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# Cultivating Customer Loyalty: The Interplay of Cultural Sensitivity, Customer Ethnocentrism, and Perceived Value in Service Quality in the Hospitality Sector

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## **Abstract**

### **Key words:**

Cultural  
Sensitivity,  
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Service Quality,  
Customer Loyalty.

*There has been a lack of extensive research on the effects of cultural sensitivity (CLS), consumer ethnocentrism (CET), and perceived value (PV) on customer loyalty (CL) within the hospitality industry. Therefore, this study employs the social exchange theory to investigate the influence of CLS, CET, and PV on CL. The study also seeks to examine the mediating impact of the dimensions of service quality (SQ). Data collection for the current study was conducted via a physical survey. The sample was collected using convenience sampling and included customers from the Jordanian hospitality sector. Data analysis was conducted using CFA and SEM techniques. The AMOS software was used to test the hypotheses. CLS, CET, and PV have had a notable influence on CL within the hospitality industry. Significant mediators in SQ (assurance and empathy), both of which operate in two dimensions. The results of this study contribute to the current body of knowledge in the field of hospitality. The study's findings underscore the importance of providing cross-cultural training to hospitality employees in order to improve their CLS. In addition, the CET poses a substantial issue for international hospitality chains. The study has significant implications for the hospitality sector in terms of enhancing customer loyalty.*

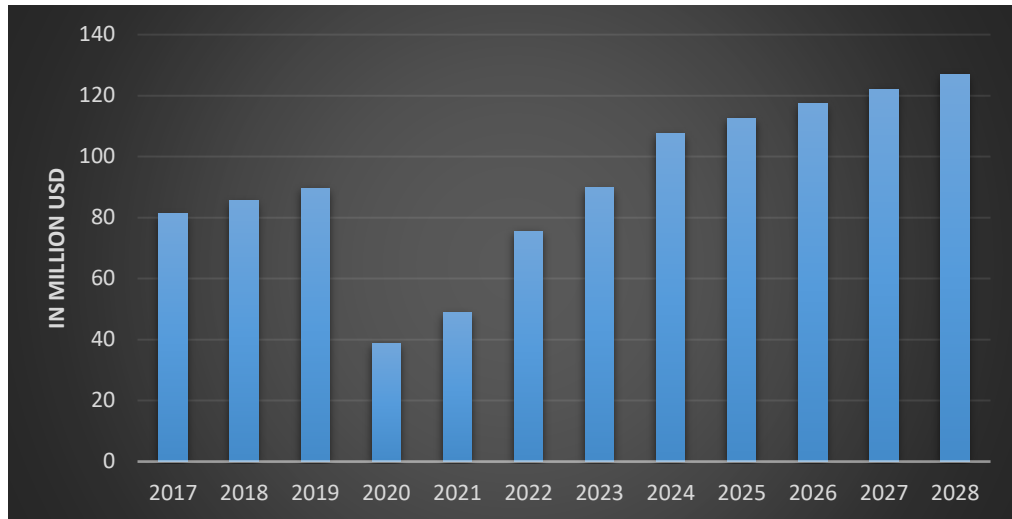
## **1. Introduction**

Effective hospitality is crucial for hotels, service centres, and the overall economy of a country. Many nations rely on their tourism industry to generate revenue from abroad (Al-Gharaibah, 2020). Due to heightened competition and ongoing market developments, service providers are now prioritising service quality in order to improve customer satisfaction and foster customer loyalty (Ofosu-Boateng & Acquaye, 2020). In today's globalised world, it is not uncommon for hospitality professionals to encounter customers from diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition, the cultural norms or values of one culture may not be suitable in another culture, which can result in a possible conflict (Yurur et al., 2021). The interaction between service providers and customers plays a crucial role in determining customer satisfaction.

Therefore, intercultural interaction holds great importance (De Carlos et al., 2019). Cultural sensitivity is of great importance in the hospitality sector (Viken, Höckert, & Grimwood, 2021). Further, the increasing competition in the hospitality industry to maintain a loyal customer base has led several international hotel chains to prioritise their global presence, from setting up to the establishment of new locations. Therefore, the issue of consumer ethnocentrism is a great concern for these hotel groups, as highlighted by Fleseriu, Kostelić, & Bocăneţ (2023). Consequentially, hotel chains, both local and international, have been making efforts to attract domestic tourists and strengthen their loyalty.

Consumer ethnocentrism may attract local hotels benefiting from a shared country of origin. Nevertheless, global franchises need to adjust to the specific tastes and preferences of each region (Fleseriu, Kostelić, & Bocăneţ, 2023).

The hospitality sector plays a crucial role in Jordan's economy due to the substantial revenues it generates. As an example, it is projected that the revenue of the Travel & Tourism market will exceed US\$386.10m by 2024, according to [Statista \(2023b\)](#). Furthermore, it is projected that the revenue in the hotel industry of the country will surpass US\$107.60m by 2024, as depicted in [Figure 1](#).



**Figure 1:** Revenue in the Hotel Market in Jordan (2017-2028).

Source: [Statista \(2023a\)](#)

Service quality is considered crucial in the Jordanian hospitality industry, as it directly impacts competitive advantage and customer loyalty. Therefore, the hospitality sector in the country has a valuable chance to gain a competitive edge by focusing on service quality ([Al-Gasawneh et al., 2022](#)). Even so, the hospitality industry in Jordan encounters notable obstacles when it comes to personnel training in order to deliver improved service quality to customers. Training is required for personnel to effectively handle customers from diverse international backgrounds ([Hyasat, Al-Weshah, & Kakeesh, 2022](#)). The objective of this study is to analyse the factors that influence customer loyalty in the hospitality sector of Jordan. This will be achieved by fulfilling the following objectives:

- To examine the impact of cultural sensitivity (CLS) on customer loyalty (CL) in the hospitality sector.
- To explore the impact of consumer ethnocentrism (CET) on CL in the hospitality sector.
- To evaluate the impact of perceived value (PV) on CL in the hospitality sector.
- To examine the mediating effect of the dimensions of service quality (assurance reliability, empathy, and responsiveness).

This study is of great importance as it investigates a significant research gap in the field of customer loyalty in the hospitality sector of Jordan. Previous studies in the Jordanian hospitality sector have primarily explored customer loyalty and retention from the perspectives of customer relationship management ([Al-Gasawneh et al., 2022](#)) and customer

satisfaction (Alketbi, Alshurideh, & Al Kurdi, 2020). This study is noteworthy due to its examination of the impacts of cultural sensitivity, customer ethnocentrism, and perceived value.

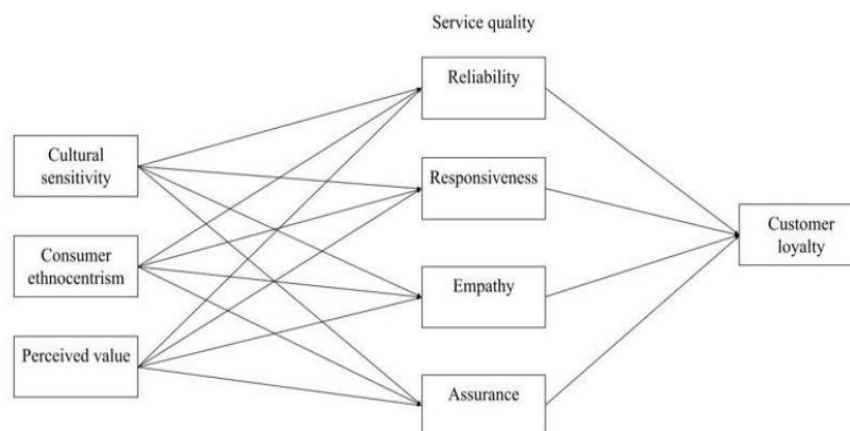
## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Background

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of cultural sensitivity (CLS), consumer ethnocentrism (CET), and perceived value (PV) on customer loyalty (CL), highlighting the dimensions of service quality. The Social Exchange Theory (SET), first proposed by Homans (1961), is considered as the primary theoretical basis for this research. Market researchers have extensively used this theory to examine the factors that influence customer loyalty in the hospitality sector (Ghaith et al., 2018).

The SET investigates the associations between individuals, making it a significant tool to perceive loyalty between customers and organisations. SET considers individuals as rational decision-makers who examines the value of social exchanges based on the benefits and costs involved (Enayat et al., 2022). SET is significantly relevant for evaluating the factors that influence customer loyalty in the hospitality industry, regarding customer-centric nature (Ghaith et al., 2018). Based on this study, customers are portrayed as rational decision-makers who carefully contemplate the perceived rewards, such as the hospitality experience, customer loyalty schemes, and perceived value, along with the associated costs, before deciding about their loyalty to a hospitality centre.

This study offers an analysis of the social exchange view of CL, supported by a thorough review of existing empirical studies. Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework of the current study. The independent variables in this study are CET and PV CLS. Moreover, the proposed research framework includes the four dimensions of SQ as mediators. While CL is considered the dependent variable.



**Figure 2:** Conceptual Framework.  
Source: Author generated

## 2.2. Hypothesis Development

### 2.2.1. The Impact of Cultural Sensitivity (CLS) on Customer Loyalty (CL)

Cultural sensitivity enhances intercultural awareness and respect, serving to safeguard cultural heritage by encouraging informed participation from indigenous communities. Further, it fosters an understanding of the cultural values of the host community, making it an important component of the tourism industry (Donohoe, 2011). As stated by Yurur et al. (2021), CLS plays a vital role in the tourism and hospitality industries, as service personnel frequently interact with customers from different cultural backgrounds. In another study, Fam et al. (2023) also explored the impact of cultural differences on customer retention in the hospitality industry.

Based on a study, Asian tourists expressed higher expectations for personnel-customer interactions and placed greater emphasis on 'satisfaction-based loyalty' compared to Western tourists. Therefore, this study proposes that customers' perceptions of a satisfactory hospitality experience differ depending on cultural differences. Further, another study carried out by Ogunnaike et al. (2022) examined the impact of cultural experience on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hospitality industry. The study indicates that the personnel's intercultural understanding had a significant impact on customer experience and loyalty.

In their study, Hsiao et al. (2023) utilised the SET framework to examine the influence of cultural competency and awareness among hospitality employees on customers' future behavioural intentions. The findings revealed a significant impact on customer behaviour. Therefore, considering the studies mentioned above, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H1:** CLS has a significant impact on CL in the hospitality sector.

### 2.2.2. The Impact of Consumer Ethnocentrism (CET) on Customer Loyalty (CL)

Ethnocentrism is a common phenomenon observed across cultures where individuals hold discriminatory attitudes by perceiving their own group as superior to others. Thus, ethnocentrism promotes 'in-group favouritism' (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006). A recent addition to the tourism and hospitality literature is the concept of ethnocentrism, which was introduced by Kibret & Shukla (2021). In their study, Cassia & Magno (2022) investigated the effects of ethnocentrism on international hospitality brands. The study found that ethnocentrism's cognitive and emotional dimensions had both positive and negative effects on the brand's image in the local market. On the other hand, the opposite trend was observed in the foreign market. In a study conducted by Ragab, Polo-Peña, & Mahrous (2023), the researchers investigated how the ethnocentric tendencies of airline travellers influence their behaviour.

The study found that travelers' ethnocentric tendencies had a notable impact on their loyalty. However, the impact was more significant in the realm of domestic airlines compared to international airlines. In a study conducted by [Stenberg & Bosved \(2023\)](#), it was found that individual ethnocentrism had a positive impact on the purchase intention of Swedish and Finnish consumers when it came to national airlines. Thus, the following hypothesis can be formulated based on the aforementioned literature:

**H2:** CET has a significant impact on CL in the hospitality sector.

### 2.2.3. The Impact of Perceived Value (PV) on Customer Loyalty (CL)

The value that consumers perceive in goods and services plays a crucial role in shaping their attitudes and behaviours. The mentioned concept highlights the value derived from the perceived excellence and customer expectations of a service in return for a price ([Surachartkumtonkun & Patterson, 2007](#)). [Habibi & Zakipour \(2022\)](#) conducted a case study of a vacation rental company to examine the impact of PV on CL. The study found a noteworthy and favourable influence of PV on CL. In a similar vein, [El-Adly \(2019\)](#) examined how PV affects CL within the hotel industry.

The study found that various factors related to the PV had a notable influence on CL, including aspects such as self-gratification, price, quality, transaction, and hedonic dimensions. In a study conducted by [Gulam, Suryadi, & Waluyowati \(2023\)](#), they found a noteworthy and favourable influence of PV on CL. [Paulose & Shakeel \(2022\)](#) found comparable outcomes in the Indian hotel industry, indicating that customer loyalty was significantly impacted by their PV. Thus, based on the findings of the aforementioned studies, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

**H3:** PV has a significant impact on CL in the hospitality sector.

### 2.2.4. Mediating Effect of the Dimensions of Service Quality

Service quality is often described as the level of excellence in service provision ([David Mc A, 2013](#)). It is a characteristic that cannot be physically measured ([Mohammad & Alhamadani, 2011](#)). According to a study by [Alketbi, Alshurideh, & Al Kurdi \(2020\)](#), service quality has a significant impact on customer satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty in the UAE hotel industry. Based on another study conducted by [Satti \(2020\)](#), the relationship between sensory marketing, service quality, and customer satisfaction was investigated. The study examined five dimensions of service quality: reliability, assurance, empathy, responsiveness, and tangibles. The study found that service quality played a crucial role in mediating the results. The study did not assess the mediation of service quality on customer loyalty.

However, the notable influence of service quality on customer satisfaction suggests that these dimensions would also play a significant role in enhancing customer loyalty. In a recent study by [Yeong, Knox, & Prabhakar \(2022\)](#), it was found that empathy, tangibles, and reliability are key factors

influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel industry. Therefore, building upon the findings and implications of the previously mentioned studies, the current study posits the substantial mediations of four dimensions of service quality.

- H4:** Reliability significantly mediates the correlation between CLS and CL.
- H5:** Reliability significantly mediates the correlation between CET and CL.
- H6:** Reliability significantly mediates the correlation between PV and CL.
- H7:** Responsiveness significantly mediates the correlation between CLS and CL.
- H8:** Responsiveness significantly mediates the correlation between CET and CL.
- H9:** Responsiveness significantly mediates the correlation between PV and CL.
- H10:** Empathy significantly mediates the correlation between CLS and CL.
- H11:** Empathy significantly mediates the correlation between CET and CL.
- H12:** Empathy significantly mediates the correlation between PV and CL.
- H13:** Assurance significantly mediates the correlation between CLS and CL.
- H14:** Assurance significantly mediates the correlation between CET and CL.
- H15:** Assurance significantly mediates the correlation between PV and CL.

### 3. Methodology of the Research

#### 3.1. Strategy and Procedure

The research has utilised a quantitative research strategy and collected primary data. The study employed a survey technique to collect data. The study primarily focused on the country context of Jordan, with a specific emphasis on the hotel sector. The study has focused its attention on the hotel sector, which is known for its emphasis on developing, managing, and sustaining a healthy relationship through service quality and its underlying factors. The hotel managers and staff were chosen based on the nature of the selected variables.

In Jordan, there are numerous hotels, both international and domestic, that offer their services. However, it was not feasible to include all the employees from these hotels. Thus, the study utilised a sampling technique to collect data from a specific population with similar characteristics to the overall population. The convenience sampling method was used by aligning the key characteristics of the defined population of the study with the defined key features of the sampling techniques. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire method. This approach was chosen to ensure the accuracy of the assumptions described for the target population. Moreover, the tool was used to gather unbiased and genuine responses, presenting a clear picture of the respondents' behaviour.

#### 3.2. Tool of Data Collection

Empirical evidence was used to develop a questionnaire from the available literature. The items in this study were collected from recent research and are shown in a comprehensive table. The table presents all noteworthy information as well as the evaluated reliability of the items utilized for this study.

**Table 1:** Information of the Questionnaire.

No of items	Adopted for	Status of variable in model	Adopted from	Cronbach alpha values
4	Perceived value	IV	(Molinillo et al., 2021)	0.926
6	Customer ethnocentrism	IV	(Vida, Dmitrović, & Obadia, 2008)	0.976
5	Cultural sensitivity	IV	(Ramadania et al., 2023)	0.961
4	Responsiveness	MV	(Le, Nguyen, & Truong, 2020)	0.912
5	Reliability	MV	(Le, Nguyen, & Truong, 2020)	0.920
5	Empathy	MV	(Le, Nguyen, & Truong, 2020)	0.946
4	Assurance	MV	(Le, Nguyen, & Truong, 2020)	0.940
4	Customer loyalty	DV	(Djelassi, Godefroit-Winkel, & Diallo, 2018)	0.972

#### 4. Results and Interpretation

The study has used the highly reliable SPSS software, known for its statistical analysis capabilities, to conduct the initial testing of the collected data. The descriptive test for this assessment reveals several useful calculations, including the analysis of the data's normal distribution and the skewness and kurtosis values falling within the desired range of -1 to +1.

**Table 2.** Normality Analysis.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
CET	296	1.00	5.00	3.8964	1.19200	-.924	.142	-.293	.282
RS	296	1.00	5.00	3.7838	1.06967	-.563	.142	-.607	.282
CL	296	1.00	5.00	4.0127	1.13405	-1.041	.142	.049	.282
PV	296	1.25	5.00	3.9941	1.01335	-1.144	.142	.347	.282
EMP	296	1.00	5.00	3.8284	1.09977	-.849	.142	-.058	.282
RLL	296	1.00	5.00	3.7142	1.11328	-.556	.142	-.749	.282
CLS	296	1.00	5.00	3.7466	1.16176	-.599	.142	-.650	.282
ASS	296	1.00	5.00	3.8117	1.14860	-.743	.142	-.386	.282

For the assessment of the items' association with their parent variables, a rotated component analysis was conducted. It was found that all the items showed a significant association with their main representative variables, with values above a threshold range of 0.6.

**Table 3.** Factor Loading Analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
CLS1				.712				
CLS2				.811				
CLS3				.779				
CLS4				.748				
CLS5				.741				
RL1			.722					
RL2			.685					
RL3			.746					
RL4			.758					
RL5			.756					
PV1						.747		
PV2						.806		
PV3						.802		
PV4						.716		
CL1					.789			
CL2					.808			
CL3					.816			
CL4					.772			
RS1								.595
RS2								.615
RS3								.707
RS4								.608
EMP1		.728						
EMP2		.780						
EMP3		.817						
EMP4		.816						
EMP5		.835						
CET1	.832							
CET2	.854							
CET3	.850							
CET4	.809							
CET5	.851							
CET6	.839							
ASS1							.674	
ASS2							.637	
ASS3							.839	
ASS4							.835	

Advanced testing was performed on the software Amos 24 using the analysis techniques of CFA and SEM to assess model fitness and test hypotheses. In the techniques mentioned, the CFA technique was used to assess the model fitness. All model fit indicators indicated that the empirical model was a good fit. The CFA test results have been presented in [Figure 3](#).

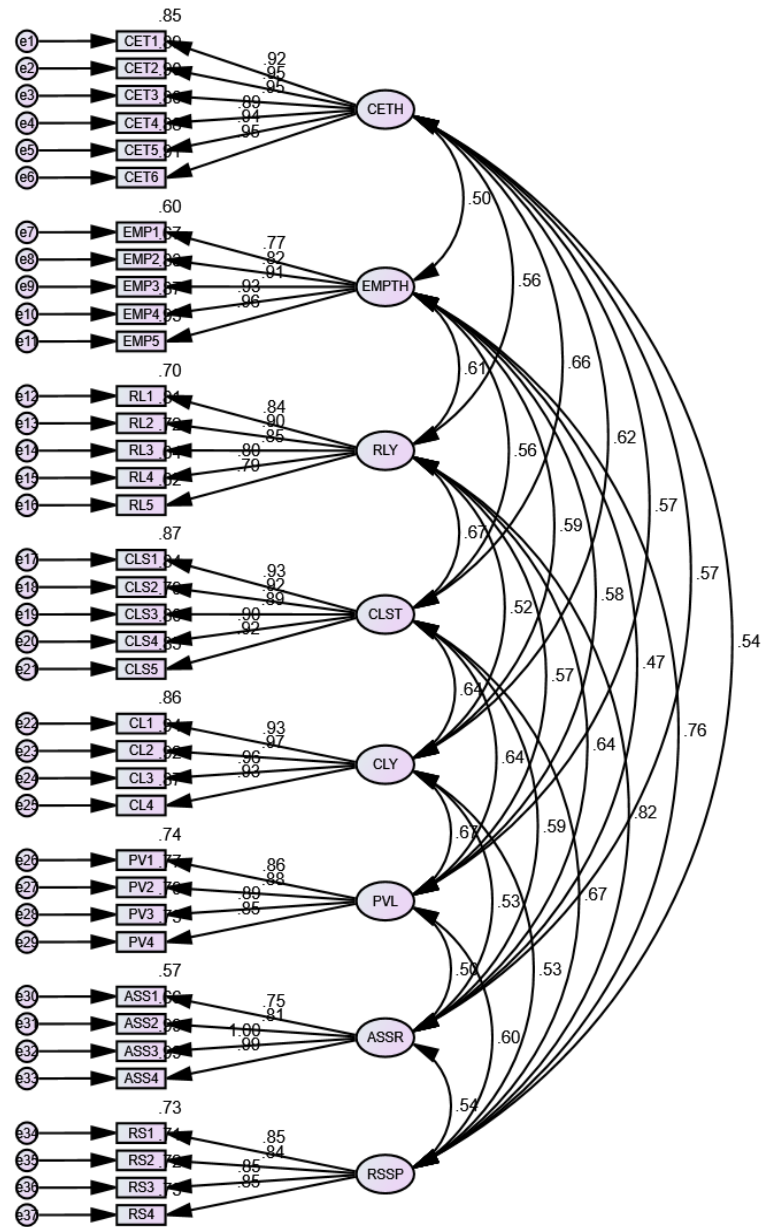


Figure 3: CFA Output.

Table 4: Model Fit Measures.

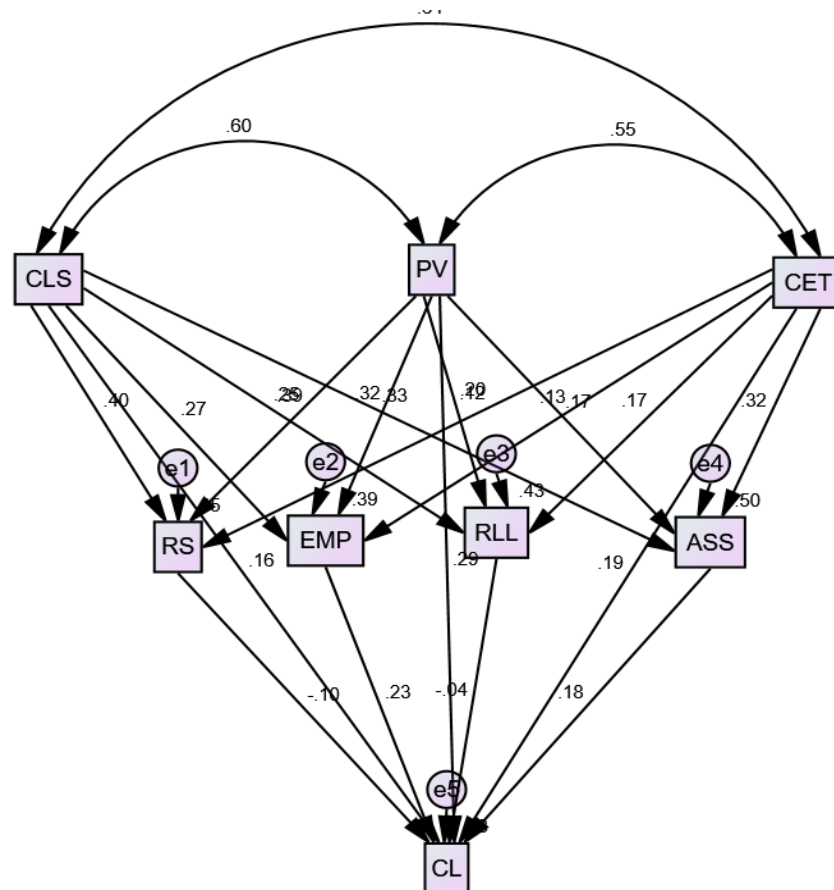
Measure	Estimate	Interpretation
CMIN/DF	2.629	Excellent
CFI	0.931	Acceptable
SRMR	0.058	Excellent
RMSEA	0.074	Acceptable

The assessment of validity and reliability is crucial and has been conducted using Cronbach alpha values and measures of construct validity. Cronbach alpha values greater than 0.9 indicated that all study variables had high levels of reliability. In addition, the validity of convergence and discrimination was also established within the dataset, and the sample was deemed suitable for hypothesis testing.

**Table 5:** Reliability and Validity Assessment.

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	CETH	EMPTH	RLY	CLST	CLY	PVL	ASSR	RSSP
<b>CETH</b>	0.976	0.871	0.430	0.978	<b>0.933</b>							
<b>EMPTH</b>	0.946	0.780	0.585	0.966	0.499***	<b>0.883</b>						
<b>RLY</b>	0.920	0.697	0.677	0.926	0.557***	0.608***	<b>0.835</b>					
<b>CLST</b>	0.961	0.832	0.451	0.963	0.655***	0.563***	0.670***	<b>0.912</b>				
<b>CLY</b>	0.972	0.895	0.453	0.975	0.617***	0.587***	0.523***	0.635***	<b>0.946</b>			
<b>PVL</b>	0.926	0.759	0.453	0.927	0.570***	0.579***	0.569***	0.645***	0.673***	<b>0.871</b>		
<b>ASSR</b>	0.940	0.800	0.415	0.995	0.565***	0.466***	0.644***	0.585***	0.530***	0.503***	<b>0.894</b>	
<b>RSSP</b>	0.912	0.722	0.677	0.912	0.541***	0.765***	0.823***	0.672***	0.529***	0.598***	0.537***	<b>0.850</b>

In the final step, the study utilised the SEM to determine the significance of the associations. Through the application of the bootstrapping method, the study confirmed the acceptance of all three direct hypotheses regarding perceived value, customer ethnocentrism, cultural sensitivity, and customer loyalty. In addition, the analysis revealed strong evidence supporting the role of empathy and assurance as service quality factors that enhance the indirect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Please find the attached report, which includes tables 6 and 7 as well as [Figure 4](#) for the SEM analysis.



**Figure 4:** SEM Output.

**Table 6:** Direct Effects Result.

	Parameter	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
CL	<--- CET	.188	.071	.310	.013
CL	<--- PV	.287	.166	.400	.002
CL	<--- CLS	.165	.053	.278	.018

**Table 7:** Indirect Effects Results.

Indirect Path	Unstandardized Estimate	Lower	Upper	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
CLS --> RS --> CL	-0.040	-0.098	0.014	0.210	-0.041
CLS --> EMP --> CL	0.061	0.021	0.127	0.006	0.062**
CLS --> RLL --> CL	-0.017	-0.072	0.037	0.561	-0.017
CLS --> ASS --> CL	0.058	0.022	0.111	0.012	0.059*
PV --> RS --> CL	-0.028	-0.078	0.008	0.196	-0.025
PV --> EMP --> CL	0.084	0.038	0.151	0.005	0.075**
PV --> RLL --> CL	-0.010	-0.053	0.019	0.511	-0.009
PV --> ASS --> CL	0.034	0.009	0.085	0.017	0.031*
CET --> ASS --> CL	0.056	0.017	0.114	0.016	0.059*
CET --> RLL --> CL	-0.007	-0.039	0.013	0.469	-0.008
CET --> EMP --> CL	0.029	0.004	0.072	0.054	0.030†
CET --> RS --> CL	-0.012	-0.043	0.002	0.178	-0.012

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Discussion of the Key Findings

This study sought to examine the effects of CLS, CET, and PV on CL within the hospitality industry. Three hypotheses were formulated. The analysis revealed that all the factors mentioned had a significant impact on CL. The impact of CLS on customer loyalty emphasizes the importance of the cultural awareness and competence of hospitality employees in offering a satisfactory customer experience and fostering and cultivating customer loyalty. The results of this study align with the findings of [Paparoidamis, Tran, & Leonidou \(2019\)](#), who explored the significant influence of employees' cultural intelligence on customer loyalty. Further, the significant impact of CET on CL shows that consumers' biases and preferential attitudes play a vital role in forming their experiences in the hospitality industry, eventually affecting their loyalty to the establishment.

Furthermore, a noteworthy impact of PV on the CL proposes that the loyalty of consumers is shaped by their understanding of the services and experiences provided by the hospitality centre. Hence, it is significant for hospitality centres to focus on consumer understanding to enhance increased loyalty. The results of this study align with those of [Paulose and Shakeel's \(2022\)](#) research, which noticed that PV had a significant influence on customers' PV. The study also investigated the indirect effect of these factors on service quality (SQ), in addition to their direct impact. This study investigated four dimensions of SQ: responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability.

Empathy and assurance were indicated as significant mediators among these dimensions. It is crucial for hospitality personnel to show empathy when interacting with consumers, especially those from diverse cultural backgrounds, as empathy plays an important role in mediating these interactions. This will offer a satisfying experience for customers and increase their loyalty. Still, it is vital to build trust with customers by assuring them that they are confident in the exceptional quality of services provided at the hospitality centre.

## **5.2. Conclusion of the Research**

The aim of this study is to explore the role of several factors in the service quality of hotels in Jordan. Especially, it explores that how cultural sensitivity, customer ethnocentrism, and perceived service quality help to enhance customer loyalty. A survey was used to collect data for a quantitative research methodology. A total of 296 valid responses were evaluated using SPSS and Amos. The statistical analysis shows that cultural sensitivity, customer ethnocentrism, and perceived service quality all have a significant impact on customer loyalty. Further, empathy and assurance in service quality features highlight these important connections. The study has disclosed that service features play an important part in enhancing customer loyalty among hotel customers in Jordan.

## **5.3. Implications, Significance and Contributions**

This study has made a noteworthy contribution by emphasizing the importance of service quality features in Jordanian international hotels. It has been that customers have significant connections with the services offered by the hotels. Further, it has been shown that perceived value plays a noteworthy role in enhancing customer loyalty, even within the hotel sector. Yet, the current literature has revealed that hotels in Jordan have carried out measures to promote cultural adaptation to the country's culture. This has helped to maintain a balance with cultural sensitivity and eventually resulted in an increase in loyal customers for these hotels. Additionally, this study highlights the significance for the hotel sector to focus on all aspects of service quality to ensure the highest level of quality in their services. This will help in enhancing customer loyalty, leading in enhanced customer retention and repeat visits.

## **5.4. Research Limitations**

This study has encountered various limitations throughout its different phases of completion, all of which have been duly reported. By doing so, future studies can learn from these limitations and strive to provide more comprehensive and meaningful insights. During data collection, the researcher encountered challenges in obtaining high-quality responses. Some of the collected responses were found to be irrelevant and were therefore excluded, resulting in a reduction in the data sample for item response theory analysis. In addition, the study has found insignificant results for the two service quality features, possibly because the respondents lacked interest while completing the questionnaire. In addition, the study includes both hotel employees and managers in its sample, which prevents it from accurately representing any specific group of employees within the industry.

## **5.5. Future Research Directions and Suggestions**

The study has identified several limitations and provided valuable suggestions for future researchers and scholars to conduct further

research. Future studies can further explore and analyse the tested empirical model using a larger sample size and a more specific selection of hotels, taking into account both domestic and international contexts. This approach has the potential to make significant contributions to the field. Furthermore, future studies could enhance the scope of this research by incorporating additional factors related to service quality that have the potential to positively impact customer retention, loyalty, and re-visit intentions. In recent years, researchers have examined the applicability of empirical models in various service sectors, including banks. These studies aim to illustrate the key quality features of services that contribute to a stronger customer relationship with organisations.

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