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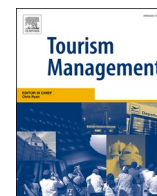
Dual perspective on the role of xenophobia in service sabotage

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the literature by examining xenophobia among tourism employees and its relationship with service sabotage, which was not previously explored. Two studies are conducted. A survey study is conducted with 194 frontline employees working in tourism, and 297 tourists participated in an experimental study. Based on the findings, xenophobia mediates the relationship between employee community attachment and service sabotage, with employees' moral identity and emotional regulation influencing this relationship. Furthermore, tourists' desire for revenge when experiencing service sabotage is both directly and indirectly affected by the attributions of cultural differences and discrimination. Notably, if tourists attribute the sabotage to xenophobia, this will not increase the desire for revenge. This research advances the understanding of the complex dynamics among employee xenophobia, service sabotage, and customer revenge in tourism.

1. Introduction

Despite significant positive changes that have shaped lives and brought meaningful progress in the world (World Bank, 2022), xenophobia remains an omnipresent phenomenon (Gyimothy et al., 2022; Liger & Guhteil, 2022) that has not lessened (Kock et al., 2020). On the contrary, it is a persistent problem that seriously affects people's lives, prosperity, well-being, and security (Liger & Guhteil, 2022).

As tourism is a particularly vulnerable context for xenophobia (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019), tourism research demonstrates a recent interest in the phenomenon (e.g., Gyimothy et al., 2022; Zenker et al., 2021). Kock, Josiassen, and Assaf (2019) coined the term "xenophobic tourist" (p. 55), capturing the discomfort and anxiety experienced by tourists in relation to strangers they encounter in foreign destinations. Following Kock, Josiassen, and Assaf (2019), a small set of well-crafted studies (Gyimothy et al., 2022; Kock et al., 2020; Zenker et al., 2021) has further addressed the xenophobia of tourists. But tourism also assumes the two-way interaction of tourists with frontline employees, where the employees themselves may not be immune to xenophobia (Mubangizi, 2021). In spite of this, no study has yet explored the possible xenophobic attitudes of frontline employees specifically in tourism, or in service industries in general. Our study addresses this gap by investigating not the xenophobic tourist but the xenophobic frontline employee

interacting with tourists (Kock et al., 2019a, 2020). Thus, we define xenophobia of frontline employees as the discomfort and anxiety they experience in relation to foreigners, with whom they interact in service encounters.

This study aims to understand how xenophobia manifests itself in service encounters characterized by employee service sabotage. Service sabotage comprises "deliberately deviant behaviors by service employees intentionally designed to adversely influence functional service encounters" (Zhou et al., 2018, p. 172). Service sabotage is more common than it was once thought to be (Harris, 2012; Lee & Ok, 2014), especially in tourism (Zhou et al., 2018). As such, it has severe economic and non-economic implications for businesses (Harris & Ogbonna, 2009) and for tourist destinations (Hu et al., 2020). Thus, unraveling its unknown antecedents (such as xenophobia of frontline employees), which we do in Study 1, is becoming crucial. However, frontline employees in tourism are attached (to a varying degree) to the community where they work. Study 1 considers this attachment, showing how the attachment of frontline employees to their communities may contribute to their ability to overcome potential xenophobia.

As mentioned previously, service encounters involve two-way interaction. As a result, to fully understand the role of xenophobia in service sabotage (Study 1), we also have to examine tourists' attribution of experienced service sabotage (Study 2). This refers to their

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understanding of the underlying reasons for service sabotage.

This research contributes to the tourism literature in several ways. First, it offers a novel framing of service employee xenophobia into the nomological network of service sabotage. Despite its widespread presence in the world today and the interest of policymakers and practitioners (Liger & Guhteil, 2022), xenophobia has not been documented in research on frontline employees in tourism. Second, we extend the literature on service sabotage, which usually focuses solely on the employee's perspective (e.g., Yue et al., 2021), to the tourist's perspective by providing insight into both sides of service encounters.

2. Literature review

2.1. Xenophobia

Xenophobia is a long-standing (Shahabi Sorman Abadi et al., 2011) negative inclination toward, or even denigration of, members of an out-group based on perceived differences that may be real or imagined (Faulkner et al., 2004). Some of these differences can be identified by cues, such as skin color, behavior, or language (Gyimothy et al., 2022). Once differences are identified and xenophobic attitudes created, xenophobia maintains a distancing mechanism from the out-groups. This dysfunctional mechanism has recently been reinforced by the closing of national borders worldwide to prevent disease contagion (Shahabi Sorman Abadi et al., 2021). This has implicitly suggested to citizens that discomfort in regard to out-groups (i.e., foreigners) is legitimate and socially acceptable. However, beyond the context of health and disease avoidance (Faulkner et al., 2004), xenophobia is also observed in other contexts, including migration (Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999; Yakushko, 2009), marketing (Gillespie et al., 2002; Hakan Altintaş & Tokol, 2007), and tourism (Gyimothy et al., 2022; Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019; Kock et al., 2020; Zenker et al., 2021).

Within the context of our paper, we focus on tourism and marketing to provide a literature review (Table 1) of studies that address xenophobia. The literature review shows that xenophobia is associated with ethnocentrism (Hakan Altintaş & Tokol, 2007), avoidance of products linked with certain sociocultural groups (Hogg et al., 2009), and avoidance of international travel (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019). Although tourists with higher levels of xenophobia do travel, they feel vulnerable and uncomfortable when interacting with foreigners. As a result, they are more likely to purchase travel insurance, travel in groups, avoid local food (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019), or simply prioritize domestic destinations (Gyimothy et al., 2022). Kock et al. (2020) showed that tourist xenophobia can be fueled by the threat of a pathogen, as was the case with the recent pandemic.

Although limited in number, the identified promising studies in tourism (Gyimothy et al., 2022; Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019; Kock et al., 2020; Zenker et al., 2021) all focus on tourists and their xenophobic attitudes. However, frontline employees in tourism can also be xenophobic. Thus, our research builds on previous knowledge on xenophobic tourists to investigate the xenophobia of frontline employees in tourism. Drawing upon our literature review (Hogg et al., 2009; Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019), we theorize that xenophobic frontline service employees will exhibit avoidance behavior during service encounters. This behavior can manifest itself in various ways, such as minimizing eye contact with tourists or slowing down the service process, or rushing the tourists, which are all considered forms of service sabotage.

2.2. Service sabotage

In tourism, service sabotage may include omitting prosocial behaviors (e.g., not helping a lost tourist) (Tung, 2021), offering small food portions (Li et al., 2021), slowing down the service (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002), mistreating customers (Boukis et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2020), blaming tourists when something goes wrong (Yeh, 2015), failing in service recovery (Peng et al., 2021), overcharging tourists (Harris,

Table 1
Overview of studies on xenophobia[a] in marketing and tourism.

Studies	Journal Outlet	Field	Underpinning Theory	Xenophobic Perspective		Key Insights
				Consumers/ Tourists	Firms/ Employees	
Gillespie et al. (2002)	Journal of International Marketing	**Marketing**	Not clearly specified	✓		It was not possible to identify xenophobia within any group of countries in terms of participation in contracts and implementation of national trademark law.
Hakan Altintaş & Tokol (2007)	Marketing Intelligence and Planning		Personal identity theory	✓		Xenophobia has a strong association with consumer ethnocentrism.
Lazaridis & Wickens (1999)	Annals of Tourism Research	**Tourism**	Dual labor market theory	✓		Albanian migrant workers in Greece experience inferior treatment compared to Western tourist-workers, highlighting the presence of xenophobia toward this ethnic minority group.
Kock, Josiassen, and Assaf (2019)	Annals of Tourism Research		Evolutionary psychology	✓		A reliable, valid, and simplified scale for xenophobia in tourism was developed, and its significance was empirically demonstrated.
Kock et al. (2020)	Annals of Tourism Research		Evolutionary tourism paradigm	✓		Xenophobia can be fueled by the threat of a pathogen, as was the case with the coronavirus pandemic, and it plays an important role in tourists' behavior.
Zenker et al. (2021)	Tourism Management		Regulation focus theory	✓		The concept of xenophobia is different from pandemic travel anxiety and is negatively correlated with intention to travel.
Gyimothy et al. (2022)	Tourism Management		Evolutionary psychology; Self-protection theory	✓		Coronavirus anxiety triggers assortative sociality, reflecting both xenophobic and ethnocentric traits. Xenophobic traits influence citizens' attitudes toward supporting the domestic tourism industry.
Present study	Tourism Management		Social identity theory; Attribution theory	✓	✓	Xenophobia is one of the drivers of service sabotage. Further, xenophobia attributions of service sabotage do not affect tourists' revenge intentions.

[a] Only studies published in journals rated at least 3 by the Academic Journal Guide are included in Table 1 to ensure that only publications with high standards for rigor and quality are considered (Hiebl, 2023).

2012), or expressing frustration and negative emotions towards tourists (Meng & Choi, 2021). Although service sabotage takes many different forms, the uniting factors are that service employees deliver a lower quality of service than would normally be acceptable and that customers are directly affected by this (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). A review of prior research on service sabotage in journals rated at least 3 by the Academic Journal Guide (see Table 2) revealed that three perspectives have been used to explain the motives for service sabotage, as follows: 1) the retaliation perspective, 2) the resource protection perspective, and 3) the attachment perspective.

First, the *retaliation perspective* is the dominant theoretical approach to studying service sabotage in tourism. In customer-to-employee social interactions, frontline employees may intentionally engage in service sabotage to retaliate against dysfunctional (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002; Li et al., 2021) and subversive (Wilson et al., 2022) customers, who may seek to harm employees and/or the brand. In these situations, service employees engage in service sabotage to restore their own self-esteem and self-worth (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002; Lee & Ok, 2014).

Second, the *resource protection perspective* is prevalent in the field of human resources and relies on the conservation of resources theory. It proposes that frontline employees may engage in service sabotage because they feel mentally (Dahling, 2017) and/or emotionally exhausted (Sommovigo et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018) or stressed from excessive job/work demands (Dahling, 2017) and/or family demands (Cheng et al., 2019). To cope with these demands and to preserve their remaining cognitive, emotional (Sommovigo et al., 2020), and physical (Meng & Choi, 2021) resources, frontline employees reduce their service effort through service sabotage.

Third, the *attachment-related perspective* has received limited research attention in the tourism literature. This perspective suggests that a person's attachment or identification with a given entity (e.g., their local community) reduces their tendency to engage in service sabotage due to their consideration of the economic benefits received by the given community when customers/tourists are satisfied (Ma et al., 2021;

Table 2
Theoretical perspectives on service sabotage motives.

Theoretical perspective on service sabotage	Focus	Underpinning theories	Antecedents	Studies	Service sabotage perspective	
					Service employees	Consumers/ tourists
Retaliation perspective	Service sabotage as direct revenge against misbehaving customers	Emotional contagion theory	Customer mistreatment (+)	Sommovigo et al. (2020); Walker et al. (2014)	✓	
		Frustration–aggression theory	Customer incivility (+)	Cheng et al. (2020)	✓	
		Deontic theory	Customer interactional justice (+)	Dahling (2017)	✓	
		Cognitive appraisal theory	Customer anger (+)	Li et al. (2021)	✓	
		Cognitive–motivational–relational theory	Customer mistreatment (+), anger (+)	Chen & Wu (2022)	✓	
		Social exchange theory	Customer injustice (+)	van Jaarsveld et al. (2016)	✓	
		Cultural value framework	Customer incivility (+), forgiveness (−), vengeance (+)	Balaji et al. (2020)	✓	
Resource conservation perspective	Service sabotage as a way to preserve emotional and physical resources	Conservation of resources theory	Job burnout (+)	Lee & Ok (2014); Meng & Choi (2021)	✓	
			Emotional dissonance (+)	Lee & Ok (2014)	✓	
			Job demands (+)	van Jaarsveld et al. (2010)	✓	
			Customer mistreatment (+)	Wang et al. (2011)	✓	
			Dysfunctional customer attitude/behavior (+)	Boukis et al. (2020)	✓	
			Empowering supervision (−), work engagement (−)	Zhou et al. (2018)	✓	
			Customer aggression (+)	Walker et al. (2017)	✓	
Attachment-related perspective *(The focus of this study)*	Service sabotage demonstrating disaffiliation or affiliation with a given organization/community	Social identity theory	Parent attachment (−), colleague attachment (−)	Meng & Choi (2021)	✓	
		Psychological contract breach	Psychological contract breach (+), abusive supervision (+)	Park & Kim (2019)	✓	
		Psychological contract breach	Customer-caused stressor (+), supervisor-caused stressor (*ns*)	Kao et al. (2014)	✓	
		Psychological contract breach	Colleague-caused stressor (*ns*)	Kao et al. (2014)	✓	
		Affective event theory	Customer negative event (+), state hostility (+)	Chi et al. (2013)	✓	
		Social exchange theory	Positive leader–member exchange (−)	Dai et al. (2016)	✓	
		Social exchange theory	Customer justice (−), supervisor justice (−), moral identity (−)	Skarlicki et al. (2016)	✓	
		Social identity theory; Attribution theory	Community attachment (+), tourist xenophobia (−)	Present study	✓	✓

Note: "+" refers to a positive effect; "−" refers to a negative effect; and "*ns*" refers to a non-significant effect.

Zhang et al., 2018). The attachment (e.g., to family and friends [Meng & Choi, 2021] or to country or community [Kabadayi, 2019]) reduces the tendency to engage in service sabotage because it offers positive emotional resources that protect against various stressors and negative emotions encountered (Boukis et al., 2020).

Considering the escalating polarization in the world (Smith & Korschun, 2018) and the prevailing climate of insecurity and fear (Gyimothy et al., 2022), which intensifies the emphasis on in-groups and familiar communities (O'Malley et al., 2023), it becomes imperative to reexamine the attachment-related perspective. Therefore, this paper extends the existing literature on the attachment-related perspective of service sabotage to tourism management. Through the theoretical lens of social identity theory, it examines the complex relationship among community attachment, xenophobia, and service sabotage. It also considers possible conditioning factors in the form of self-control.

3. Overview of the studies

As this paper explores the role of xenophobia in service sabotage from the dual perspectives of frontline employees and tourists, it consists of two studies, which have separate theoretical backgrounds (i.e., social identity theory and attribution theory), as per Table 3. Study 1 focuses on the driving mechanisms of service sabotage, and Study 2 disentangles the tourists' understanding and reaction to service sabotage (Fig. 1).

We have developed two conceptual models for the two studies, both of which are presented in Fig. 1. The left side of Fig. 1 shows the conceptual model tested in Study 1, which aims to explain the service sabotage, with employee xenophobia playing an important mediating role. On the right side of Fig. 1 is the conceptual model tested in Study 2, which disentangles the consequences of service sabotage, namely tourists' attributions of the causes of service sabotage and subsequent desire for revenge.

In the following sections, we present Study 1, anchored in social identity theory, followed by the hypotheses and results. The same structure is then followed for Study 2, which is anchored in attribution theory.

4. Study 1: role of xenophobia in service sabotage behavior of frontline employees

4.1. Social identity theory

Social identity theory posits that individuals tend to categorize others into in-groups and out-groups in order to enhance their self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tung, 2021). This categorization process involves one's aligning personal goals and behaviors with those of in-group members (Skarlicki et al., 2008) with the objective of contributing to the success of the in-group (Harris & Ogbonna, 2006). Consequently, attachment to an in-group (i.e., community or neighbors) is likely to reduce a person's inclination to engage in behaviors (i.e., service sabotage) that are detrimental to the group's interests (Meng & Choi, 2021). Conversely, inter-group biased behavior (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019) (i.e., service sabotage) is triggered when individuals encounter others who are perceived as different (Tung, 2021) or who are seen as posing a potential threat to the in-group (Reed & Aquino, 2003).

Anchored in social identity theory, the role of self-control (i.e., moral identity and emotional regulation) is also acknowledged due to its role in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors in interactions with out-

groups. First, *moral identity* refers to the evaluation of situations, courses of action, people, or behaviors as morally right or morally wrong. It provides guidance and a reference point for individuals to assess their own actions and behaviors in relation to the moral values of their group or community (Henle et al., 2005). Moral identity mitigates fears and threats associated with out-groups (Reed & Aquino, 2003). Second, *emotional regulation* is the ability to induce, control, or restrain one's own emotions (Wong & Law, 2002). It helps to regulate emotions and feelings in interactions with out-group members in service encounters (Chi et al., 2015). Therefore, the conceptual model captures the role of emotional regulation and moral identity in service sabotage.

4.2. Hypotheses of study 1

Social group members tend to feel more at ease with individuals from their own in-group and may exhibit resistance toward out-group members, such as foreigners (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Moreover, some individuals may even avoid social interactions when they perceive threats associated with out-group members (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019; Reed & Aquino, 2003). In the context of our study, this implies that xenophobic tendencies among frontline employees toward foreigners (i.e., tourists) may prompt them to engage in service sabotage behaviors as a means of controlling the perceived risks associated with interacting with foreigners.

However, it is important to acknowledge that frontline employees also possess varying degrees of attachment to the community in which they operate. *Community attachment* refers to the extent and pattern of social participation, integration into the community, and sentiment or affect toward the community (McCool & Martin, 1994). We anticipate that community attachment does not foster attitudes that are contrary to the achievement of community goals, including the economic benefits derived from tourism activities. As a result, frontline employees attached to the community may be more welcoming toward tourists due to the economic dependency of their community on tourism (Eslami et al., 2019; McCool & Martin, 1994). This reduces xenophobic tendencies and diminishes the likelihood of service sabotage (Meng & Choi, 2021). This implies a negative mediation effect of xenophobia on the relationship between community attachment and service sabotage, as community attachment may provide frontline employees with extrinsic motivation to overcome and manage their xenophobic fears concerning tourists. Therefore, we hypothesized the following:

H1. There is an association between community attachment and service sabotage mediated by xenophobia.

Social identity theory implies that the disfavoring of out-groups may be self-regulated by individual moral identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, Reed and Aquino (2003) found that following September 11, 2001, Americans who exhibited high levels of moral identity were more willing to donate money to disadvantaged women and children in the Middle East than those with low levels of moral identity. This was attributed to their greater likelihood of overcoming inter-group biases and fears and their ability to treat out-group members fairly.

Moral identity offers guidance and a benchmark for an individual's actions and behaviors in regard to what is right or wrong (Henle et al., 2005). It provides a buffer against tendencies to violate socially acceptable moral norms (Barclay et al., 2014). To this end, it facilitates positive "attitudes toward out-group members by recategorizing them

Table 3
Overview of the empirical research.

| Study	Purpose	Underpinning theory	Research design	Sample
Study 1	To understand the role of frontline employees' self-control and community attachment in service sabotage.	Social identity theory	Survey design	194 frontline employees in tourism
Study 2	To understand how tourists perceive the reasons for service sabotage and how they act in regard to it.	Attribution theory	Experimental design	297 tourists
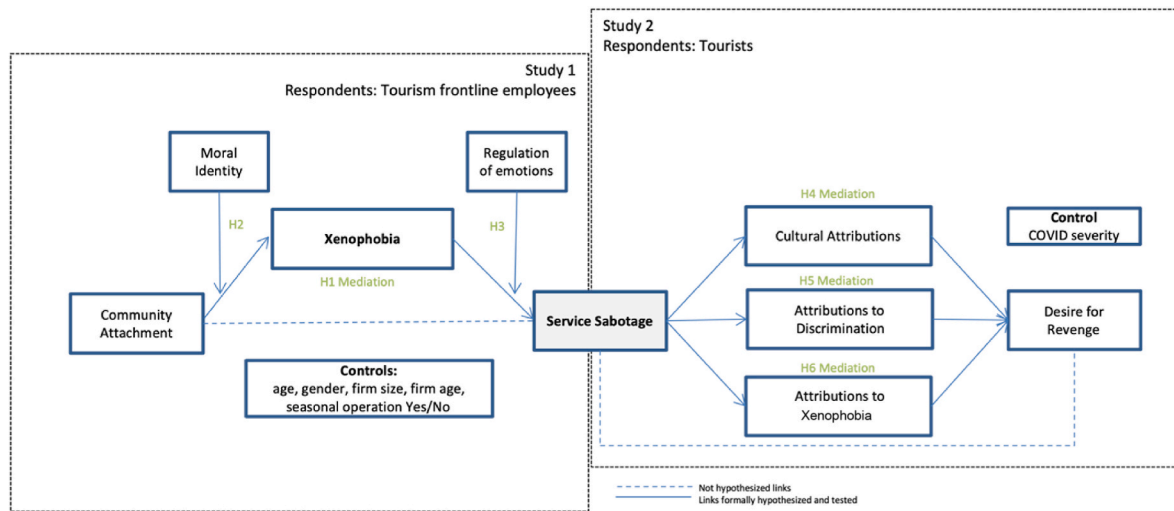
Fig. 1. Conceptual models tested in Study 1 and Study 2.

from out-to in-group" (Reed & Aquino, 2003, p. 1238). Prior research has found that moral identity safeguards against retaliatory behaviors (Bavik & Bavik, 2015; Kao & Cheng, 2017). Similarly, frontline employees who are attached to their community and exhibit higher levels of moral identity are expected to experience the synergizing effects of community attachment and moral identity. Their community attachment and moral identity should work together to control any potential discomfort and anxiety they may feel in relation to foreigners as out-groups (e.g., Madupalli & Poddar, 2014). Consequently, xenophobia induced by community attachment should be less likely to lead to service sabotage. Thus, we hypothesized the following:

H2. The relationship between community attachment and service sabotage is mediated by the xenophobia, but this relationship is moderated by moral identity, so that for individuals with high moral identity, the negative effect of community attachment on xenophobia is strengthened.

Emotions define individuals and distinguish them from others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and can facilitate or even block the flow of social interaction (Kidwell & Hasford, 2014). However, emotions are volatile; they are not only passively experienced and expressed but often regulated (Izard, 1990) through emotional regulation which is a relatively stable ability. Emotional regulation serves as a buffer against various stressors (Wang et al., 2011), daily negative moods (Chi et al., 2015), emotional dissonance (Lee & Ok, 2014), and social conflicts (Li et al., 2021).

Frontline employees with high emotional regulation abilities tend to be able to correct and control their emotions (Chi et al., 2015) in service interactions. Therefore, this study theorizes about the role of emotional regulation for frontline employees who have already developed xenophobic tendencies. Employees with high levels of emotional regulation might strategically opt to express their xenophobic attitudes through covert means of service sabotage rather than more overt forms of deviant counterproductive behavior (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). By regulating their negative emotions such as discomfort and anxiety towards tourists and maintaining a calm demeanor, service sabotage will become a means of expressing their xenophobic attitudes.

Employees with xenophobic tendencies may also experience internal conflict between their biases against tourists and their obligation to provide quality service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In this way, emotional regulation enables them to manage these internal conflicts, such as their desire to express their xenophobic attitudes with their awareness that something like that is unacceptable in their local communities, tourism industries, etc. Thus, service sabotage can provide a playground for expressing their xenophobic attitudes, allowing them to harm tourists indirectly while

maintaining an outward appearance of adherence to the community's social norms. Accordingly, by building on H1 further, we hypothesize that:

H3. The relationship between community attachment and service sabotage is mediated by xenophobia, but the regulation of emotions moderates this relationship, such that for individuals with a higher ability to regulate their emotions, xenophobia positive effect on service sabotage is strengthened.

4.3. Study 1: research methodology

4.3.1. Research design and sample

Study 1's data were gathered from frontline employees in the tourism industry, such as tour guides and employees of restaurants and hotels. To collect the data, we collaborated with regional tourism bureaus in Bosnia and Herzegovina (N = 12), which were contacted and asked to facilitate the data collection. Once their participation in the study had been confirmed, all tourism bureaus that agreed to collaborate on this research project (N = 6) were sent an e-mail with a cover letter and a link to an online survey, which was then forwarded to the frontline employees registered in the bureaus' respective databases. In order to encourage candid responses to the survey items, the employees were assured that their participation would be treated confidentially. A period of 15 days was allotted for the respondents to complete the questionnaire.

To calculate the sample size needed to test our hypotheses and to achieve sufficient statistical power to detect medium effects in our complex model, we used G*Power (Faul et al., 2009). To capture medium effect sizes with 95% power and a one-tailed test, the required number of observations was 74. After two reminders, in accordance with Dillman's (2011) process, 194 surveys were validly submitted, which was sufficiently above the limit needed to provide sufficient statistical power to detect medium effects in our model.

The majority of respondents were employed by companies operating year-round (82.5%), while only 17.5% were associated with seasonal operations. On average, the companies had been established for 13 years (SD = 1.18). The gender distribution among the respondents was almost equal, with 48.3% being men and 51.7% being women. The largest age groups were 35–44 (32.5%) and 18–34 years old (32%). To evaluate non-response bias, we conducted a comparison between early and late respondents in relation to the study constructs. The analysis revealed no significant differences between these two groups (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Blair & Zinkhan, 2006).

4.3.2. Measures used in study 1

Xenophobia was assessed using a four-item reflective scale adapted

from the scale developed by Kock, Josiassen, and Assaf (2019), which has been previously implemented in tourism studies (e.g., Gyimothy et al., 2022; Kock et al., 2020; Zenker et al., 2021). The items from Kock, Josiassen, and Assaf (2019) were modified to align with the context of frontline service employees. The adapted items were reviewed by an international panel of ten academics specializing in marketing and tourism, each with extensive experience in academia (Mean = 17 years, S.D. = 6.1 years). The panel members expressed high confidence in their knowledge and ability to evaluate the adapted items (Mean = 4.1 out of 5, S.D. = 1.1). Eight out of the ten academics agreed that the adapted items adequately or somewhat adequately captured the construct of xenophobia among frontline service employees. We measured service sabotage with the scale by Harris and Ogbonna (2006). Moral identity was measured with semantical differentiation items adopted from Reidenbach and Robin (1990). Community attachment was measured with items from Gursoy et al. (2010), while the regulation of emotions was measured with items developed by Wong and Law (2002). All items were measured on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The survey instrument (Appendix A) was first developed in English; it was then translated into the Bosnian language by a professional translator. Next, another (independent) translator performed a back translation to English. Finally, the survey was administered in the Bosnian language.

Based on the observed skewness and kurtosis values of the items (see Appendix A), we concluded that the data distribution in Study 1 was moderately non-normal (Finney & DiStefano, 2006). Therefore, the maximum likelihood method (MLM) estimator was employed in a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted in mPlus to assess the measurement properties. Appendix A reports the results of CFA, including the values for the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE), which were higher than the benchmark values (CR = 0.6, AVE = 0.5). In addition, the CFA results revealed an acceptable model fit, as follows: $\chi^2(df) = 210.99\ (94)$, $p = 0.00$; comparative fit index = 0.939; Tucker–Lewis index = 0.922; standardized root mean square residual = 0.044; and root mean square error of approximation = 0.080. We also tested the discriminant validity of each latent variable using two methods. We first checked that no item contributed to a variable other than its own. We then applied Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria and checked that the variance extracted in each construct was higher than the square of its correlations with other constructs. Table 4 reports the descriptive statistics and correlations among the constructs.

To mitigate common method bias, we implemented various procedural and statistical remedies (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In order to reduce the chances of respondents identifying items underlying the same factors, we randomized the order of the reflective items and modified the question anchors whenever feasible. Additionally, we explicitly informed participants that there were no right or wrong answers, and we encouraged them to freely express their opinions. To evaluate the potential influence of common method variance on our findings, we conducted a Harman one-factor analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results of this analysis confirmed that it was improbable for a single general factor to account for the majority of covariance among the measures. Thus, it is unlikely that the data suffered from common method bias.

4.3.3. Results of study 1

To estimate the hypotheses, we used conditional process analysis (Hayes, 2018), which allows for the estimation of complex relationships whereby certain variables within a model can operate simultaneously as independent variables, mediators, and/or moderators of particular effects (Hayes, 2018). Specifically, we applied the PROCESS routine in the SPSS software, using Model 4 (includes mediation of only the path from X to Y via M) and Model 21 (includes moderation of the paths from X to M by W and from M to Y by Z) for moderated mediation (with 5000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals).

To start, to test whether xenophobia mediates the relationship between community attachment and service sabotage (H1), we applied Model 4 of PROCESS. The results (refer to Table 5) revealed a significant negative effect of community attachment on xenophobia (b = −0.144, SE = 0.069, $p = 0.038$, 95% CI: −0.279 to −0.008) and a significant positive effect of xenophobia on service sabotage (b = 0.229, SE = 0.071, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.090 to 0.369). In addition, a 95% bootstrap CI for the indirect effect of community attachment on service sabotage through xenophobia, using 5000 bootstrap samples, had a 95% CI of −0.083 to −0.002. Therefore, 2.5% of the 5000 bootstrap estimates were smaller than −0.083, and 2.5% were larger than −0.002. As this CI was entirely below zero, it supported the conclusion that the indirect effect was significant, supporting H1.

Next, to test H2 and H3, we applied multiple moderated mediation Model 21 of PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The results in Table 6 show the moderation effects of both moral identity (b = 0.182, SE = 0.082, $p = 0.027$, 95% CI: 0.021 to 0.343) and regulation of emotions (b = 0.173, SE = 0.085, p = 0.045, 95% CI: 0.004 to 0.341). In addition, the index of multiple moderated mediation was significant (95% CI: 0.001 to 0.081); that, together with significant interaction effects, provided solid support for H2 and H3.

We plot the interaction effects in Figs. 2 and 3. Fig. 2 demonstrates that community attachment consistently decreases xenophobic attitudes towards tourists among frontline employees regardless of their level of moral identity. By contrast, in situations of low community attachment, moral identity becomes the primary factor in regulating frontline employees' xenophobic tendencies. There is a noticeable difference in xenophobic tendencies between employees with high and low moral identities in such cases. As Fig. 3 shows, higher regulation of emotions increases service sabotage at higher levels of xenophobia. At the same time, higher regulation of emotions decreases service sabotage at lower levels of xenophobia.

To further test conditional mediation, we conducted analyses of both conditional effects on the indirect relationship between community attachment and service sabotage via xenophobia. The results of our analyses are presented in Table 7, which provides effect size estimates and CIs for the conditional indirect effects of community attachment on service sabotage, through xenophobia, at four different combinations of moral identity and regulation of emotions. As shown in Table 7, the indirect effect of community attachment on service sabotage (indirect effect = −0.071, 95% CI: −0.161 to −0.008), through xenophobia, was significant when both moral identity and regulation of emotions were low. In addition, the same indirect path (indirect effect = −0.146, 95%

Table 4
Descriptive statistics and correlations of latent variables (Study 1).

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Xenophobia	3.37	1.81	**0.785**	0.038	0.003	0.045	0.022
2	Service sabotage	2.08	1.41	0.195**	**0.610**	0.002	0.001	0.009
3	Regulation of emotions	2.43	1.53	−0.051	−0.040	**0.673**	0.002	0.040
4	Moral identity	3.25	2.05	−0.211**	0.035	−0.048	**0.864**	0.129
5	Community attachment	3.11	1.75	−0.147*	−0.096	0.200**	−0.002	**0.617**

Note: On the diagonal, the average variance extracted is in bold. Over the diagonal, the square correlations assess constructs' discriminant validity. The mean and standard deviation are calculated with a summated scale.
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 5
Results of mediation assessment (Study 1).

Antecedents		Xenophobia (M)					Service sabotage (Y)				
		Coeff.	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI		Coeff.	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	iM	2.514	0.282	0	1.957	3.071	iY	2.302	0.329	0	1.654	2.951
Community attachment (X)	a	−0.144	0.069	0.038	−0.279	−0.008	c'	−0.060	0.068	0.377	−0.195	0.074
Xenophobia (M)		–	–	–	–	–	b	0.229	0.071	0.001	0.090	0.369
		$F(1, 192) = 4.3554, p = 0.038$						$F(2, 191) = 6.220, p = 0.002$				

Table 6
Results of moderated mediation assessment (Study 1).

| Antecedents		Xenophobia (M)					Service sabotage (Y)				
		Coeff.	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI		Coeff.	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	iM	8.302	2.173	0.000	4.015	12.589	iY	3.5	0.707	0	2.106	4.894
Community attachment (X)	a	−1.346	0.542	0.014	−2.416	−0.277	c'	−0.047	0.070	0.493	−0.183	0.089
Xenophobia (M)		–	–	–	–	–	b	−0.355	0.297	0.234	−0.942	0.231
Regulation of emotions (Z)		–	–	–	–	–		−0.365	0.193	0.060	−0.746	0.015
Moral identity (W)		−0.883	0.328	0.008	−1.529	−0.237		–	–	–	–	–
Community attachment * Moral identity		0.182	0.082	0.027	0.021	0.343		–	–	–	–	–
Xenophobia * Regulation of emotions								0.173	0.085	0.045	0.004	0.341
		$F(3, 190) = 6.691, p = 0.000$						$F(4, 189) = 4.167, p = 0.002$				
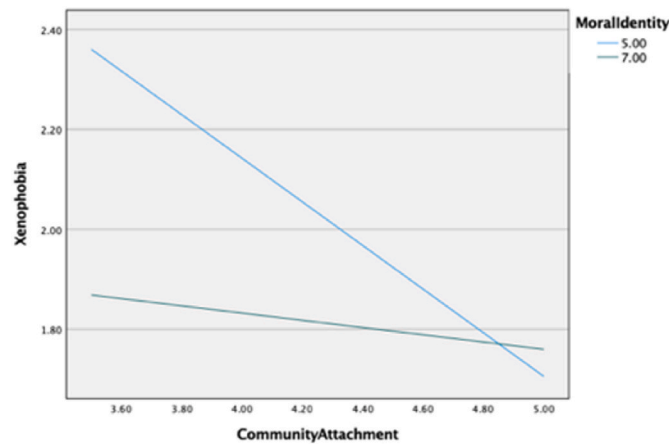
Fig. 2. Interaction effect of moral identity (Study 1).
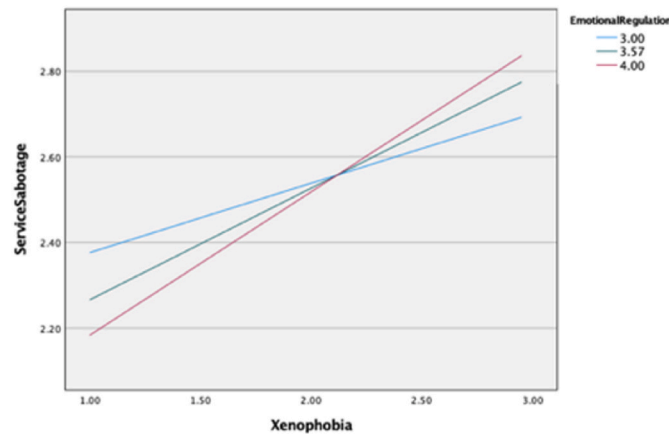

Fig. 3. Interaction effect of emotional regulation (Study 1).

CI: −0.290 to −0.051) was also significant when moral identity was low, and regulation of emotions was high.

4.4. Discussion of study 1

The results of Study 1 showed that community attachment plays a crucial role in defining service sabotage as a consequence of xenophobia.

Table 7
Conditional indirect effects of community attachment at various values of the moderators (Study 1).

Values of moderators		Indirect effect	95% CI	
Moral identity	Regulation of emotions		BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low	Low	−0.071	−0.161	−0.008
Low	High	−0.146	−0.290	−0.051
High	Low	−0.012	−0.045	0.012
High	High	−0.024	−0.088	0.024

First, community attachment reduces the intention of employees to behave in a sabotaging manner toward tourists. Simultaneously, it reduces employees' xenophobia and, thus, indirectly prevents the service sabotage that xenophobic employees would engage in if they were not attached to the community. Without community attachment, xenophobia triggers defense mechanisms against tourists (i.e., out-group members), probably due to perceived potential threats. In addition, Study 1 highlighted two important moderators of an indirect relationship between community attachment and service sabotage via xenophobia: moral identity and emotional regulation. While moral identity helps to recategorize tourists from an out-group to an in-group, strengthening the negative association of community attachment and xenophobia, emotional regulation is an amplifier of xenophobia.

Study 2 builds on the insights into the role of xenophobia in service sabotage gained through the results of Study 1 by examining tourists' understanding of the reasons for service sabotage and their reactions.

5. Study 2: tourists and the aftermath of service sabotage

Empirical evidence indicates that employees and customers often have distinct perceptions of service outcomes (Sharma et al., 2015). Thus, building upon the findings of Study 1, Study 2 shifted the focus to customers, specifically tourists, in order to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of the reasons behind service sabotage. This is captured in the conceptual model shown on the right side of Fig. 1. In the following sections, we explain the selection of variables in Study 2, which is based on attribution theory, and present our hypotheses and the research findings.

5.1. Attribution theory

Attribution theory captures the process by which people make causal explanations to answer the question "Why did this occur?". Attribution

theory suggests that individuals process information rationally based on inferences made about the causes of situations, which ultimately drive their responses (Folkes, 1984). Their explanations are based on their evaluation of the event, the conditions around it, and the available information, beliefs, and motivations used to judge it (Breitsohl & Garrod, 2016). When the reasons for service failure (Min & Kim, 2019) in an intercultural service encounter are not obvious, customers may attribute unsatisfactory service outcomes to either cultural differences (Tam et al., 2014, 2016) or discrimination (Min & Kim, 2019).

Cultural difference attribution is associated with differences in terms of culture and language (Tam et al., 2014). It provides an excuse for low levels of service quality (Sharma et al., 2015; Tam et al., 2014). Discrimination, however, is "the differential treatment of customers based on perceived group-level traits that produce outcomes favorable to 'in-groups' and unfavorable to 'out-groups'" (Crockett et al., 2003, p. 1); such traits might include race or gender. Discrimination attribution, which occurs when customers feel they have not been treated well compared to other customers due to race, gender, etc., has been found to result in anger and a desire for revenge in customers (Min & Kim, 2019).

In an extension of prior studies on service outcome attributions (i.e., cultural difference versus discrimination attributions), we introduced xenophobia as a possible additional attribution. Attribution to xenophobia, in our study, was seen as tourists' perception that they have not been treated well in a service encounter due to negative out-group bias against them as foreigners (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019). To explore the role of attribution to xenophobia, we also tested alternative attributions of service sabotage experiences recognized in the literature (Min & Kim, 2019; Tam et al., 2014, 2016) and evaluated how these attributions may trigger a desire for revenge.

5.2. Hypotheses of study 2

The retaliation perspective on the drivers of service sabotage, as depicted in Table 2, highlights that customers' uncivil behavior toward frontline employees can trigger retaliatory intentions toward those customers (Bani-Melhem et al., 2020; Boukis et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2020; Chi et al., 2013; Dahling, 2017). Similarly, customers may also harbor a desire for revenge against a company (Lages et al., 2023) in response to experiencing service sabotage from frontline employees. We anticipated that this association is partially mediated by factors such as cultural difference attribution, discrimination attribution, and/or xenophobia attribution.

Cultural differences (i.e., the degree to which two cultures are different) (Triandis, 1994) are likely to result in unclear service roles for both customers and frontline employees (Sharma et al., 2015; Tam et al., 2014, 2016). Due to different norms, values, and languages, different cultures may adopt different service scripts and standards (e.g., regarding waiting time or assertiveness of communication) when executing and evaluating services (Sharma et al., 2009). These differences mean that customers are likely to lower their service expectations when they interact with culturally distant frontline employees (Sharma et al., 2015). Indeed, when a service is delivered by a culturally distant rather than culturally similar frontline employee, customers are less dissatisfied with service failure (Stauss & Mang, 1999; Tam et al., 2014). In other words, cultural differences may act as a caution to anticipate low levels of service quality by offering an excuse for a frontline employee's inability to deliver service of the desired standard (Tam et al., 2014, 2016) and even for service sabotage. Thus, if service sabotage is attributed to cultural differences, a factor external to the employee and beyond their control, we expected that tourists will have lower levels of revenge intentions. Thus, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H4. The relationship between service sabotage and the desire for revenge is mediated by cultural difference attribution, whereby attributing service sabotage to cultural differences reduces the desire for revenge.

Race (Moufakkir, 2020) and gender (Carr, 1999) differences are likely to trigger stereotypes. In particular, "because of the history of race and gender discrimination worldwide, colored or underprivileged people are more likely to feel discriminated against when encountering a negative event" (Min & Kim, 2019, p. 60), such as service sabotage. Thus, some customers may perceive interpersonal discrimination in the absence of any other obvious reason for their receiving low service quality (Min & Kim, 2019; Weiner, 2012). In today's world, implicit forms of interpersonal discrimination, such as avoidance of social contact, are more likely to be employed to evade sanctions, as opposed to explicit forms of discrimination (King et al., 2006). Thus, we argue that service sabotage (e.g., intentionally slowing down service and ignoring customers' requests) will result in perceptions of discrimination by customers and, in turn, that customers will desire revenge (Min & Kim, 2019). Consequently, we hypothesize that:

H5. The relationship between service sabotage and the desire for revenge is mediated by discrimination attribution, whereby attributing service sabotage to discrimination increases the desire for revenge.

When service sabotage occurs, customers may attribute this behavior to frontline employees viewing them as foreigners and, thus, out-group members (Rivers & Lytle, 2007). More specifically, customers may suspect that frontline employees are avoiding contact and rushing through the service due to their discomfort and anxiety regarding foreigners (Shahabi Sorman Abadi et al., 2021). In this case, service sabotage will be interpreted as a deliberate act against customers as out-group members. This interpretation can evoke strong negative reactions. When feeling sabotaged and unfairly targeted due to their foreign status, customers may seek retribution by attempting to harm the company's reputation, boycotting its services, or spreading negative word of mouth. Thus, we argue that the perception that frontline employees harbor xenophobic feelings, characterized by anxiety and discomfort regarding tourists, will lead customers to seek revenge by penalizing and damaging the company (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006).

H6. The relationship between service sabotage and the desire for revenge is mediated by attribution to xenophobia, whereby attributing service sabotage to xenophobia increases the desire for revenge.

5.3. Study 2: research methodology

5.3.1. Research design and sample

The focus of Study 2 was on service recipients and their view of service sabotage. Thus, data were gathered from tourists through experimental design. Two scenarios were developed based on the work of Wan and Wyer (2019) and Albrecht et al. (2017) to reflect two (i.e., high and low) levels of service sabotage. The scenarios were subjected to scholarly review by three academics, resulting in minor amendments (scenarios are displayed in Appendix C). Next, we conducted a pilot study with 96 participants (males: $M_{age} = 43.00$, $SD_{age} = 10.89$; females: $M_{age} = 33.04$, $SD_{age} = 10.57$) with the aim of testing the scenarios that had been developed. All respondents were provided with the definition of service sabotage (i.e., service sabotage is a deliberate negative behavior of an employee that affects the standard service [Zhou et al., 2018]) and one randomly assigned scenario. The two scenarios performed as expected and were thus used in the main experimental study.

In the main study, the two scenarios were integrated into an online self-administered survey on the Qualtrics platform. To reduce systematic error, each respondent was randomly assigned to one of the two scenarios. The respondents were recruited from the online panel platform Prolific, which allows researchers to reach a representative sample set by filtering participants using demographic screening tools. The study obtained a representative sample of 297 respondents from the United Kingdom (UK), cross-stratified on gender, age, and ethnicity, as per the simplified UK census. The two scenarios showed a satisfactory level of realism check (M = 5.45, SD = 1.12). In terms of manipulation checks, and as expected, the high service sabotage (HSS) condition ($M_{HSS} = $

5.75, SD_HSS = 1.11) ranked higher on perceptions of service sabotage than the low service sabotage (LSS) condition [M_{LSS} = 3.53, SD_{LSS} = 1.88; t(1, 50) = 6.37; p < 0.001; Cohen's d = 1.44; r = 0.58].

5.3.2. Measures used in study 2

Following the realism and manipulation checks, the respondents evaluated a scenario for service sabotage using items developed by Harris and Ogbonna (2006). In addition, a range of control questions (e.g., concerning COVID-19 severity and the relevance of the scenario) were introduced in the survey (Roux & Thöni, 2015). Finally, the respondents evaluated their perception of the reasons for service sabotage through attribution measures developed and tested in the literature, as follows: cultural difference attribution (Tam et al., 2014) and discrimination attribution (Baker et al., 2008; Min & Kim, 2019). Items measuring xenophobia attribution were adopted based on Kock et al.'s (2019a) study. In addition, desire for revenge was measured based on Grégoire et al.'s (2009) work. The instrument used in Study 2 is in Appendix B.

The CFA run in mPlus was used to assess the measurement properties of the scales used in Study 2. As the data in Study 2 were also moderately non-normal (Finney & DiStefano, 2006), the MLM estimator was again used in the CFA. Appendix B reports the results of the CFA, including the CR and the AVE. As in Study 1, all of the constructs in Study 2 obtained indices higher than the benchmark values (CR = 0.6, AVE = 0.5). In addition, the CFA results revealed an acceptable model fit: χ2(df) = 305.91 (137), p = 0.00; CFI = 0.930; TLI = 0.912; SRMR = 0.058; RMSEA = 0.064. The measures used in Study 2 also demonstrated discriminant validity, consistent with the procedure used for the measures in Study 1.

5.3.3. Results of study 2

To estimate our conceptual model in Study 2, we used again the PROCESS routine in the SPSS (Hayes, 2018). Specifically, we used Model 4 (includes mediation of the path from X to Y via multiple M variables) to test mediation (with 5000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected CIs). The analysis in Table 8 shows that the mediation effect of cultural difference attribution (b = 0.0217, 95% CI: 0.0017 to 0.0515) and discrimination attribution (b = 0.0553, 95% CI: 0.0212 to 0.0968) in relation to the indirect effect of service sabotage on desire for revenge was significant. Thus, as the 95% bootstrap CIs for both mediators did not contain zero, H4 and H5 were both supported. Special attention was given to the attribution of xenophobia, as it was hypothesized to play a role in transforming service sabotage into a desire for revenge. However, the results in Table 8 did not support this indirect effect. Upon further examination of the results in Table 9, it was observed that although tourists may attribute service sabotage to xenophobia (b = 0.182, SE = 0.052, p = 0.001, 95% CI: 0.079 to 0.285), this attribution does not significantly drive the desire for revenge (b = −0.077, SE = 0.07, p = 0.275, 95% CI: −0.215 to 0.062).

5.4. Discussion of study 2

The findings of Study 2 revealed that service sabotage directly drives desire for revenge. Moreover, while both cultural and discrimination attributions partly mediate the effect of service sabotage (cf. Tam et al., 2014, 2016) on desire for revenge (although in different ways), attribution to xenophobia does not. Thus, service sabotage by a frontline employee triggers desire for revenge in the customer both directly and indirectly. This may be explained by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960),

Table 8
Indirect Effects of Service Sabotage on Desire for Revenge (Study 2).

	Std. indirect effect estimate	95% CI	
		LLCI	ULCI
TOTAL	0.0645	0.0086	0.1275
Cultural difference attribution	0.0217	0.0017	0.0515
Discrimination attribution	0.0553	0.0212	0.0968
Attribution to xenophobia	−0.0124	−0.0402	0.0123

according to which individuals react unfavorably to other individuals' negative behavior toward them. In this case, the customer develops a desire for revenge as a direct result of the employee's sabotage behavior.

Interestingly, xenophobia does not mediate the service sabotage–desire for revenge relationship. At this point, we can only speculate on the reasons for such results. If tourists attribute service sabotage to xenophobia, they may choose to avoid the xenophobic environment in the future rather than seek revenge. Future research may explore the relationship between the attribution of service sabotage to xenophobia, on the one hand, and other outcomes, such as avoidance (versus revenge or complaining), of the xenophobic environment, on the other hand. Possibly, the relationship between service sabotage attribution to xenophobia and desire for revenge is not necessarily direct but may be mediated by other factors, such as the level of experienced psychological stress (Haj-Salem & Chebat, 2014). Another possibility is that the relationship may be conditioned by factors such as availability of disconfirming/confirming evidence about the intentions of the service saboteur (Temerak et al., 2023) or intercultural competence of the service recipient (i.e., tourist) (Tam et al., 2014).

6. General discussion

In many tourist destinations, due to religious/cultural (Temerak, 2019), economic (Kock, Josiassen, Assaf, Karpen, & Farrelly, 2019), political, or health and safety reasons (Shahabi Sorman Abadi et al., 2021), tourists may not be welcomed. When tourists are regarded as a threat, it is expected that their presence will provoke a behavioral response from the frontline employees with strong xenophobic attitudes. However, contrary to findings from studies dealing with migration (e.g., Kabadayi, 2019), our study revealed that a strong attachment to their community can actually reduce xenophobic tendencies among frontline employees in tourism. As a result, this reduction in xenophobia contributes to a decrease in service sabotage in tourism. However, to date, xenophobia has not received attention from scholars as a factor that may influence the behavior of frontline employees in tourism. This analysis fills that gap and also offers new insights by showing that: 1) higher levels of moral identity strengthen the negative association of community attachment to xenophobia against tourists, and 2) higher levels of emotional regulation amplify xenophobia effects on service sabotage.

Furthermore, this study sheds light on the consequences of employees' service sabotage behavior for tourists.

6.1. Theoretical implications

This paper contributes to the tourism literature on xenophobia in several ways. Extant studies have not yet explored the potential xenophobic attitudes of frontline employees, either in general or in tourism specifically. Thus, by investigating the xenophobic frontline employee serving tourists, rather than the xenophobic tourist (Gyimothy et al., 2022; Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019; Kock et al., 2020), this research closes the gap by empirically testing the xenophobia of the frontline employee as the antecedent of service sabotage. Moreover, our model includes the role of community attachment as a contextual variable and the role of emotional regulation and moral identity as self-controls that may interact with the indirect effects of community attachment on service sabotage.

Furthermore, this paper offers an unique contribution to the service sabotage literature (Leidner, 2020) by framing service sabotage differently. In particular, we build on past findings from the literature by incorporating two further theories, namely social identity theory and attribution theory, into an innovative framing of service sabotage. We offer four insights in this regard. First, while the majority of previous studies on service sabotage has been concerned with its triggers (e.g., customers' mistreatment) and with negative states (e.g., emotional exhaustion) (Lee & Ok, 2014) as causes (Zhou et al., 2018), limited research has been conducted on attachment-based drivers of service sabotage. In particular, rather than adopting a perspective of

Table 9
Results of Mediation Analysis (Study 2).

	Coeff	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI	Model
Constant	4.892	0.470	0	3.969	5.816	$R^2 = 0.026$
Service sabotage → Cultural difference attribution	−0.157	0.058	0.007	−0.271	−0.044	$F(2, 294) = 3.9267, p = 0.020$
Severity → Cultural difference attribution	−0.037	0.070	0.593	−0.174	0.099	
Constant	3.361	0.425	0.001	2.524	4.198	$R^2 = 0.069$
Service sabotage → Discrimination attribution	0.235	0.052	0	0.132	0.337	$F(1, 294) = 10.9303, p = 0.000$
Severity → Discrimination attribution	0.070	0.063	0.266	−0.054	0.194	
Constant	3.225	0.425	0	2.389	4.061	$R^2 = 0.040$
Service sabotage →Attribution to xenophobia	0.182	0.052	0.001	0.079	0.285	$F(1, 294) = 6.1562, p = 0.002$
Severity →Attribution to xenophobia	0.015	0.063	0.808	−0.108	0.139	
Constant	2.115	0.647	0.001	0.842	3.388	$R^2 = 0.182$
Service sabotage → Desire for revenge	0.280	0.064	0	0.153	0.405	$F(5, 291) = 12.95, p = 0.000$
Cultural difference attribution → Desire for revenge	−0.155	0.065	0.017	−0.283	−0.028	
Discrimination attribution → Desire for revenge	0.265	0.068	0.001	0.132	0.399	
Attribution to xenophobia → Desire for revenge	−0.077	0.07	0.275	−0.215	0.062	
Severity → Desire for revenge	−0.086	0.072	0.234	−0.228	0.056	

organizational attachment (e.g., organizational culture and organizational citizenship) (Balaji et al., 2020; Shi & Huang, 2022), this study focused on community attachment, a concept rarely discussed in this context. Second, while previous research has mainly investigated service sabotage from the frontline employee's perspective (e.g., Park & Kim, 2019) (see Table 2), this study unpacked consumers' attributions of employee service sabotage to understand the implications of these attributions on tourists' desire for revenge on a firm. Adopting the consumer perspective is the most appropriate way to understand the implications of service sabotage because consumers are best placed to evaluate the impact of service sabotage on themselves. Third, we extended the service sabotage literature from the drivers of sabotage (e.g., Huang et al., 2019) to its outcomes. Study 2's findings confirmed that consumers do indeed attribute service sabotage to cultural differences and discrimination. Fourth, we applied attribution theory to a new context, intercultural service encounters (Tam et al., 2016), by capturing in a single paper three different service sabotage attributions, as follows: cultural differences, discrimination, and xenophobia. Previously, these forms of attribution have either been examined separately (e.g., cultural differences) (Tam et al., 2016) or been considered synonymous (e.g., discrimination and xenophobia) (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019); they had not been investigated simultaneously in a single study.

6.2. Managerial implications

Service sabotage is costly to a business's reputation and profitability, as it can lead to increased dissatisfaction and churn among tourists (Harris & Ogbonna, 2012). Our findings suggest that service employees may engage in service sabotage due to xenophobic inclinations towards foreigners. Consequently, tourism companies should make their employees and culture managers aware of this fact when recruiting. Implementing awareness training programs for current frontline employees that address and confront xenophobic thoughts towards foreigners can mitigate service sabotage behaviors. Tourism firms or destination managers can organize these training programs.

Our study also demonstrated that community attachment helps employees to reduce their xenophobic tendencies to engage in service sabotage. Accordingly, based on the results of Study 1, tourist destinations could promote the community attachment among frontline employees, to ensure that tourists are welcomed. This is particularly important in the context of destinations that rely heavily on foreign employees who do not necessarily have strong community attachment to the destination in which

they work. Therefore, special programs are needed to promote the attachment of these foreign workers to the destination.

Tourists themselves could also be perceived as part of the community. For example, simple attachment symbols (e.g., "I love Singapore" T-shirts) may help tourists to be perceived as in- rather than out-group members; this may, in turn, help to reduce employees' service sabotage tendencies. When an employee is not attached to the community wherein they provide a tourism service, moral identity can play an important role in reducing the development of xenophobia. Accordingly, educational programs fostering common moral norms may empower frontline employees to prevent the development of xenophobic fear. This is a fear that, if unmanaged, could lead to tourism service sabotage. Reducing service sabotage is particularly important in avoiding unfavorable attributions (e.g., discrimination attribution) by tourists and the resultant consequences, such as high customer desire for revenge, as demonstrated in Study 2. Welcoming posters (e.g., "Everyone welcome here!") and pictures (e.g., showing people from different races and ethnic groups) in airports and touristic premises may help to avoid discrimination attribution by tourists. Moreover, companies that want to reduce customers' desire for revenge have to react in dual ways to monitor and minimize service sabotage by frontline employees but also try to influence customers' interpretations of sabotage to focus on cultural differences rather than discrimination.

6.3. Research limitations and future research directions

Our research is not without limitations. In our study, we adapted the validated scale of Kock, Josiassen, and Assaf (2019) to measure xenophobia. In an open survey with 10 marketing academics, who have an average of 17 years of academic experience, three of the 10 academics identified concepts that may intersect with xenophobia in their conceptualizations. This presents an opportunity for further research to clarify the boundaries of xenophobia conceptualization concerning out-group dynamics and in-group tensions. For example, xenophobia can be seen as one facet of assortative sociality that is closely related to constructs such as in-group centeredness (e.g., ethnocentrism), in-group exclusivity (perceived superiority of the in-group), and in-group attachment, each with similar operationalizations. Thus, social dominance orientation (Ho et al., 2015) could also be considered a starting point in clarifying xenophobia boundaries (Gyimothy et al., 2022). Xenophobia's complex nature could benefit from further exploration through qualitative observation, semi-structured interviews, and projective techniques with tourists and tourism firms' employees.

Some of our findings could not be fully explained, such as the lack of a link between attributing service sabotage to xenophobia and the desire for revenge. Because of this, we recommend a quantitative replication of our study followed by qualitative validation. Combining both approaches within a future study would align with a mixed method sequential explanatory research (Ma et al., 2022), where the qualitative phase is employed to clarify the quantitative findings.[1]

In the context of our study, the objects of xenophobia were foreign tourists, and we made no distinction in terms of how tourism employees perceived foreigners from similar versus different cultures to them. The objects of xenophobia could also be local tourists who may not be foreigners but are strangers to the employees (tourism employees deal with strangers on a daily basis). Thus, validating the results of our study considering cultural similarity between tourists and tourism employees or using strangers as the object of xenophobia could provide interesting opportunities for corroboration of the findings.

Similar to common practice in tourism research (e.g., Bani-Melhem et al., 2020; Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999), both studies utilize samples from a single country. While our research is grounded in theory, which, if robust, should apply across various contexts (Boso et al., 2013), validating the findings in alternative social and cultural settings would be important. This would allow the assessment of the persistence of the results among different populations.

Lastly, Study 2 was limited by the low R-square values of customers' attributions (e.g., cultural differences and xenophobia) due to uncertainty about the intentions of the transgressor (i.e., the employee who sabotaged the service). Future research could expand on our results by examining customers' reactions (e.g., revenge) based on different levels of evidence available to them (e.g., corroboration versus disconfirmation of online reviews by other tourists) to judge frontline employees' intentions when engaging in deviant behavior (e.g., service sabotage) (Temerak et al., 2023).

7. Conclusion

This paper contributes to both xenophobia and service sabotage literatures in the tourism context. From the frontline employee's perspective, the findings revealed that service sabotage can be reduced by enhancing employees' community attachment. Nonetheless, results also reveal that employees with higher levels of moral identity have stronger immunity against xenophobia and consequently service sabotage, even in cases where they are not attached to the community. This makes them a valuable resource in building firms' and destinations' competitive advantages. At the same time, the study reveals that employees who exhibit both xenophobic tendencies and high emotional regulation skills may have a stronger inclination to engage in sabotage behavior. This poses a potential risk for the firm, as these employees are more likely to engage in harmful actions that can undermine the company's reputation and customer satisfaction. In addressing the tourist's perspective, tourism service managers need to educate tourists so that they can attribute service sabotage to cultural differences rather than to discrimination or xenophobia. We ultimately offered insights into how tourism service managers and destination managers can reduce the negative implications of service sabotage

occurring as a result of employee xenophobia.

Impact statement

This study focuses on examining the impact of xenophobia on service sabotage behavior among tourism employees, as well as understanding the reasons behind such behavior from the perspective of tourists who experience it. The findings reveal that xenophobia plays a significant role in driving employees to sabotage the service to tourists, although this effect is mitigated when employees have a stronger attachment to the community in which they operate. This suggests that tourism managers should prioritize programs aimed at fostering community attachment among employees in order to reduce xenophobia and subsequent service sabotage behaviors. In the recruitment process, managers should prioritize candidates with high moral identities, especially in cases where community ties are lacking. This can help mitigate xenophobic tendencies among employees and promote a more inclusive experience for tourists.

To prevent cultural differences and discriminatory attributions by tourists and reduce their desire for revenge, tourism facilities can display welcome posters and feature diverse racial and ethnic groups in their promotional materials. Additionally, companies can implement measures to monitor instances of service sabotage by employees and work towards mitigating tourists' interpretations of such situations. These efforts can contribute to reducing both employee sabotage behaviors and tourists' revenge desires, ultimately fostering a more harmonious tourism environment.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Appendix

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[1] We would like to thank to an anonymous reviewer for making this suggestion.

Appendix A

List of questions used in Study 1, including descriptive statistics, skewness and kurtosis values, and confirmatory factor analysis results.

Items (Items in Bosnian language)	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Loadings (S.E)	t-value
Xenophobia, *CR* = .896, *AVE* = .685								
Bearing in mind the current situation with COVID-19, if in the near future you would have guests/tourists from China … (Imajući u vidu trenutnu situaciju sa COVID-19, ako bi u skorijem periodu imali goste/turiste iz Kine …)								
I would not feel comfortable in dealing with their culture. (Ne bih se osjećao ugodno nositi se s njihovom kulturom.)	1	4	1.95	.898	.536	−.669	0.877 (0.024)	36.545
I would probably feel uneasy engaging with the tourists. (Vjerojatno bih se osjećao nelagodno komunicirati s turistima.)	1	4	1.85	.895	.737	−.396	0.817 (0.029)	28.533
I would be suspicious towards the incoming tourists. (Bio bih sumnjičav prema dolazećim turistima.)	1	5	1.93	.890	.810	.225	0.888 (0.023)	38.735
I would be worried that the tourists will be reserved with me. (Bojao bih se da će turisti prema meni biti rezervirani.)	1	4	2.02	.842	.286	−.852	0.717 (0.039)	18.326
Service Sabotage, *CR* = .822, *AVE* = .610								
People here take revenge on rude tourists. (Ljudi se ovdje osvećuju nepristojnim turistima.)	1	5	2.43	.921	.682	.262	0.711 (0.046)	15.376
People here hurry tourists when they want to. (Ljudi ovdje požuruju turiste kad žele.)	1	5	2.60	.934	.409	−.240	0.713 (0.045)	15.807
It is common practice here to "get back" at difficult tourists. (Ovdje je uobičajena praksa da se teškim turistima "vraćaju".)	1	5	2.47	.834	.488	.571	0.903 (0.039)	23.156
Regulation of Emotions, *CR* = .891, *AVE* = .673								
I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally. (U stanju sam kontrolirati svoj temperament i razumno se nositi s poteškoćama.)	1	5	3.62	.804	−.328	.650	0.807 (0.033)	24.487
I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions. (Prilično sam sposoban kontrolirati vlastite emocije.)	1	5	3.58	.828	−.331	.425	0.834 (0.030)	27.41
I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry. (Uvijek se mogu brzo smiriti kad sam jako ljut.)	1	5	3.48	.900	−.366	.224	0.752 (0.038)	19.964
I have good control of my own emotions. (Dobro kontroliram vlastite emocije.)	1	5	3.52	.852	−.621	.685	0.883 (0.027)	33.294
Moral Identity, *CR* = .950, *AVE* = .864								
In order to finalize booking arrangement with the big group, Goran promised that they will be able to enter their rooms in hotel at 10am although he knew that another big group is leaving hotel at 9:30 and it takes more than 30 min to clean all the rooms. Goran thought to himself, "If the incoming group complains, I'll just blame it on the group before" (Kako bi dovršio dogovor o rezervaciji s velikom grupom, Goran je obećao da će oni moći ući u svoje sobe u hotelu u 10 ujutro iako je znao da druga velika grupa napušta hotel u 9:30 i potrebno je više od 30 minuta da se sve očisti sobe. Goran je u sebi pomislio: "Ako se grupa koja dolazi bude žalila, prije ću okriviti grupu")								
Fair – unfair. Pošteno – nepošteno	1	5	1.731	1.151	1.535	1.383	0.902 (0.016)	56.293
Just – unjust. (Pravedno – nepravedno)	1	5	1.700	1.019	1.419	1.350	0.938 (0.013)	74.339
Morally right – not morally right. (Moralno ispravno – Moralno neispravno)	1	5	6.731	1.137	1.554	1.521	0.948 (0.012)	80.675
Community attachment, *CR* = .751, *AVE* = .617								
I do feel like at home at this community. (Osjećam se kao kod kuće u ovoj zajednici.)	1	5	3.990	0.938	−1.197	1.875	0.961 (0.187)	5.129
I'm interested in what is happening in this community. (Zanima me što se događa u ovoj zajednici.)	1	5	4.061	0.877	−1.367	2.869	0.558 (0.119)	4.670
Model fit: χ^2(df) = 210.99 (94), p = 0.00; CFI = 0.939; TLI = 0.922; SRMR = 0.044; RMSEA = 0.080								

Appendix B

List of questions used in Study 2, including descriptive statistics, skewness and kurtosis values, and CFA results

Scale Properties and Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Loadings (S.E)	t-value
Service Sabotage, $CR = .773$, $AVE = .537$								
It looks like it is common practice for that waiter to "get back" at difficult tourists.	1	7	4.21	1.389	−.409	−.201	0.638 (0.042)	15.078
It looks like the waiter could "get at tourists" to make the rest of employees laugh.	1	7	4.35	1.570	−.383	−.528	0.877 (0.037)	23.602
In the scenario, the waiter deliberately slows down the service.	1	7	4.47	1.265	−.109	−.191	0.659 (0.043)	15.163
Xenophobia Attributions, $CR = .768$, $AVE = .533$								
The waiter does not feel comfortable dealing with the culture of the tourists.	1	7	4.19	1.500	−.113	−.650	0.635 (0.046)	13.861
The waiter probably feels uneasy engaging with tourists.	1	7	3.70	1.467	.096	−.698	0.91 (0.043)	21.236
This waiter seems worried about dealing with tourists.	1	7	4.12	1.505	−.148	−.755	0.605 (0.045)	13.434
Cultural Attribution, $CR = .815$, $AVE = .604$								
This situation is an example of a communication gap.	1	7	3.73	1.520	−.065	−.858	0.623 (0.041)	15.15
This situation may be due to language barriers.	1	7	4.09	1.464	−.373	−.619	0.974 (0.031)	31.253
This situation may be due to cultural differences.	1	7	4.67	1.399	−.297	−.401	0.69 (0.037)	18.561
Discrimination Attribution, $CR = .836$, $AVE = .635$								
I believe the service failure was due to discrimination.	1	7	4.58	1.398	−.407	.066	0.938 (0.027)	34.232
I believe tourists' characteristics (e.g., race and appearance) might be relevant to the service failure.	1	7	5.15	1.264	−.557	.169	0.67 (0.037)	18.316
I believe the waiter discriminated against tourists.	1	7	3.44	1.720	.378	−.979	0.759 (0.034)	22.227
Desire for Revenge, $CR = .886$, $AVE = .661$								
I would cause inconvenience to the waiter.	1	7	3.33	1.714	.428	−.908	0.72 (0.032)	22.189
I would want to make the waiter get what he/she deserved.	1	7	3.22	1.671	.495	−.800	0.796 (0.27)	29.871
I would take action to get the restaurant in trouble.	1	7	2.81	1.486	.780	.101	0.848 (0.22)	39.188
I would get even with the restaurant.							0.88 (0.19)	45.293
Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Severity, $CR = .817$, $AVE = .602$								
There is a high probability of someone contracting COVID-19.	1	7	5.87	1.121	−1.275	2.188	0.877 (0.034)	26.052
I am at risk of getting COVID-19.	1	7	5.26	1.446	−.853	.365	0.669 (0.040)	16.884
COVID-19 is highly contagious.	1	7	6.08	1.125	−1.641	3.375	0.767 (0.036)	21.324
Model fit								
χ^2(df) = 305.91 (137), $p = 0.00$; CFI = 0.930; TLI = 0.912; SRMR = 0.058; RMSEA = 0.064								

Appendix C

Scenarios used in Study 2 together with realism check questions.

HIGH service sabotage condition

In September 2020, around the time when new variants of COVID-19 were discovered, a group of tourists arrived at a holiday destination. While talking to a waiter, the tourists stated that they had made a reservation for a table with a sea view. The waiter looked unhappy (he had a frown on his face) and offered them a table in the far corner, which the tourists accepted. The waiter served the tourists in an inconsiderate, unfriendly, and rude manner, avoiding eye contact and using a harsh tone throughout the tourists' stay in the restaurant. The waiter and other employees gathered together around the bar, laughing and often looking toward the tourists. After waiting for a longer time than usual, the tourists noticed that the waiter was serving other customers who had arrived after them and that he was chatting away and laughing with them. After all of this waiting, the food was finally served, and less than 10 min after the tourists received the food, the waiter started coming by too often, offering to take their plates. The tourists felt rushed to finish their meal and left quickly.

LOW service sabotage condition

In September 2020, around the time when new variants of COVID-19 were discovered, a group of tourists arrived at a holiday destination. While talking to a waiter, the tourists stated that they had made a reservation for a table with a sea view. The waiter looked unhappy as he offered them a table in the far corner, which the tourists accepted. The waiter barely paid attention to the tourists during the meal. It was very difficult for the tourists not to take notice that the waiter frequently tried to avoid eye contact with them while speaking in a low tone of voice. They also noticed that the waiter was chatting away and laughing with other customers and employees. Within 10 min of the tourists placing their order, the food was served, and after that, the waiter withdrew from paying any attention to the tourists. The tourists finished their meal and left at the end.

Realism check questions

To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to the situation you just read about? (Strongly disagree [1] – Strongly agree [7])
- I could easily imagine the described situation.
- I could put myself in the situation of the tourists.

Service sabotage is a deliberate negative behavior of an employee that affects the standard of service. In your opinion, does this scenario described above reflect service sabotage?
- The scenario is NOT an example of service sabotage 1–7 Scenario IS an example of service sabotage.

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