

COVID-19 and employee-customer relationship: hotel frontline employee perceptions

Abstract

The COVID-19 (coronavirus) induced fear has gripped both tourism service providers and tourists. This study seeks to explore hotel frontline perception of the impact of COVID-19 on customer relationship. Heider's balance theory was used to explore the relationship between the hotel frontline employees and the customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It further determines the level of social trust in the theater of service provision. Using Zimbabwe 3–5 star rated hotels frontline employees as a case study, the study reveals the imbalanced relations between the hotel frontline staff and the customers due to COVID-19 Pandemic. Fear appears to be the greatest factor affecting the relationship between hotel employees and customers. Mistrust between the host and guest affects the relationship between the employee and customer.