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Understanding dissatisfaction through evaluation theory

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Despite its effects on organisations, dissatisfaction is an under-researched topic in management. This research provides a model built upon evaluation theory that helps to understand the motives, negative emotions, confrontation strategies and legitimacy when consumers are not satisfied with the services given. This model is tested in a sample of 844 people using structural equation modelling. The research findings show the impact of reputation and identification in dissatisfaction and the importance of managing dissatisfaction to improve trust and loyalty. Managers can use these results to development strategic plans and marketing strategies in order to attract and retain more consumers.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Change is an intrinsic feature of modern societies and its effects are felt everywhere. Universities are not immune to this and must necessarily adapt their functions and activities (Blanco-González et al., 2021; Cardoso et al., 2012). This adaptation will be reflected in strategic plans. Those plans have to integrate factors that are sensitive to stakeholders, such as the government, university staff, students, taxpayers and society in general (El Nemar et al., 2020; Lagrosen et al., 2004). Consequently, it is necessary to incorporate the different viewpoints of agents that act as stakeholders, implicitly taking on a greater marketing focus (Allen & Smith, 2008; Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2019; El Nemar et al., 2020). This is especially relevant as the current context is characterised by limited resources and growing competition among service providers (Cattaneo et al., 2016; Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016), where the perception and satisfaction of the students take on greater significance (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019; Miotto et al., 2020).

There are a few studies assessing students' perception of their university based on a series of defined dimensions (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019; Kwek et al., 2010). However, no studies have been found that consider student perception of the university from the dissatisfaction viewpoint. Dissatisfaction can generate negative behaviours towards the organisations with crucial outcomes (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009). Thus, this research aims to answer the following

question: How do the students in a higher education (HE) system assess dissatisfaction?

Research based on evaluation theory (Lazarus, 1991) attempts to understand the consequences of different behaviours on an organisation (Chen, 2015). The application of evaluation theory in an HE context is particularly useful because it has the classic characteristics of services (Brady et al., 2006), but its complexity and controversy mean it must be addressed through new perspectives (Lagrosen et al., 2004). Indeed, the services given by HE are not available to everyone, and they involve various stakeholders, such as the government, future workers, taxpayers and society in general (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019).

Analysing a negative perception, it is possible to understand the consequences that unsatisfactory service can have for the HE organisation in a highly demanding and diverse context (El Nemar et al., 2020). Assuming that failures in service are inevitable, and efforts by the institutions and consumers to prevent them can be useless, it is necessary to understand their effects to know how to mitigate them (Waqas et al., 2014). Consequently, improvement in intangible assets management is essential for universities in order to achieve their social and economic goals in the medium and long term (Christensen & Gornitzka, 2017). Managers need to improve the reputation (Miotto et al., 2020; Verčič et al., 2016), identity (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Rather, 2018) and satisfaction (Rather & Sharma, 2018) to generate the trust, loyalty and legitimacy perceived by the students.

The literature review has shown that not only should satisfaction be analysed but that dissatisfaction must also be included in the analysis to confirm which variables can alleviate its effect (Palmer et al., 2016; Rather, 2018; Rather et al., 2019) and what consequences it can generate for the organisation (Pascual-Nebreda et al., 2021). The objectives of this research are thus (1) to demonstrate that it is necessary to analyse dissatisfaction (negative perspective) and (2) test the primary effect of reputation and identity on dissatisfaction and the secondary impact of dissatisfaction on trust and loyalty. These objectives seek to better understand how dissatisfaction works in an education service context. In addition, this research goes further by proposing the incorporation of a variable that has been attracting research interest in recent years, organisational legitimacy (Díez-Martín et al., 2021), which is another novelty of the paper. This research positions trust as a signal of quality that makes it possible to reduce the uncertainty in decision-making processes. The empirical study is carried out in the HE context because of the increasing competitiveness between public and private universities competing to attract students, obtain quality seals, adapt to market orientation or gain position in international rankings, among others (Miotto et al., 2020).

This research is relevant because it provides a series of recommendations for adopting a strategic approach to understanding the process of students' evaluation. The implications suggest a few lines of action that would help universities to reduce student dissatisfaction and achieve more stable and long-term relationships. Managers must be conscious of how reputation and university identity affect students' dissatisfaction and emphasise actions that reinforce the image they wish to transmit according to the institution's personality by hiring competent employees or developing good internal and external communication.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Evaluation theory was formerly used to analyse the behaviour of the employees in a work setting (Folkman et al., 1986). This theory was applied in the marketing literature to examine consumers' emotions and behaviours (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Song & Qu, 2017), because it can explain how stimuli affect emotions and how those, in turn, impact consumer behaviour (Watson & Spence, 2007). Specifically, evaluation is a process that helps to determine whether an encounter in the service setting has been satisfactory or unsatisfactory, generating specific emotions that can cause a response in an individual (Bagozzi et al., 1999).

This theory explains which emotions could be produced in a specific context and how they could affect behaviour (Song & Qu, 2017). It describes the psychological process that an individual undergoes when exposed to an environmental stimulus (Lazarus, 1991; Scherer et al., 2001). Bagozzi et al. (1999) define the emotion as a mental state of being prepared that arises from cognitive evaluation of events and that can generate specific actions that reaffirm or confront emotion, always contingent on its nature and on its significance for the individual; the emotions are based on assessments of situations. Positive emotions arise from situations congruent with individual goals, while negative emotions reflect situations that are incompatible with those goals (Soscia, 2007).

There are two schools in evaluation theory. One postulates that emotions are like a limited set of dimensions and focuses on discussion about relational significance and discrete emotions (Roseman, 2001). Another describes evaluation as a mental process (Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2001). This process starts with a primary evaluation, according to which consumers evaluate the congruence of the situation compared with their goals. If the organisation's behaviour is considered disturbing or incongruent with the objectives, a secondary evaluation is generated, involving cognitions and negative emotions (Pascual-Nebreda et al., 2021). Finally, the consumers assess various confrontation strategies and adopt a behavioural response to the problem (Lazarus, 1991; Roseman et al., 1990). This evaluation process starts from an initial cognition or primary evaluation and progresses through cognitive evaluations and additional emotions or secondary evaluation that will determine the individual's behaviour intentions, that is, confrontation strategies (LePine et al., 2016).

This research uses the second approach to study the behavioural response of unsatisfied university students (Figure 1). The model shows a series of elements that influence the primary evaluation, such as reputation and identity, contributing to a secondary evaluation. In this case, the negative secondary evaluation is analysed, using two constructs: dissatisfaction and trust, ending up with confrontation strategies through the variable loyalty. In the last step, the organisation's legitimacy (which can minimise the impact in confrontation) is added.

HE establishments are organisations that offer services to deal with singular challenges (Chong & Ahmed, 2015). They are service providers inasmuch as they reflect characteristics commonly associated with other service providers (Parasuraman et al., 1985), that is, HE can be considered as a service that is marketable in a similar way to any other service (Mazzarol et al., 2003). In the literature on services, there is an agreement that dissatisfaction arises from a comparison between expectations and performance (Parasuraman et al., 1985). It is based on the paradigm that maintains that dissatisfaction with the services is related to the fulfilment of expectations (Cadotte et al., 1987).

Various factors can form these expectations, particularly those of the students (Zeithaml et al., 1993), for example, word-of-mouth communication (positive or negative feedback from family members or workmates on a specific university's offer), experience with a related service (secondary school or pre-university studies) and advertisements for a potential service (promises in terms of campus life, teaching quality and employability). They also propose that the personal needs of the users tend to inform their expectations (Ballmann & Mueller, 2008). This observation agrees with those studies that emphasise that acknowledging the needs of individuals is an important step towards understanding the impact of contextual factors in the results, such as motivation, behaviour, affection and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Consequently, it is essential to know what the
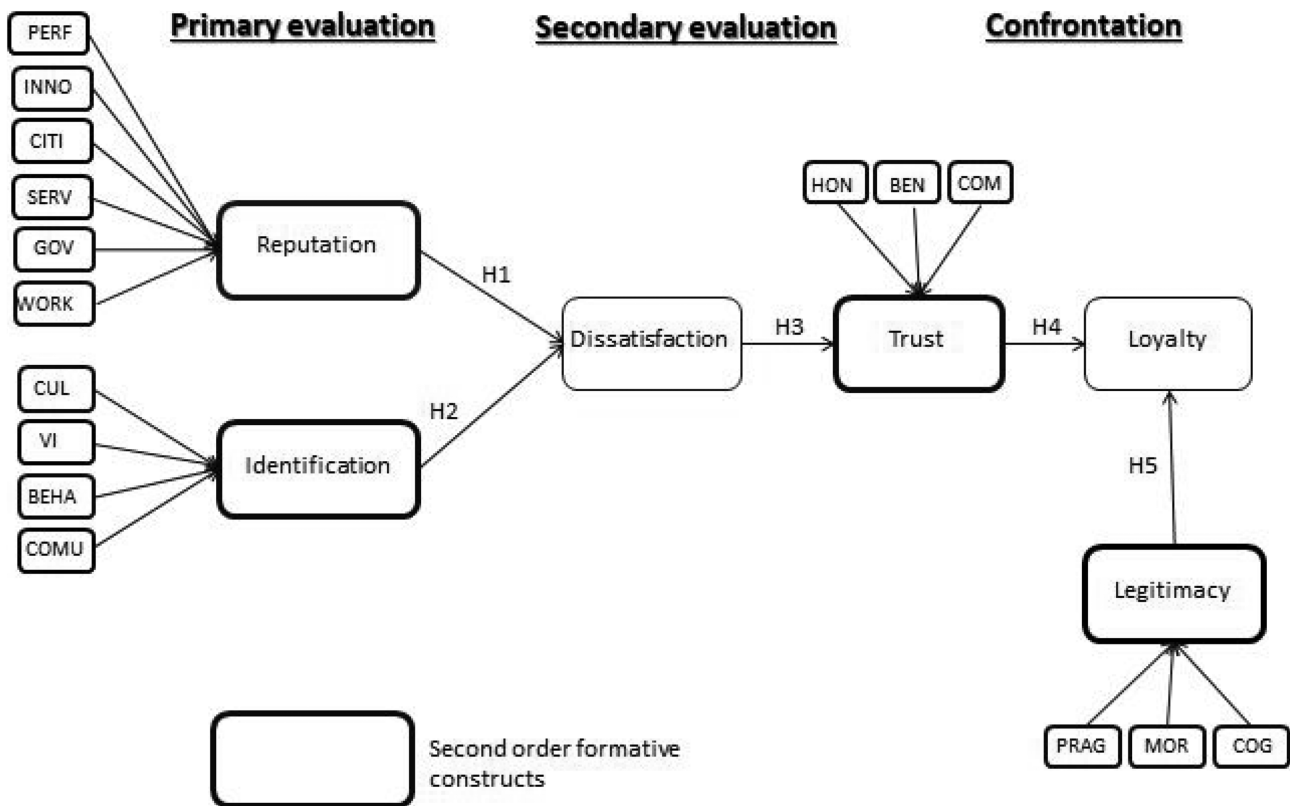
FIGURE 1 Research model used in the present study. *Source*: Own elaboration

main causes are and how motivations trigger the dissatisfaction of students (Pascual-Nebreda et al., 2021). This is a subject that is seldom addressed in the literature, yet which is fundamental when adopting the measures required to ease possible negative effects. That is where evaluation theory comes into play.

Services in general, and also HE, face the challenge of offering services without errors. However, failure during the service management is almost inevitable, and, consequently, so is dissatisfaction (Waqas et al., 2014). For this reason, a model is necessary that makes it possible to ascertain which processes cause the students at the universities to be dissatisfied. The *primary evaluation* is considered through the perceived reputation of the university and the student's identification with the institution. When an experience provokes dissatisfaction (*secondary evaluation*), the students are not happy, and this adversely affects trust. In turn, the situation leads to *coping*, which is assessed through loyalty and intentions to behave.

2.1 | Primary evaluation: Reputation and identity

The primary evaluation constitutes the first stage of the evaluation process. Reputation is a collective evaluation of the capacity of an organisation to provide valuable results for a representative group of stakeholders (Fombrun et al., 2000). Reputation is one of the primary contributors to perceived quality (Priporas & Kamenidou, 2011), becoming especially important in services owing to its intangibility and how difficult it is to evaluate the organisation's quality and performance (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006). In particular, the reputation of a university has become an important factor of primary evaluation to determine institutional competitiveness and positioning (Chapleo, 2007). Due to the current situation of HE, the relevance of reputations is increasing (Verčič et al., 2016). However, despite how important it is for management to achieve and maintain a good reputation in the eyes of the students (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019; Miotto et al., 2020), there is still a lack of clarity in managing reputation, and it remains challenging for universities (Vidaver-Cohen, 2007). The heterogeneity in terms of expectations stands out among the various reasons that generate this complexity (Vidaver-Cohen, 2007), as well as the different types of educational institutions (Suomi, 2014). In particular, existing studies on university reputation have detected its impact on expected student behaviour (Sung & Yang, 2009), student satisfaction and loyalty (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009). However, in the HE context, the studies have tended to ignore management of the relationship with students, despite it being key to formulating a long-term strategy in terms of reputation, identification and satisfaction towards an institution.

Hypothesis 1. Corporate reputation reduces the level of students' dissatisfaction.

During the primary evaluation, the customers tend to choose those brands with an identity that better represents them (Aaker, 1996). Universities are often perceived as corporate brands (Chapleo et al., 2011), attempting to cultivate the identification of the university with a brand. Universities recognise the value of their institutional brands, which students can identify with a certain benefit fed by prior experiences that strengthen their differentiation (Palmer et al., 2016). When a student identifies with the university, their attitudes towards it are more positive compared to those who do not do so (Balaji et al., 2016). People identify with organisations that they perceive as having a favourable reputation, because they can satisfy their self-esteem and personal growth needs (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In the HE setting, the personality, knowledge and prestige of the university brand are especially relevant in developing student identification with it (Balaji et al., 2016) and, of course, in primary evaluation (Blanco-González et al., 2020). Knowing the university brand and its prestige decisively determines the student–university identification (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2019). Universities should develop promotion activities so that the students strongly identify with their brand (Balaji et al., 2016). Students that identify with certain brands perceive positive psychological results and develop favourable actions with respect to the brand. As HE institutions offer unique services, an in-depth understanding of brand identity, meaning and prestige within the sector could lead to more effective communication among stakeholders, including teaching staff, students, graduates and employees (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016).

Hypothesis 2. Identification towards the institution reduces the level of students' dissatisfaction.

2.2 | Secondary evaluation: Dissatisfaction and distrust

The variable dissatisfaction will be taken into consideration for the secondary evaluation (Pascual-Nebreda et al., 2021). In evaluation theory, dissatisfaction is a consequence of the primary evaluation because it stems from the user's value judgement of the pleasure derived from the use of the product or service (Oliver, 1981). Satisfaction or dissatisfaction is an emotional reaction to the experience with a product or service (Spreng & Singh, 1993), the former positive and the latter negative. The HE context is not free from this duality of satisfaction–dissatisfaction. Students that identify with an organisation often ignore and minimise negative information and experiences, so it becomes more likely that they will be satisfied even when their expectations are not completely fulfilled (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

As evaluation theory sustains, consumers are satisfied when the true performance of the company confirms or goes beyond their expectations (Oliver, 1999). Negative disconfirmation occurs when the performance of the service is worse than expected. Positive confirmation generates satisfaction, while negative disconfirmation leads to dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1999). In addition, satisfaction–dissatisfaction strongly predicts student trust and intention to visit a company or institution again and to provide positive recommendations and references about the company to others (Rather & Sharma, 2018). If HE students are satisfied with the quality of the service provided, their retention rate and willingness to recommend the institution to other potential students will be high (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019). In a case of dissatisfaction, the opposite situation is expected; consequently, the students' distrust and their behavioural intentions will stem from the dissatisfaction.

Hypothesis 3. The degree of students' dissatisfaction will directly impact trust.

Trust is therefore the second variable that contributes to secondary evaluation. Deng et al. (2010) consider that distrust is an important determinant of dissatisfaction and that both distrust and dissatisfaction affect loyalty. Trust has been defined as the degree of confidence in an exchange partner's integrity and reliability (Rather et al., 2019), revealed due to relational qualities such as honesty, credibility, benevolence and consistency (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust is considered as a pillar of relationship marketing, because if favours several customer outcomes through promoting efficiency, effectiveness and productivity (Rather, 2019). Trust can be defined as a user's expectation that an organisation will not behave opportunistically and that it will provide its products with the quality expected by the user (Anderson & Weitz, 1992). Therefore, if the university does not behave with integrity, the students will feel distrust.

Trust is a complex construction because it includes cognitive factors, which are based on the user's knowledge of the organisation and its capacities, and it also includes affective factors, which are the emotional link between the organisation and the individual that develops over time (Dowell et al., 2015). Although the concepts of reputation and trust are different, organisations with good reputation will probably have higher levels of satisfaction and trust; this increases the feeling of trust towards the organisation and reduces the perceptions of risk (Keh & Xie, 2009). Particularly, research on HE has shown that student trust in an institution favours enrolment on their educational programmes, along with greater loyalty and commitment (Meer & Chapman, 2015). Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggest that the link between customers' perceptions of trusting an organisation and their reactions towards it depends on the degree to which the customers know and identify with the institution.

Hypothesis 4. Trust in the institution influences students' loyalty.

2.3 | Confrontation: Loyalty and legitimacy

Loyalty is defined as user intention to continue with an organisation and can include both emotional and attitudinal elements

(Zeithaml et al., 1996). 'True loyalty' is a psychological impulse that leads to a positive word-of-mouth perception and repetition of the buying behaviour (Shankar et al., 2003). In HE contexts, Iskhakova et al. (2017) define student loyalty as faithfulness or devotion. Previous literature reported that brand loyalty rests largely on consumer satisfaction (Rather & Camilleri, 2019) and loyalty can be defined and assessed by both attitudinal as well as behavioural measures (Rather et al., 2019).

The intention to behave refers to a declared probability of participating in a behaviour (Oliver, 1999). This can be in a positive way in case of satisfaction or in a negative way when there is dissatisfaction. Specifically, such behaviour includes the customer's intention to buy again or to flee, along with the intention to generate positive or negative word-of-mouth judgements (Chen & Chen, 2010). Such actions often occur when the use experience is satisfactory and pleasing or, in contrast, dissatisfactory and negative (Kim et al., 2013). Therefore, dissatisfaction is considered an antecedent for negative intention (Oliver, 1999), producing also distrust and unfavourable intentions (directly and indirectly) to reuse the product or to visit the organisation again (Han et al., 2011). When customers are not satisfied, their positive behavioural intentions to visit the organisation again and to recommend its services are reduced (Chen & Chen, 2010). We consequently assume that student's behavioural intention might be a key indicator for future viability.

Legitimacy is taken into consideration as a possible construct that impacts loyalty (Blanco-González et al., 2020). Legitimacy, understood as 'the generalised perception that the actions of a company are desired, self-originated or appropriate within a social system of standards, values, beliefs and definitions' (Suchman, 1995, p. 574) is considered to be a key element for organisation survival and success (Díez-Martín et al., 2021; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). Legitimated organisations are in a more beneficial position when it comes to access to markets and relevant resources (Miotto et al., 2020). Most interest groups are only willing to have relationships with organisations considered to be legitimate and will avoid having relationships with those that are not legitimate (Deephouse et al., 2017). That is why organisations that seek continuity and market success will have to demonstrate their viability and legitimacy to gain the support of interest groups (Díez-Martín et al., 2021). Legitimate, congruent institutions make the students improve the evaluation of a brand's authenticity (Fritz et al., 2017). However, in spite of how relevant legitimacy is for HE institutions, there are few empirical documents that take it into consideration (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019; Martínez-Navalón et al., 2019; Miotto et al., 2020).

> **Hypothesis 5.** The legitimacy of an institution has a positive influence on loyalty.

3 | METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

To analyse the data and validate the study hypotheses, a model of structural equations originating in structural equation modelling (SEM)

variances has been used. This model can statistically analyse established relationships through the prediction of the dependant variables, allowing the direct and indirect effects among variables to be calculated and quantified (Hallak et al., 2018). Specifically, this study resorts to the partial least squares (PLS) method as it enables analysis of compound and factorial models, measurement of variables and estimation of the model proposed (Hair et al., 2018). PLS-SEM stands as one of the most complete techniques for analysing models where relationships between variables are identified and their influence is measured (Van Riel et al., 2017).

The selected research setting was Rey Juan Carlos University, a Spanish public university. The Spanish public universities represent 60% of the university system; they are losing competitiveness compared to private universities and need to adopt identification and loyalty elements to survive (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2019). Moreover, these institutions need to establish the best manner to manage their intangible assets and improve market orientation (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019). Rey Juan Carlos University was chosen for several reasons: It is a young university (1996), has 38,085 students and a teaching staff of 1543 and is in Madrid, where there is great competition between university institutions to attract international students.

For data gathering, an online questionnaire was developed. In an initial stage, a pre-test was developed with 300 students to verify the scale used and to adapt the questions of the survey if necessary. The data used in this research were collected through an on-line survey from 1 May to 1 July 2018. A text was included with the questionnaires sent. In order to increase participation, the collaboration of the dean was fundamental, and the same message was published on social networks. A total number of 844 effective surveys were answered.

For measuring the constructs, the items were adapted from existing scales, with a 11-point Likert scale, where 0 refers to disagreeing very strongly and 10 refers to agreeing very strongly. Table 1 presents the variables, items and sources used in the study.

The sample was large enough to perform the analysis through PLS-SEM. Its use is also justified to investigate a novel subject on which the literature available is limited and in which many different relationships should be explored. Consequently, this technique is widely applied as an effective tool for exploratory analysis Hair et al. (2019). Using PLS-SEM is also recommended when some of the variables analysed are composed of dimensions Martínez-Navalón et al. (2019), as well as when the model proposed by Henseler (2017) is used. The PLS-SEM analysis was performed using SmartPLS 3.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Descriptive analysis

As has been indicated previously, the objective of this study was to identify how various factors influence the rating process, which in this case was dissatisfaction. The research setting chosen was the public universities in Spain, business and management degree students. After the pretest, the 844 effective surveys were completed by students.

TABLE 1 Constructs, items and sources

Variables	Items	Sources
Reputation	PERF1. It obtains lucrative job placements	Blanco-González et al. (2020); Del-Castillo-Feito et al. (2019); Miotto et al. (2020); Vidaver-Cohen (2007)
	PERF2. It has growth perspectives	
	INNO. It uses innovative teaching methods	
	CITI. It supports good causes	
	SER1. The educational offer responds to market trends	
	SER2. It trains competent students	
	SER3. It has good value for money	
	GOV. It takes its stakeholders into consideration in their management decisions	
	WORK1. My university's lecturers are competent	
	WORK2. The administrative personnel are competent	
Identification	CUL. The employees at my university know the institution's mission	Cachón-Rodríguez et al. (2021); Cachón-Rodríguez et al. (2019)
	VI1. I clearly recognise my university's logo	
	VI2. My university's visual identity faithfully represents what it is	
	VI3. The public understands my university's symbols	
	BEHA1. The actions of my university reflect their values	
	BEHA2. My university periodically reviews staff performance	
	COMU1. Through its communications, my university sends a clear, consistent message to all its public	
	COMU2. The communication strategy seeks to transmit and image that agrees with its personality	
	COMU3. At my university, there is generally good internal and external communication	
Dissatisfact.	INSAT1. I feel dissatisfied with the resources that my university has	Oliver (1980); Pascual-Nebreda et al. (2021)
	INSAT2. The experience at the university has not lived up to my expectations	
	INSAT3. In general terms, I feel dissatisfied with having chosen this university	
Trust	HON. My university fulfils its promises	Lassala et al. (2010); Martínez-Navalón et al. (2019)
	BEN. It offers advice and recommendations that benefit its interest groups	
	COM1. It takes care of its students' needs	
	COM2. The lecturers are competent	
	COM3. It has enough student knowledge to permit it to develop studies, courses or conferences, that adapt to student needs	
Loyalty	LEA1. I would encourage relatives and friends to study at my university	Baldinger and Rubinson (1996); Blanco-González et al. (2020)
	LEA2. If someone asked for advice, I would recommend my university	
	LEA3. I would surely consider my university to be the first option	
Legitimacy	PRAG1. My university provides me with some personal benefits	Chaney et al. (2016); Chung et al. (2016); Blanco-González et al. (2020); Del-Castillo-Feito et al. (2019); Díez-Martín et al. (2021); Miotto et al. (2020); Suchman (1995)
	PRAG2. It helps me to develop as a person	
	PRAG3. It satisfies my needs	
	COG1. I know about the activities that my university carries out	
	COG2. I consider that they perform them in the best possible way	
	COG3. My university is well managed	
	MOR1. My university complies with the law	
	MOR2. It behaves honestly	
	MOR3. It is socially responsible	

The distribution per gender was balanced: 41.35% male and 58.65% female, with a majority of the participants between 18 and 30 years old 72.64%.

4.2 | Measurement model analysis

The PLS-SEM analysis was developed in several steps (Hair et al., 2018). First, following the research of Rather and Hollebeek (2020), the common method bias was tested (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The measurement scale was validated, and then the structural model analysis was carried out. The measurement scale was validated twice: first with the items of the multidimensional variable and later with the dimensions already grouped. This established two models, one for first order (Tables 2 and 3) and another for second order (Table 4). In the first step, we validated the measurement scale twice. For the first-order model, all the items of the variables were reflective. Consequently, the criteria to test were individual reliability, composite reliability convergent validity and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler, 2017).

In the last step of first-order scale measurement validation, the discriminant validity was analysed (Table 3). This was performed with two analyses. The analysis was based on the Fornell and Larcker and heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) method (Hair et al., 2018; Henseler, 2017).

Once the first-order measurement scale had been validated, items of the multidimensional variable were grouped, allowing the validation of the second-order model (Table 4). In this model, the dimensions of the multidimensional variables were of an educational nature (Hair et al., 2019), so other analyses were performed to validate the second-order scale. First of all, all the criteria previously identified for reflective elements were studied. However, in the second-order model, all the items were maintained. The formative variable was analysed to rule out collinearity problems by assessing the factor of inflation on the factor of the variance VIF (Hair et al., 2018).

4.3 | Structural model analysis

Before analysing the model, it is necessary to rule out any collinearity problem (Hair et al., 2018). Table 5 indicates that hypothesis has been accepted and rejected. In general, the model has a satisfactory predictive relevance. We accepted Hypotheses 1–5.

5 | DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 | Theoretical implications

The competition in HE in the last few decades has led to universities adopting a market orientation, introducing new intangible managerial practices to increase their success (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016; Miotto et al., 2020). This management has been complex because it has

simultaneously to satisfy the requirements of various interest groups, particularly students (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019). Specifically, issues such as reputation, identity, satisfaction, trust, loyalty and legitimacy have been crucial in helping the organisations to survive and gain advantages in their industry (Balaji et al., 2016). However, there are no studies about the negative perspective (dissatisfaction) (Waqas et al., 2014). This research makes advances in the academic field by deepening the analysis of dissatisfaction (Pascual-Nebreda et al., 2021) and incorporating new variables such as organisational legitimacy (Díez-Martín et al., 2021). In this line, this study contributes to evaluation theory (Chen, 2015) by providing empirical evidence from its use in HE, and it confirms the influence of a series of antecedent variables and the consequences. It also contributes to institutional theory because it provides empirical evidence of the necessary incorporation of legitimacy in models of behaviour.

It shows how reputation (Hypothesis 1) and identity (Hypothesis 2) influence the primary evaluation of dissatisfaction, how dissatisfaction impacts trust during the secondary evaluation (Hypothesis 3) and how this influences loyalty confrontation (Hypothesis 4). Additionally, legitimacy is also included as an influencing factor of loyalty (Hypothesis 5). Reputation and identity diminish dissatisfaction. In turn, dissatisfaction negatively impacts trust, creating distrust in the service provider. This distrust likewise influences loyalty and behavioural intentions, given that the less trust a student has in the institution, the more disloyal he or she will be. Lastly, it has been confirmed that legitimacy significantly impacts how loyal a student will be to the university. The more legitimate the university is, the more the likelihood of students being loyal.

Due to the current competitive context of HE, managing intangible assets has become a differentiator. These institutions have understood the multiple benefits that a positive identity, legitimacy, trust and reputation can bring in terms of improving their competitive position (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Miotto et al., 2020). These factors can help to recover the public's trust and offer a signal of quality that makes it possible to reduce the uncertainty of stakeholders in their decision-making processes (El Nemar et al., 2020; Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001). However, despite the relevance of those intangibles in organisations, there is still a lack of empirical evidence to clarify the possible relationships that might exist among them. This is clearly due to their complexity and the diversity among universities and interest groups. Specifically, this research is the first to adopt such an integrative approach from a negative perspective, focusing on the management of dissatisfaction.

5.2 | Managerial implications

This research has empirically shown the hypotheses proposed in the HE field. It is important because public universities are facing strong competition from private institutions to capture students (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019). The results provide a set of implications for the management of the universities, which can be extended to other educational institutions. These implications suggest a few

TABLE 2 First order measurement items

Variables Reputation	Items	Loading	T-value	CA	CR	AVE
Performance	PERF1	0.915	27.66	0.811	0.915	0.843
	PERF2	0.922	61.93			
Innovation	INNO	1	-	-	-	-
Citizenship	CITI	1	-	-	-	-
Services	SER1	0.87	46.41	0.878	0.919	0.792
	SER2	0.912	16.96			
	SER3	0.876	58.55			
Governance	GOV	1	-	-	-	-
Workplace climate	WORK1	0.924	29.12	0.789	0.903	0.822
	WORK2	0.891	41.22			
Identification						
Culture	CUL	1	-	-	-	-
Visual identity	VI1	0.683	22.39	0.753	0.854	0.661
	VI2	0.843	45.97			
	VI3	0.754	21.43			
Behaviour	BEHA1	0.822	16.53	0.813	0.889	0.729
	BEHA2	0.867	62.92			
Communication	COMUN 1	0.869	26.97	0.876	0.924	0.802
	COMUN 2	0.927	14.96			
	COMUN 3	0.893	56.13			
Trust						
Honesty	HON	1	-	-	-	-
Benevolence	BEN	1	-	-	-	-
Competence	COM1	0.957	89.16	0.908	0.956	0.914
	COM2	0.944	31.58			
	COM3	0.965	65.33			
Loyalty	LEA1	0.944	128.9	0.965	0.975	0.933
	LEA2	0.966	279.9			
	LEA3	0.977	340.5			
Dissatisfaction	INSAT1	0.938	147.1	0.946	0.966	0.9
	INSAT2	0.954	233.8			
	INSAT3	0.945	176.1			
Legitimacy						
Pragmatic legitimacy	PRAG1	0.933	40.62	0.929	0.954	0.875
	PRAG2	0.954	29.00			
	PRAG3	0.929	67.09			
Cognitive legitimacy	COG1	0.823	34.54	0.838	0.903	0.757
	COG2	0.917	44.01			
	COG3	0.865	93.22			
Moral legitimacy	MOR1	0.945	65.10	0.928	0.955	0.873
	MOR2	0.971	49.65			
	MOR3	0.894	74.85			

Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; CA, Cronbach's alpha; CR, composite reliability.

lines of action that would favour universities by reducing student dissatisfaction and achieving more stable and long-term relationships. First, HE managers must be conscious of how important reputation and university identity are in student satisfaction. The managers must emphasise actions that reinforce the image they want to transmit according to the institution's personality, hiring competent employees,

TABLE 3 First-order model measurement (discriminant validity)

VARIABLE	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
(1) Trust_Ben	**1**	0.76	0.72	0.77	0.58	0.55	0.68	0.75	0.67	0.7	0.65	0.67	0.61	0.48	0.56	0.59	0.67	0.63
(2) Trust_Com	0.72	**0.95**	0.83	0.87	0.59	0.5	0.7	0.9	0.81	0.8	0.75	0.73	0.69	0.48	0.69	0.69	0.77	0.78
(3) Trust_Hon	0.72	0.79	**1**	0.81	0.62	0.5	0.72	0.88	0.77	0.78	0.74	0.76	0.65	0.48	0.62	0.65	0.72	0.71
(4) Id_Beh	0.69	0.75	0.72	**0.85**	0.76	0.58	0.8	0.83	0.76	0.87	0.81	0.76	0.77	0.59	0.70	0.70	0.77	0.82
(5) Id_Cult.	0.58	0.56	0.61	0.68	**1**	0.47	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.64	0.5	0.57	0.54	0.45	0.47	0.49	0.57	0.59
(6) Id_Vi	0.51	0.43	0.48	0.48	0.41	**0.81**	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.59	0.61	0.41	0.35	0.42	0.57	0.53
(7) Id_Com	0.63	0.64	0.67	0.66	0.62	0.59	**0.89**	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.64	0.58	0.46	0.57	0.56	0.63	0.61
(8) Disssatisf	−0.71	−0.81	−0.85	−0.73	−0.59	−0.51	−0.65	**0.94**	0.9	0.8	0.76	0.85	0.72	0.51	0.64	0.73	0.81	0.80
(9) Loyalty	0.64	0.76	0.75	0.67	0.50	0.43	0.56	−0.84	**0.96**	0.7	0.8	0.72	0.67	0.44	0.59	0.65	0.74	0.72
(10) Leg_Cog	0.63	0.69	0.71	0.72	0.59	0.46	0.66	−0.7	0.68	**0.87**	0.8	0.74	0.73	0.61	0.69	0.71	0.75	0.76
(11) Leg_Moral	0.62	0.69	0.71	0.70	0.49	0.40	0.56	−0.71	0.73	0.75	**0.93**	0.70	0.67	0.52	0.71	0.67	0.73	0.75
(12) Leg_Prag	0.64	0.67	0.74	0.66	0.55	0.52	0.58	−0.80	0.69	0.65	0.66	**0.93**	0.70	0.54	0.58	0.68	0.79	0.78
(13) Rep_Perf	0.55	0.59	0.59	0.62	0.49	0.49	0.49	−0.63	0.59	0.60	0.58	0.61	**0.91**	0.63	0.65	0.72	0.89	0.82
(14) Rep_Cit	0.48	0.45	0.48	0.53	0.45	0.36	0.43	−0.50	0.43	0.56	0.5	0.52	0.57	**1**	0.52	0.50	0.67	0.56
(15) Rep_Gov	0.55	0.66	0.61	0.63	0.47	0.33	0.53	−0.62	0.57	0.64	0.68	0.55	0.58	0.51	**1**	0.63	0.70	0.69
(16) Rep_Inno	0.58	0.65	0.64	0.62	0.49	0.40	0.52	−0.70	0.63	0.65	0.64	0.66	0.65	0.49	0.63	**1**	0.81	0.79
(17) Rep_Serv	0.62	0.68	0.67	0.64	0.52	0.47	0.54	−0.73	0.68	0.64	0.65	0.71	0.74	0.62	0.66	0.76	**0.89**	0.89
(18) Rep_Work	0.55	0.65	0.63	0.65	0.52	0.42	0.50	−0.69	0.62	0.61	0.63	0.67	0.65	0.49	0.61	0.71	0.74	**0.91**

Note: Values in bold indicate irrelevance.

TABLE 4 Second-order measurement model of the formative construct

Variables	Dimensions	Weights	T-value	VIF
Reputation	RPPERF. Performance	0.068	2.183	2.547
	RPIN. Innovation	0.287	4.469	2.756
	RPCSR. Citizenship	0.016	2.330	1.748
	RPSER. Services	0.393	4.661	3.989
	RPGOV. Governance	0.151	3.540	2.126
	RPWORK. Workplace climate	0.279	4.574	2.678
Identity	BEHA. Behaviour	0.601	9.300	2.343
	CUL. Culture	0.128	2.054	2.155
	VI. Visual	0.163	3.086	1.59
	COMUN. Communication	0.276	3.929	2.368
Trust	HON. Honesty	0.558	10.799	3.066
	BEN. Benevolence	0.140	2.323	2.458
	COM. Competence	0.426	7.632	3.062
Legitimacy	PRAG. Pragmatic	0.4	7.565	1.983
	MOR. Moral	0.527	9.089	2.616
	COG. Cognitive	0.208	3.389	2.644

Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; VIF, variance inflation factor.

TABLE 5 Structural relations

Hypothesis	Loadings	T-value	F^2
Hypothesis 1. Reputation → dissatisfaction	−0.795	13.092	0.352
Hypothesis 2. Identity → dissatisfaction	−0.772	10.359	0.234
Hypothesis 3. Dissatisfaction → trust	−0.887	75.077	3.698
Hypothesis 4. Trust → loyalty	0.803	8.323	0.234
Hypothesis 5. Loyalty → legitimacy	0.793	7.478	0.158

Note: Dissatisfaction: $R^2 = 0.702$; $Q^2 = 0.625$; trust: $R^2 = 0.787$; $Q^2 = 0.634$; loyalty: $R^2 = 0.693$; $Q^2 = 0.641$; Legitimacy: $R^2 = 0.736$; $Q^2 = 0.692$.

developing good internal and external communication, etc. They have to prioritise strategies that strengthen the institution's reputation and the identity of students in the institution. Building a solid reputation requires long-term decisions at the institution to be aligned with the strategy, organisational culture and corporate communication (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). Managers must understand how students and other stakeholders want to perceive their institution. As for identity, an all-encompassing focus on high commitment for human resource management would improve the organisational identification and would result in mutual benefits for both students and institution (Latorre et al., 2016).

Second, if the students are dissatisfied, this would generate distrust among them that could become disloyalty towards the institution. They would carry out negative behaviours of active confrontation, such as producing negative word-of-mouth comments, not returning to their courses, etc. For this reason, a student's trust would increase when his or her perception of possessing appropriate knowledge and information is high and when the experiences with the institution are positive. The managers should ensure that their institution offers programmes and services efficiently and effectively and that student expectations are fulfilled, with periodic revisions

using surveys or workgroups with students. For example, a news item focused on highlighting the quality of the products and services would permit trust in the institution to be strengthened (Kharouf et al., 2015). The students need information that confirms that the institution is competent, believable and ethical. Along these lines, legitimacy is fundamental for the universities, given that if the institution is legitimate, it will have a strong competitive advantage that will influence loyalty and behaviour intentions positively. HE institutions should make an effort to improve themselves and to build relationships with students by using the application of relationship marketing methods, important factors in the educational environment of the 21st century or the Covid context that involve providing assessment and personalised comments to the interest groups.

Third, to the extent to which these aspects are taken into consideration in a holistic approximation, a stronger link with students would be achieved, becoming a differential factor in a context marked by strong competition. Making sure these students have high loyalty levels towards the university will make it possible to ensure future relationships and contribute to present and future success, survival and the institution's economic development. To achieve this objective, students must realise that the university has the resources and means

to offer the services that they demand: good personnel and installations, a strategic plan appropriate for training and university careers and the identification of students with a highly prestigious institution. An interesting idea is the deployment of a community, establishing long-term ties between students, staff and other stakeholders; but graduates should also be included, encouraging a rational and emotional link that also has services and benefits for its members.

5.3 | Limitations and future research lines

The limitations of this research were that the sample was from a single Spanish public university and that it is necessary to analyse the different stakeholders. Future research should incorporate these stakeholders and a disaggregation and comparison of results. Consequently, it is necessary to continue advancing in this setting to create a more profound theoretical body that makes it possible to understand how the management of institutions with such importance in modern societies have to develop and how university administrators can increase identification, reputation, trust and loyalty and diminish dissatisfaction in a time marked by the effects of Covid-19.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
None.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
N/A.

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