirming the discriminant

validity. In sum, the reliability and validity of the study measures were established and there were no critical issues.

**Table 2**

Descriptive statistics, reliability and convergent validity of reflective constructs

Constructs and indicators	Mean	SD	Loadings	t-value	Alpha
<b>Attitudes</b> (CR=0.837; AVE=0.563; R <sup>2</sup> =0.661; Q <sup>2</sup> =0.340)	1.97	0.55			0.836
I think that booking hotel in Egypt is a good idea	1.99	0.65	0.737	20.724*	
I like the idea of booking hotels in Egypt	1.91	0.66	0.700	17.189*	
I have a positive opinion about hotels in Egypt	1.91	0.69	0.834	26.855*	
I feel excited about booking hotels in Egypt	2.05	0.66	0.726	19.157*	
<b>Booking intentions</b> (CR=0.90; AVE=0.692; R <sup>2</sup> =0.669; Q <sup>2</sup> =0.388)	2.06	0.55			0.900
If I were to book a hotel, I would consider booking it in Egypt	2.04	0.62	0.832	25.124*	
I prefer to book hotel in Egypt over other destinations	2.03	0.62	0.828	25.573*	
I expect to book hotel rooms in Egypt in the near future	2.07	0.64	0.858	28.374*	
I plan to book hotel rooms in Egypt	2.08	0.62	0.810	25.062*	

Notes. SD refers to standard deviation; \* p < 0.001

### 5.3. The structural model

The second step of PLS-SEM is to evaluate the structural model (inner model) through examining the associations between variables to test the postulated hypotheses (Hair et al., 2011). Path-based consistent PLS algorithm estimated the parameters and consistent bootstrapping with 5000 sample and 95% confidence evaluated the significance (see Tables 3 and 4 and Figure 2).

Before testing the proposed hypotheses, the study asserted that preconditions of PLS-SEM were met through checking the predictive power (R<sup>2</sup>), predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>) and goodness of fit. The value of the R<sup>2</sup> for both endogenous variables (Table 2) indicated a strong relationship with exogenous variables. Approximately 66% of the variance in guests' attitudes were explained by both expected hospitality practices and expected hotel attributes. Also, nearly 67% of the variance in booking intentions were explained by guests' attitudes. The predictive relevance or cross-validity redundancy was assessed through examining the Stone–Geisser index Q<sup>2</sup> of both dependent variables included in the model by performing blindfolding technique. Hair et al. (2014) explained that predictive relevance of a model refers to its ability to predict latent endogenous constructs and can be confirmed when Q<sup>2</sup> value is above zero. The value of Q<sup>2</sup> for both guests' attitudes and booking intentions were (0.340 and 0.388, respectively) significantly higher than zero which confirmed the predictive relevance of the model. Lastly, the model goodness of fit was assessed through looking at the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) value (0.050) which indicated that the model adequately fitted the covariance data (Henseler et al., 2014).

#### 5.3.1. Direct paths

Hypothesis 1 captured the relationship between expected hospitality practices and booking intentions and was not supported because the association was not significant ( $\beta_1 = 0.099$ ;  $t_1=1.439$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). Hypothesis 2 examined the impact of expected hospitality practices on

guests' attitudes toward hotels and was supported where the association was negative ( $\beta_2 = -0.260$ ) and significant ( $t_2=2.069$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Hence, the expected hospitality practices did not directly impact guests' booking intentions, yet they have negatively impacted guests' attitudes toward hotels.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 denoted the impact of expected hotel attributes on both booking intentions and guests' attitudes, respectively. The results showed that hypothesis 3 was not supported ( $\beta_3= -0.059$ ;  $t_3=0.547$ ;  $p>0.05$ ) but hypothesis 4 was supported where the relationship was negative ( $\beta_4 = -0.610$ ) and significant ( $t_4=4.188$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Thus, expected hotel attributes have negatively impacted guests' attitudes but did not impact booking intentions. Hypothesis 5 examined the impact of guests' attitudes on booking intentions and was strongly supported with significant positive association ( $\beta_5 = 0.853$ ;  $t_5 = 6.408$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

**Table 3**

Coefficients and significances of direct paths

H#	Paths	$\beta$	$t$ -value	$F^2$	Result
H1	Expected hospitality practices $\rightarrow$ Booking intentions	0.099	1.439	0.015	Rejected
H2	Expected hospitality practices $\rightarrow$ Guests' attitudes	-0.260	2.069*	0.103	Supported
H3	Expected hotel attributes $\rightarrow$ Booking intentions	-0.059	0.547	0.003	Rejected
H4	Expected hotel attributes $\rightarrow$ Guests' attitudes	-0.610	4.188***	0.566	Supported
H5	Guests' attitudes $\rightarrow$ Booking intentions	0.853	6.408***	0.815	Supported

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The  $F^2$  values (Table 3) were also reported in order to determine the effect size of the exogenous variables on the endogenous ones (Hair et al., 2014) and these values were explained in accordance with Cohen's (1998) guidelines for the effect size ( $F^2$ ). Specifically, expected hospitality practices have no effect on booking intentions ( $F^2= 0.015$ ) and small effect on guests' attitudes ( $F^2= 0.103$ ). Similarly, expected hotel attributes have no effect on booking intentions (0.003) but large effect ( $F^2= 0.566$ ) on guests' attitudes. Lastly, guests' attitudes have a large effect on booking intentions ( $F^2= 0.815$ ).

### 5.3.2. Mediated paths

Hypotheses 6 and 7 captured the mediation effect of guests' attitudes in the linkage between expected hospitality practices and booking intentions (H6) and in the association between expected hotel attributes and booking intentions (H7). The study adopted mediation analysis approach suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008). The results (Table 4) revealed that guests' attitudes was not a significant mediator in the indirect linkage between expected hospitality practices and booking intentions (effect = 0.222;  $t_6=1.81$ ;  $p>0.05$ ) and both lower level LL (-0.1166) and upper level UL (0.266) contain "zero". On the other hand, the indirect relationship between expected hotel attributes and booking intentions through guests' attitudes was significant (effect= -0.520;  $t_7=3.674$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and both lower level LL (0.136) and upper level UL (0.504) do not contain "zero". Accordingly, guests' attitudes had no significant mediation effect in the association between expected hospitality practices and booking intentions, yet it acted as a significant mediator in the linkage between expected hotel attributes and booking intentions.

**Table 4**

Coefficients and significances of mediated paths

H#	Paths	effect	$t$ -value	LL	UL	Result
H6	Hospitality practices $\rightarrow$ Attitudes $\rightarrow$ Booking intentions	0.222	1.817	-0.1166	0.266	Rejected
H7	Hotel attributes $\rightarrow$ Attitudes $\rightarrow$ Booking intentions	-0.520	3.674***	0.136	0.504	Supported

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

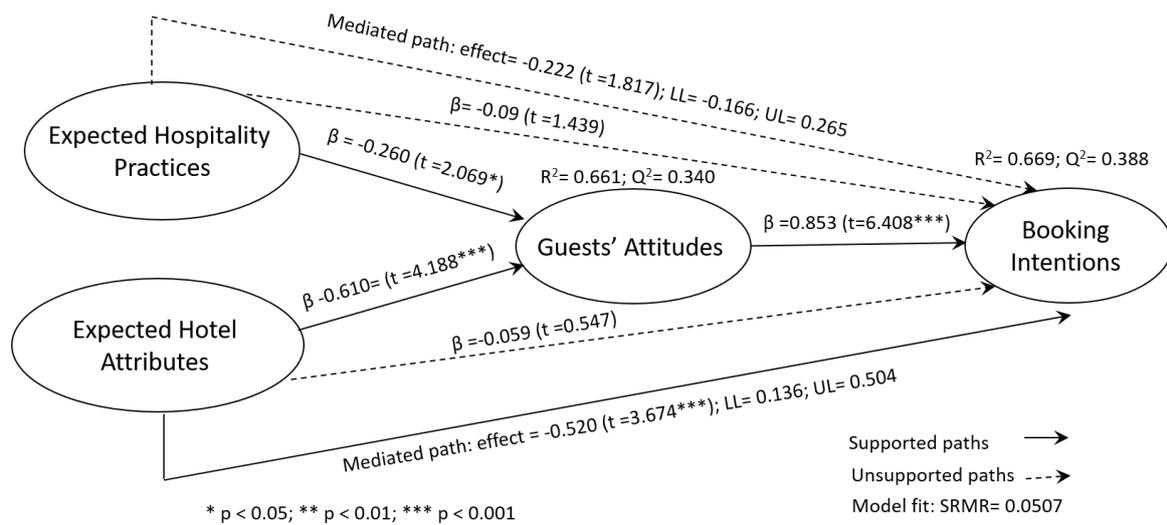


Fig.2. Paths coefficients and significance from PLS-SEM results

## 6. Discussion and implications

### 6.1. Findings and theoretical contribution

This study contributes to theory and addressed a gap in knowledge through being the first attempt, to the author's best knowledge, to explore American tourists' expectations regarding hospitality practices and hotel attributes focusing on the hotel industry in Egypt. Through highlighting the desired hotel attributes and expected hospitality behaviors by a major international tourist segment in Egypt, this study adds to the growing literature of hospitality management and provides empirical evidence on potential tourists' expectations which can be a cornerstone for future research on this issue.

Preceding studies from different hotel settings around the world (such as: Shanka & Taylor, 2004; Poon & Low, 2005; Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012; Rhee & Yang, 2015) reported various results about the perceived importance of certain hotel attributes and hospitality practices. This study partially supports the conclusions of prior research. Specifically, expected hospitality practices and intangible hotel attributes were perceived to be of higher importance than tangible hotel attributes. In other words, participants expected hotels to deliver high standards of hospitality practices and to possess reasonable intangible hotel attributes in order to meet their expectations and satisfy their needs.

In reference to the potential influence of both expected hospitality practices and desired hotel attributes on tourists' attitudes and booking intentions, this study confirmed that expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes did not directly impact booking intentions, yet they have negatively impacted guests' attitudes toward hotels. That is, potential tourists anticipated that hotels in Egypt may not deliver adequate hospitality practices or possess hotel attributes that meet their expectations which eventually created negative attitudes and unfavorable behavioral intentions toward these hotels. This result is supported by previous studies (Chow et al., 2005; Rhee & Yang, 2015) that negative attitudes toward hotels can induce unfavorable behavioral intentions.

Relevant literature (Ajzen, 2001) reported that customer attitudes can mediate the associations between certain antecedents and customer behavioral intentions. This study provided empirical evidence that confirms the significant mediation effect of tourists' attitudes. Through conducting a mediation analysis, the results showed that potential guests' attitudes toward hotels acted as a significant mediator in the indirect associations between expected hotel attributes and booking intentions. That is, higher guests' expectations of hotel

attributes have negatively influenced guests' attitudes toward hotels which in turn impacted booking intentions.

**6.2. Practical implications**

Based on its empirical findings, this study provides some valuable implications for hoteliers, particularly in Egypt. First, hotels need to enhance their hospitality practices and advance their intangible attributes to the extent that meet the expectations of their potential guests in order to support positive attitudes and stimulate booking intentions. This can be accomplished through training frontline personnel to perform hospitable behaviors including initiating proper welcoming; developing a friendly relationship with guests; assuring comfortable accommodation; displaying genuine effort to help and please guests; providing personalized services.

As for hotel attributes, hotels are encouraged to renovate and upgrade their intangible and tangible attributes. In this context, highly expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes concluded by the present study (Figure 3) can be a starting point for hotel managers for enhancing hotel services to the level that meets expectations of potential tourists.

Since tourist perception and attitudes are key determinants of tourist intentions, certain marketing activities can result in desirable outcomes. In this context, it is recommended that hotel advertisement and publicity activities should focus on promoting hospitable behavior and appropriate attributes of hotels because such characteristics seem to be important for potential tourists. Hotel managers are also advised to commence attitude-altering strategies targeting their potential guests to change negative attitudes toward hotels. Collaborative marketing campaigns between hotels are also encouraged to execute a global advertising campaign to convey a new image of hotels in Egypt that appeal to potential international tourist arrivals.

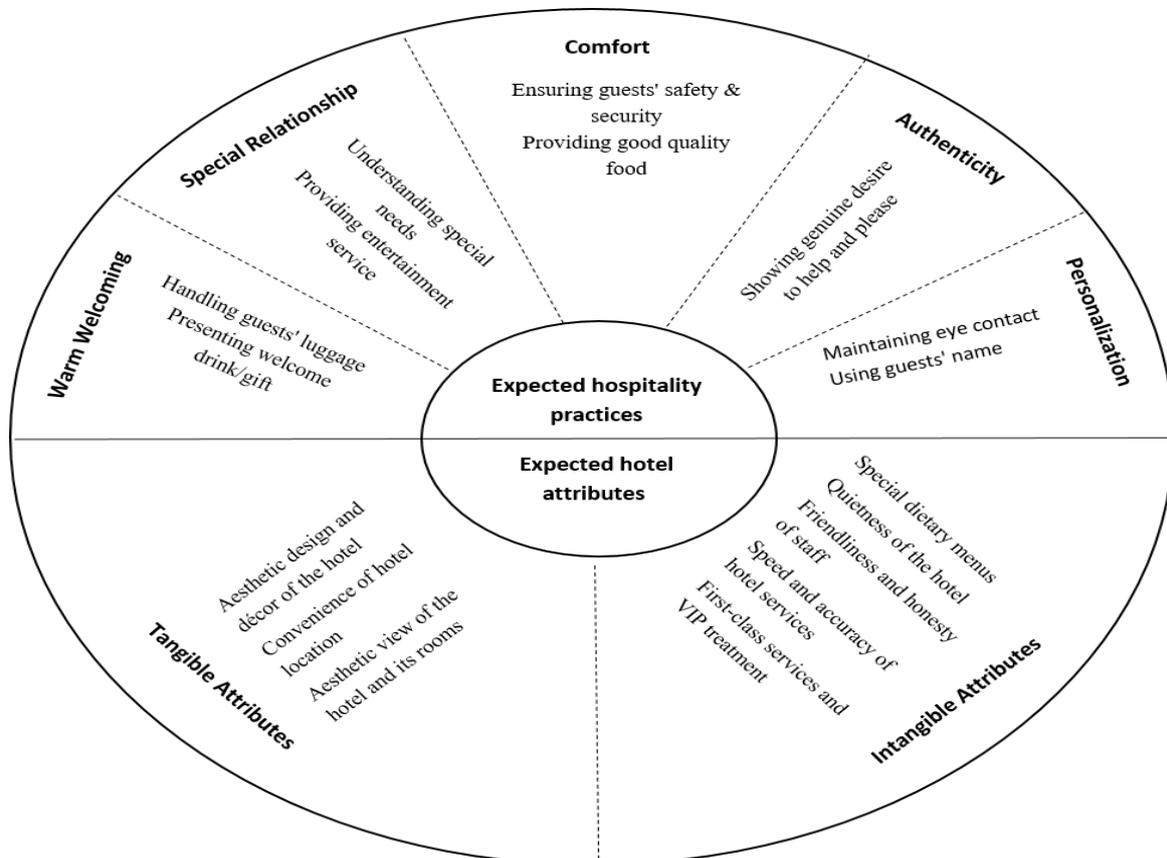


Fig.3. Highly expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes

### 6.3. Limitations and future research

This study has some limitations. Focusing only on American tourists as the target population is considered a limitation of this study. Examining the proposed model among multiple nationalities could have produced thorough data and enable better generalizability of the results. Thus, future research in this area is encouraged to involve participants from several racial and ethnic backgrounds and examine the differences among them. Another limitation of this study involved being investigating expected hospitality practices and hotel attributes for the settings of the hotel industry in Egypt. Hence, further research can investigate these issues within different settings to enrich the growing literature and compare differences, if any, between results.

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## ممارسات الضيافة وخصائص الفنادق المتوقعة كعامل تنبؤ باتجاهات ونوايا حجز السائحين الأمريكيين للفنادق في مصر

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### المخلص

تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف توقعات السائحين الأمريكيين لممارسات الضيافة وخصائص الفنادق وتأثير تلك التوقعات على اتجاهاتهم ونواياهم السلوكية نحو الفنادق في مصر. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الكمي وتم استخدام الاستبانة كأداة لجمع البيانات الأولية. وقد اشتملت عينة الدراسة على 300 سائح شاركوا في المسح الإحصائي وتم استخدام نموذج المعادلة الهيكلية من خلال برنامج **Smart PLS 3.0** للتحقق من صحة الفروض المكونة لإطار الدراسة. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن السائحين الأمريكيين لديهم مستوى عالٍ من التوقعات بشأن ممارسات الضيافة وخصائص الفنادق غير المادية التي يرغبون في توافرها في الفنادق في مصر. كما أكدت النتائج أن هذه التوقعات العالية قد أثرت سلباً على اتجاهات السائحين الأمريكيين نحو الفنادق في مصر وهو ما قد يؤثر بدوره على نواياهم السلوكية نحو حجز تلك الفنادق. وقد انتهت الدراسة إلى تقديم مجموعة من التوصيات العملية الموجهة إلى مديري الفنادق في مصر التي قد تمكنهم من تلبية توقعات ورغبات السائحين الأمريكيين وتحسين اتجاهاتهم نحو الفنادق في مصر.

### معلومات المقالة

#### الكلمات المفتاحية

الاتجاهات؛ نوايا؛  
السائح الأمريكي؛  
المعادلة الهيكلية.

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