

## Abstract

The basic purpose of this study is to identify and study quality attributes of the lodging sector in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The focus of this research is on preferences of the tourists and their service experiences by conducting a study on the difference between expectations of the customers and their perception about the hotel services. There are different models of measuring service quality in the services sector and SERVQUAL is the most frequently used model. This model reports the difference between the expectations of the customers from the service quality and the actually perceived quality of service. This model provides detailed analysis of the service quality offered by the lodging sector in Saudi Arabia including aspects related to hotel, hotel facilities and hotel service offerings of the hotels. The participants of the study include the visitors of the hotels inside Saudi Arabia and the Saudi travelers who travel within the Middle East region. The 24 participants of the study have been asked about their level of satisfaction and perceived quality of service during their visit in the hotels. The participants were asked questions regarding the different dimensions of service quality. The results of the study indicated the gaps in the service quality in the lodging sector of KSA. Approximately one-third of the participants of the study regarded the service quality in the lodging sector to be unsatisfactory. Results of the study also indicated that about 50% of visitors preferred staying in upscale hotels in KSA while 33% preferred staying in budget hotels. Two third the guests stayed in luxury hotels were there for business purposes; however, one third

**Comment [RL1]:** Again this comes from what I originally thought you did ... was interview tourist but instead you say you are interviewing employees and asking about all of their hotel experiences not just for leisure

**Comment [RL2]:** It does? show me where?

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**Comment [RL3]:** This was the study I thought you did but this is not what you are claiming later on? !!! Who did you really survey / interview?

**Comment [RL4]:** Be careful did you really explore gaps? See your questions

**Comment [RL5]:** Visitor or employees

**Comment [RL6]:** Then they can't be tourists?

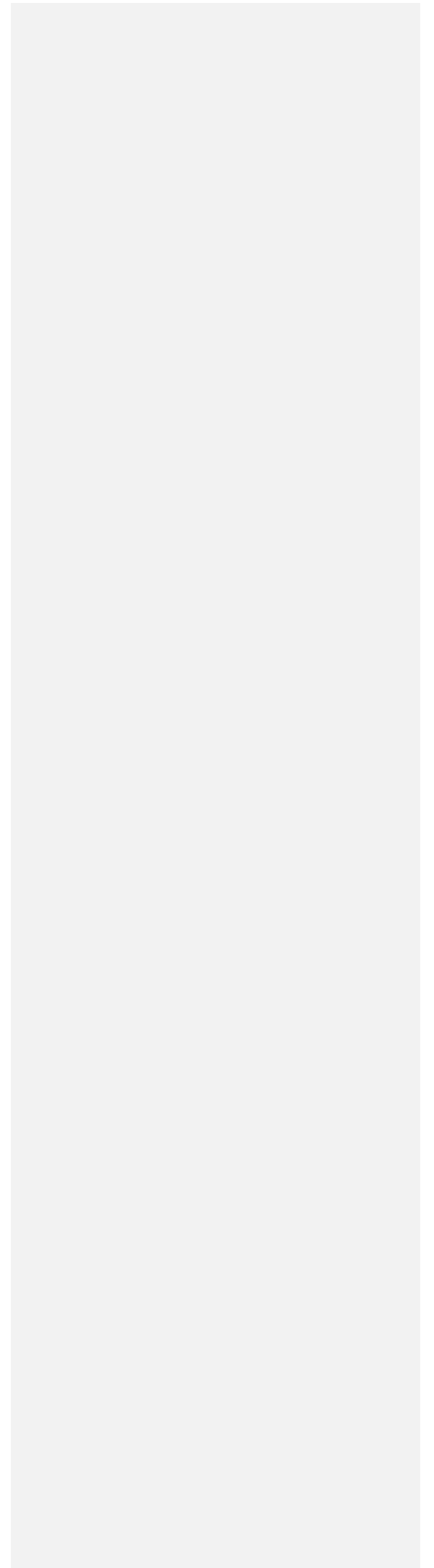
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stayed there for leisure. Results also revealed that about 60% of travelers who traveled outside Saudi Arabia preferred luxury hotels for leisure and they stayed 25-30 nights on average.

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**Comment [RL7]:** Does this page reflect what you really did?

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## 1.0 Introduction

### Background of Lodging Sector in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Historically, the economy of Saudi Arabia has been dependent upon oil; however, the focus seems to have shifted towards the hospitality industry. This is the case with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) as well as the other Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) countries, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The economic sectors of the Saudi Arabia have observed significant changes as the government in the country has shifted its focus to the growth and development of the non-oil sectors. An important role is played by the development of the lodging sector in the country. The lodging sector of Saudi Arabia is the largest of the entire GCC region. In 2013, the total accommodation capacity of the GCC region was 458,045 rooms and the Saudi share of the lodging sector of the region was about 63%. A large number of hotel rooms were added by the government in the KSA during the period of 2006 to 2013. During this period, the growth rate of 9.5% was observed, and a total of 95,627 rooms were added into the lodging sector then (pwc, 2014).

Different types of accommodations have been established in Saudi Arabia over the course of time. The hotel industry in KSA includes basic hotels, resorts, furnished apartments, student hostels and the youth hostels. A brief account of all of these developments is provided below:

#### *Hotels*

Approximately 850 establishments in Saudi Arabia can be regarded as the hotels, with a total of 95,000 rooms. These establishments include 165 unclassified hotels established in the KSA. The

**Comment [RL10]:** Correct your citation here and at the end of the paper. Is this whole section from the same source?

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**Comment [RL11]:** Better to provide evidence of how the government classify accommodation in the KSA

**Comment [RL12]:** What is a classified hotel?

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owners of these hotels couldn't complete the criteria and qualifications of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage to get their hotels classified. The Ministry of Hajj in Saudi Arabia has been making efforts to register the unregistered establishments in order to meet the requirements of travelers of Hajj and Umrah. Approximately 44,395 rooms are available only in Makkah City, and there are a total of 383 registered hotels in Makkah. The ministry of Hajj is continuously consulting with the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage in order to carry out the process of registration of hotels in the Makkah region. When the process of registration of hotels will be completed in Makkah, 548 hotels will have been registered in Makkah with the accommodation capacity of 70,000 rooms. These important facts are related to Makkah because Makkah is the major city with respect to the tourism as millions of people come to this city annually for Hajj and Umrah throughout the year (Aljazira Capital, 2015).

**Comment [RL13]:** Would be excellent to include what these are considering the nature of your study – much more important that section 2.5 agree?

**Comment [RL14]:** Why is this section important to your topic make the connection for the reader?

### *International Hotel Brands*

A large number of international hotel brands have also been operating in the KSA and they comprise of 88% of the rooms in the excellent class in Saudi Arabia. The international hotel brands have been existing and operating in the Saudi lodging sector for 15 years or more. ~~The existence and operation of the lodging sector for this period indicates that the certain standard of quality has been set by the international hotel brands.~~ The service quality offered by the international hotel brands serves as the benchmark for the rest of establishments operating in the accommodation sector of the country. The growth and development of the international brands and emergence of domestic brands in the market indicate that the KSA hotel industry is passing through the phase of growth and moving towards the phase of maturity.

**Comment [RL15]:** What is the excellent class? How are hotel classified?

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**Comment [RL16]:** In a thesis it just sounds like your guessing if you say or more?

**Comment [RL17]:** Sounds like a hypothesis or an opinion

**Comment [RL18]:** Says who?

**Comment [RL19]:** You need to support these last two sentences with evidence from maybe secondary studies



### *Planned Hotel Developments*

The development of the lodging sector can be perceived from the number of applications for establishment of hotels by the Ministry of Commerce in May 2001. These applications offered a total of 6,065 rooms in the 69 hotels for which the applications were submitted. Some of the hotels for which applications have been submitted are completely renovated, and they have acquired their building permissions as well. They are only waiting for the operating license for which they have applied. There will be an increase in accommodation capacity in the country if these hotels obtain their operating license. Most of these new hotels have been established in Madinah (2,155), Jeddah (1,325) and Makkah (1,919) (pwc, 2014).

**Comment [RL20]:** Need to make the connect to your study in order to include this 2001 point

### *Furnished Apartments*

The primary target market of the furnished apartments is the family market. According to the modern trends, the apartments have been designed by the hotel managers in such a way that they provide families with an “at home” experience especially when these families stay at these apartments during their holidays. The family is not made to stay in the several different rooms with low accommodation capacity. They are able to stay together to enhance their experience at the vacations. A great degree of privacy is also ensured in these self-contained apartments.

**Comment [RL21]:** Again other than a paragraph explaining the classifications of accommodation in Saudi Arabia - I don't see the connection of apartments to your SERVQUAL study?

The actual number of furnished apartments in the country is not known, but the process of their registration has been initiated by the government. The Ministry of Commerce has been appointed to register the apartments and record the statistics about the actual number and bed capacity. According to some initial estimates made by the Ministry of Commerce in this regard and some additional research, total number of furnished apartment properties in the country are around

~~828. These establishments have the accommodation capacity of approximately 40,000 rooms, and the bed capacity of approximately 80,000 (Eickleman & Piscatori, 2012).~~

~~According to the Ministry of Commerce, the actual number of these furnished apartments can be much higher than the estimated number, primarily due to the misreporting of the actual figures since most of these establishments fall out of the regulatory net that has been established by the Ministry of Commerce.~~

~~Another reason for the lack of statistics is that these establishments exist across the whole country and they are very unevenly distributed. Of these furnished apartments, 72% of them are established in the Holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Furnished apartments are emerging as the popular place for accommodation for the people who come for pilgrimage. On the hand, Riyadh, another city of KSA, has a large number of such establishments. About 1570 furnished apartments are in Riyadh, plus 21 establishments are known as the student and the youth hostels in which there is a bed capacity of 2,425 beds. These accommodations are popular for inter-college and inter-university sporting events.~~

#### *Residential Compounds*

Several residential compounds in the KSA claim to be the Western residential compounds. Some of them offer the facilities of short-term accommodation while the others offer hostel-like facilities. These make a very significant contribution in the lodging sector by boosting the capacity of commercial accommodation in the country. The number of these residential compounds is still not known because of the lack of a regulatory net for **them**.

**Comment [RL22]:** Again other than a paragraph explaining the classifications of accommodation in Saudi Arabia - I don't see the connection of resident compounds to your SERVQUAL study?

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Table 1: The SCT Tourism Growth Scenario (2001) PWC (2001)

Type of Accommodation	Base year (2000)	2005	2010	2015	2020
Hotel	45.7	52.1	62.4	77.1	97.7
Furnished Apartments	57.4	66.1	80.5	122.8	131.6
Rented Accommodation	9.7	11.1	13.3	20.1	20.9
Private Home	61.6	72.5	90.8	139.1	155.8
Hostel/Camping	2.4	2.6	3.1	4.6	4.9
Others	13.9	16.4	20.6	26.8	35.7
Total	190.7	22.8	270.7	390.5	446.6

**Comment [RL23]:** This reads as if your presenting a picture of lodging numbers from 2001 am I misreading this?

### Evolution of the “Economy” Hotels

The lodging industry in KSA is fragmented and misaligned with the international standards.

**Comment [RL24]:** According to what source?

Lack of authentically recorded data causes the misrepresentation of the real facts regarding the hotel industry in the country. Most of the internationally branded hotels are located in Riyadh, Jeddah and Eastern Province. Some locations have no such international brands. These locations include Al-Ahsa, Buraydah, Jubail, Hail, Jazan, and Abha. Several local brands of hotels occupy these markets with their established full-service hotels.

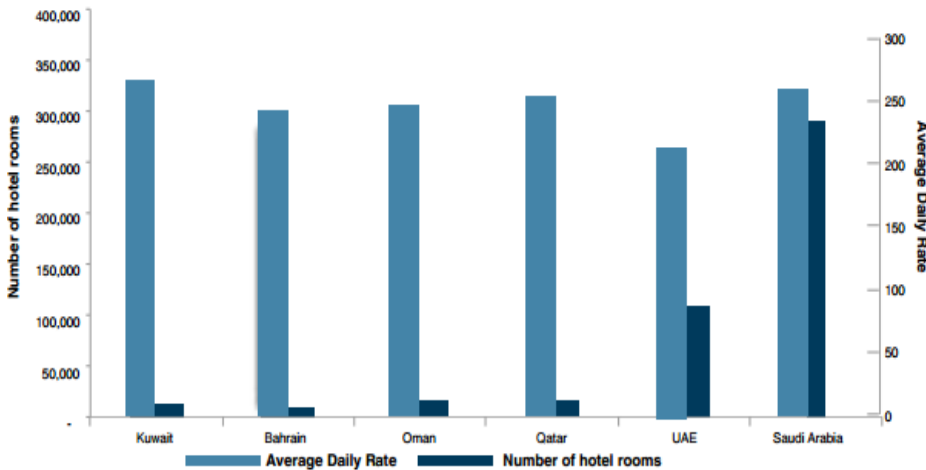
**Comment [RL25]:**

Best Western Hotels and Tulip Inn were the major international brands that were earliest to enter the Saudi hotel market. Tulip Inn has nine hotels established throughout the country, and it is considered to be the most established brand in the KSA. The presence of Tulip Inn in the Saudi market is just the marketing consortium (Le, 2010).

**Comment [RL26]:** When did international hotel first enter the country?

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Table 2: Country wise hotels in GCC and Average Daily Rates (ADR)



Comment [RL27]: You need to define GCC

(Source: Alpen Capital Report: 2014)

Until 2011, there were 157,430 hotel rooms available throughout KSA which were registered under the Ministry of Commerce. Only 22% of these hotels were those which were registered under “three star” category. Most of these rooms are located around the City of Makkah. Approximately 70% of these rooms are present in the Makkah region while the remaining 30% are present in Riyadh and associated regions of Al Baha, Jazan, Tabuk, Asir, Madinah and Eastern Province.

Comment [RL28]: What category are you asking your participants to reflect on when considering their stay in a hotel?

According to the research conducted by Colliers International (2012), about 19% of the total hotel brands in the country are internationally branded hotels. Maximum numbers of international brands are present in Taif where 52% of the population of these hotels exists. About 336 rooms of internationally branded hotels were expected to be added in the inventory by 2013.

Comment [RL29]: You can't write about something expecting to happened in 2013 for work now in 2016

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The major hotel chains that were to enter the Saudi market until 2015 included Holiday Inn Express, Premier Inn, Centro and Ibis. The majority of these hotels were to be established in Khobar, Dammam, Jeddah and Riyadh.

**Comment [RL30]:** Did they?

**Comment [RL31]:** Is it important to mention all outside brands that exist or not?

According to the research conducted by Colliers International in the 15 major cities of the Kingdom for the purpose of indicating the performance of the hotels in these cities indicated that rate of occupancy in hotels in the major cities ranged between 61% and 80%. On the other hand, this range was between 51% and 68% in the secondary cities. ~~Some of the hotel brands which are known as the “economy hotels” are driven by the volume of occupants. These hotels have low room rates but they usually operate at an occupancy rate which is 5% to 10% higher than the general market rate. On average, the rate of the rooms in these hotels is between SAR 354 and SAR 400 (AHIC, 2015).~~

### ~~Influx of “Luxury” Hotels around Major Cities~~

#### ~~Riyadh~~

~~Riyadh is the capital city of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and it is the city where the largest population of the luxury hotels exists. One reason of largest population of luxury hotels in Riyadh is that it is the prime destination for luxury tourism. The Central Board District (CBD) along King Fahd road is the major demand generator for the luxury hotels. This location is very close to the ministries and the major financial institutions. Approximately 66% of the four and five star hotels exist in this area. This research indicates that the corporate travelers mostly choose luxury hotels for accommodation. The economic crisis of 2010 affected the performance as well as revenue of these luxury hotels because the business tourism had declined a great deal.~~

**Comment [RL32]:** Describe what is defined by a luxury hotel in KSA and what star rating this equals? You just need a section explain the service levels available in the country and what the number of room / hotels make up these areas to connect with what you are asking in your interview questions

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~~However, the demand started to increase in the very next year and the revenues became stabilized once again in 2011.~~

### *Jeddah*

~~Jeddah has emerged as the major site for the business tourism because it has become the developing business hub of the entire country. In 2009, all the hotels in Jeddah were categorized once again with a purpose to make them follow the global standards. The hotel market in Jeddah is the one which is dominated by the four and five star luxury hotels. In Jeddah, the occupancy rate is generally high in the luxury hotels as compared to those in Riyadh because of the international as well as the domestic business community moving towards Jeddah for business.~~

### *Eastern Province*

~~The industrial hub of the country exists in the Eastern Province. It is the hub for the oil extracting as well as the other industries. Approximately 86% of the industry in the country is located in the Eastern Province. Al Khobar and Dammam are the two major beneficiaries of the domestic tourism and for servicing the clients of the oil industry. As compared to Jeddah and Riyadh, the rate of occupancy in the Eastern Province has been low historically. The recent oil crisis has put the hotel industry under even higher pressure. However, the market has indicated some signs of recovery since 2011. The market of Eastern province is also dominated by the luxury four and five star hotels (pwc, 2014).~~

Table 3: Hotel Vital Parameters

	2014 (Riyadh)	Compound Annual Growth Rate (2008-14)	2014 (Jeddah)	Compound Annual Growth Rate (2008-14)
ADR (SAR)	939	0.6%	903	6.9%
RevPar (SAR)	543	-2.7%	703	8.5%
Occupancy	58%	-3.3%	78%	1.5%

PWC (2014)

**Comment [RL33]:** So how does this relate to SERVQUAL

**Comment [RL34]:** You need to connect these last 5-10 pages to your study why is this background information important to the areas of SERVQUAL?

### 1.1 Problem Statement

The focus of this research is on preferences of the tourists and their service experiences by conducting a study on the difference between expectations of the customers and their perception about the hotel services. Service quality model SERVQUAL has been used in this research to study the difference between the actual service quality experience and perceived service quality of the visitors.

**Comment [RL35]:** According to later chapters you are NOT focusing on preferences of tourist

**Comment [RL36]:** Somehow you need to justify and explain how you are using SERVQUAL to evaluate participants opinions of their hotel experiences while in the KSA and outside the KSA – correct?

### 1.2 Limitations of the study

The limited reliable sources about service quality in hotels in Saudi Arabia were the first constraint for this study. Moreover, trying to gather primary and secondary data was challenge's because of the limited available resources and the reluctance of a few respondents to reply. The results of this study have implications for the lodging sector of Saudi Arabia and the other countries in the Middle East.

**Comment [RL37]:** Limitations are influences that the researcher cannot control. They are the shortcomings, conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher that place restrictions on your methodology and conclusions.

**Comment [RL38]:** Your confusing this with the gap in the literature about service in KSA hotels? Correct?

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## 2.0 Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive preview of service quality in the lodging sector of Saudi Arabia. The lodging sector and hotel industry of the Saudi Arabia have gained significant importance in last two decades. This sector has faced a number of issues as well and the performance of this sector has not been up to the expectations (Le, 2010). This chapter is based on the qualitative studies and empirical findings that have reported the service quality experience of the customers of the lodging sector of Saudi Arabia. Some of the research studies were designed to measure the service quality using different models of service quality. The three models that are more popular as compared to the others are SERVQUAL, HOLSERV, and LODGING QUALITY INDEX. Each of these models has associated strengths and weaknesses which will be discussed in this chapter of this research.

**Comment [RL39]:** This reads as if you have a lot of studies specific to hotel service quality in KSA – true?

**Comment [RL40]:** This should be the main focus of the literature review – how the model is assessed with customers – which is what you did?

## 2.1 Literature review

### Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Lodging Sector

This chapter provides a comprehensive outline of service quality and customer satisfaction. The lodging sector has become very important from an economic point of view in the past two decades. Major challenges faced by the service providers in this industry include meeting customer expectations and elimination of steps that result in poor service quality (Le, 2010). This chapter outlines the importance of service quality in satisfying customers in the service sector, especially in lodging sector. Several research studies have attempted to measure service quality and customer satisfaction in lodging sector. Many researchers have improved the model of measuring service quality in this sector. Three models of service quality have become

**Comment [RL41]:** Are you focusing on a financial perspective or a service perspective?

**Comment [RL42]:** This should be your focus



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very popular in measuring service quality and customer satisfaction. They are SERVQUAL, HOLSERV and LODGING QUALITY INDEX. Each model has its own strengths and weaknesses and they have been widely used in lodging sector.

### 2.1 Defining Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Both, service quality and customer satisfaction are necessary for the survival of the service. Both of these concepts are intangible so it is very difficult to provide a specific definition of both of these concepts. Term ‘customer satisfaction’ is a psychological concept. Satisfaction is achieved when the performance of the product or service exceeds the expectations of the customer (Oliver, 1997). The definition of customer satisfaction provided by Oliver is from the perspective or point of view of expectation disconfirmation. Before purchasing any product and/or service, the customer has some expectations about its performance. Expectation becomes positive confirmation if the experience of the customer after using the product or service is equal to or better than his or her expectation. If the performance of the product or service is below the expectation, it results in negative confirmation by the customer. Customers are said to be satisfied if they report positive confirmation of the expectations. The level of satisfaction is different for every customer because of difference in personal experiences, needs and wants of different customers (Oliver, 1997).

Customers of products and services are emphasizing quality more than ever. ‘Quality’ is a very frequently used term in buying and selling of products and services, but not too many people have the actual idea about this term. It is mistakenly replaced by durability or luxury most of the time; however, it is defined as “general excellence of standard or level” or “a level of superiority that is usually high”. David Garvin (1988) has identified different approaches to

**Comment [RL43]:** If you are going to have to make a case in chapter one why you chose to focus only on the SERVQUAL model.

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explain different dimensions of 'quality'. According to one of the approaches used by Garvin, the transcendent approach, "quality is synonymous with innate excellence, absolute and universally recognizable: you will know when you see it". According to this point of view, this term can be used for products and services which are meeting the standards. In light of this approach, quality can be taken as a global value which can be taken as measure of value judgment at universal scale (Garvin, 1988).

Parasuraman, Seithmal, Berry (2002) conducted research in which they studied four different kinds of services, i.e. product repair and maintenance, securities brokerage, credit cards, and retail banking. Regardless of the fact that all of these services can be classified differently, it was identified that the customer evaluated service quality on the same general criterion. Another approach presented by Garvin (1988) is the user-based approach. It is based on the claim, "beauty lies in eyes of beholder". According to this approach, perception of service quality is based on satisfaction of customers after using the products and services. After using the same product, some customers may report it to be of high quality while the others may perceive it to be below the standards. There is yet another approach to define quality presented by Garvin (1988) which regards quality to be the efficient management of business processes. This approach ensures that customers are satisfied at all levels (internal and external). This approach has been found most effective because it provides flexibility overall as well as specific operations of the company, and increases effectiveness as well as competitiveness of the company (Garvin, 1988).

## 2.2 Significance of Measuring Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Service quality and customer satisfaction play a significant role in services industry. One of the cheapest modes of promotion identified by several researches is customer satisfaction (e.g. Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert, Patton, & Yokoyama, 1990; Naumann, 1995). Organizations spend billions of dollars to improve service quality. In the case of services organizations, it is usually said that “doing things wrong” accounts for an increase of about 30-40% of the operating cost. In the services sector, the cost of gaining a new customer is 6-7 times higher than the cost of retaining a customer; however, a 5% retention rate may cause a 25-95% increase of revenue of the services organizations (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). These statistics indicate the importance of service quality and customer satisfaction in the services sector. Evaluating customer satisfaction allows the companies to view the quality of products and services of company from the point of view of customers, on one hand; and it has impact on word of mouth recommendations and purchase repetition on the other hand (Berkman & Gilson, 1986; Pizam & Ellis, 1999). Measuring customer satisfaction also helps organizations in analyzing the standard of service quality before and after the application of changes. It also allows organizations to locate gaps in service quality. Therefore, measurement of service quality as well as the customer satisfaction is beneficial for company qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Companies have a better chance to gain market share, customer loyalty, cost reduction, high returns on investments and a guaranteed competitive advantage (Render, Haksever, Russell, & Murdick, 2000; Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert, Patton, & Yokoyama, 1990; Naumann, 1995). In the lodging sector, especially in the case of three star hotels, service quality is one of the measures through which hotels prove the quality of services they deliver to their customers. Management of these hotels

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has developed a hotel rating system which they carefully analyze on regular basis. There are several forums in the form of websites which is in-charge of this rating system, and thousands of hotels compete to get into top ten positions through providing the best services to their customers. Tourists and other business travelers who have concerns about the service quality of hotels keep visiting such websites. They prefer to stay in the hotels which have been rated high by the website. Hotels have become able to attract more customers on the basis of such ratings and these website sources have become their competitive advantage. Such hotel rating systems have resulted in high service quality in hotels, and they also have positive impact on the performance of the hotels (Le, 2010).

**Comment [RL44]:** 2.1 to this point should be integrated in chapter one to make a case for what you are writing about.

### 2.3 Models of measuring Service Quality in Lodging Sector

There is a lack of consensus of procedure of measuring service quality because of the multi-dimensional nature of the service quality. Multi-dimensional factors are associated with the provider as well as the receiver of the services. Another important dimension which needs to be considered is inability of individuals to store services. Therefore, several specific models of measuring service quality have been developed which are discussed in upcoming sections.

**Comment [RL45]:** Opinion or supported with evidence in the literature?

**Comment [RL46]:** Again if you focus on multiple models you need to make the case for why you chose the SERVQUAL model in chapter 1.

#### 2.3.1 SERVQUAL Model

One of the most popular and widely used models of service quality is the SERVQUAL Model. This model is based on the evaluation of service quality by the clients. Clients rate service quality on the basis of comparison between expected service quality and actual perceived service quality while considering the gaps in service quality. The Gap model is the foundation of service quality scale, and is presented in Fig.1 as 'Model of Service Quality Gaps'. This model is

**Comment [RL47]:** Says which 3 sources?

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one of the extensions of the model presented by Parasuraman and his colleagues (1985). Within the concept of service quality, seven major gaps can be located, including:

**Gap 1:** It is the gap between the expectations of the customer and the perception of the management. This gap is one of three most significant gaps in the case of external customers. If there are several layers of management in an organization, this gap will be large. Other reasons for this gap include lack of upward communication or a wrong orientation of market research.

**Gap 2:** It is the gap between the perception of the management and specifications of services. If the management board or employees of organizations are involved in inadequate commitment to service quality, this gap may result. This gap may also be the result of inappropriate or lack of goals, lack of standardization of tasks or perception of infeasibility of services.

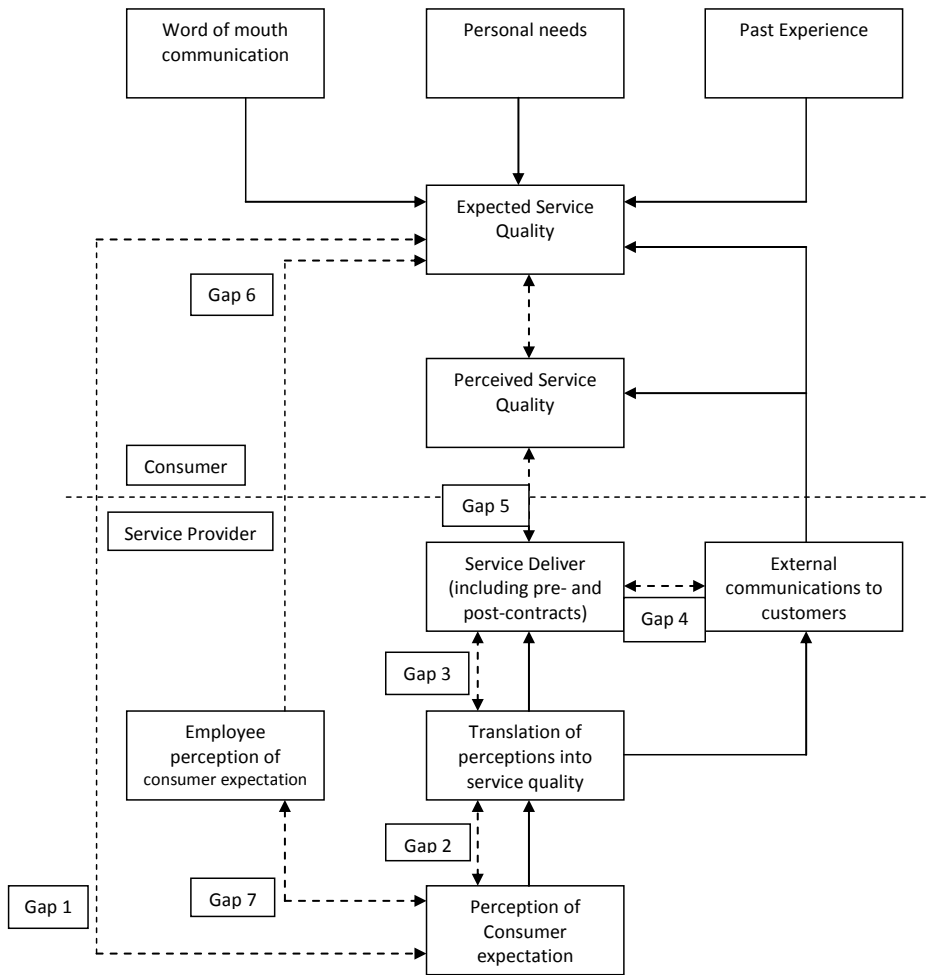
**Gap 3:** It is the gap which exists between the specifications of services and the delivery of service. This gap is result of misperception or lack of knowledge of employees about their duties. However, there can be other causes of this gap including, for example, lack of knowledge in employees about how to perform their duties, inappropriate supervisory control system and lack of teamwork in employees.

**Gap 4:** It is the gap between the delivery of the services and external communications. This gap is result of over-promising by top management to the employees who are internal customers, as well as to the external customers of the employees. Another major reason which may cause this gap is low level of horizontal communication among employees.

**Comment [RL48]:** Who created SERVQUAL and why? Has it ever been applied to hotels?

**Comment [RL49]:** Need citations for these four paragraphs

SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY



**Figure 1: Model of Service Quality Gaps**

(Parasuraman et al., 1985; Curry, 1999; Luk and Layton, 2002)

**Comment [RL50]:** All three sources created this?

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

**Gap 5:** It is the gap between the expectations of the customers and their perception about the actual services delivered to them. This is the second most significant gap and it is taken as true measure of service quality. This gap addresses the expectations and the perceptions of the external customers. This is the gap upon which SERVQUAL model has its implications. The expectations of different customers about service delivery are very diverse. Every service provider strives for identifying the needs and wants of the external customers and tries to fill the gaps of these needs and wants. However, there are some factors other than their needs, expectations and the service itself, including external factors like the breakthrough by competitors, and word of mouth which impact the perception of customer about the service delivered.

**Gap 6:** It is the gap between the expectations of the customers and perception of the employees of the organization. It is the third most significant gap because it is also closely associated with the external customers. If the perception of employees about the expectations of customers about service quality is wrong, there will be a negative impact on the customer satisfactions because service delivery will not match or exceed their expectations.

**Gap 7:** It is the gap between the perception of the employees and the perception of the board managers. It is caused by the lack of effective communication channels among employees and the top level managers. The issue of this gap can be resolved by establishing effective means of communication between the employees and the top manager of the organization.

According to the concept of service quality, a high level of service quality can be achieved if these gaps are smaller, or negligible. Even in the case of emergence of one of the gaps, the

customers will be dissatisfied because their expectations are not met.

**Comment [RL51]:** Whole pages of your literature review cannot be without citations or it's not really a literature review.

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Parasuraman and his colleagues were able to develop SERVQUAL on the basis of this model in 1985. The model developed by them in 1985 consisted of ten different desirable dimensions of measuring service quality. Later, in 1988, the number of dimensions was reduced from 10 to 5 (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). In 1988, these dimensions consisted of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. This is a very flexible scale which can be customized by adding some more dimensions and/or removing some while modifying the scale for the different industries in order to accommodate for the differences. (Van Dyke, Kappelman, & Prybutok, 1997). In order to measure the service quality in the case of the lodging sector, the original instrument was recommended by different researchers to measure service quality on different dimensions. The dimensions of service quality can be defined as follows:

**Comment [RL52]:** Where they trying to measure the service of any particular type of business?

**Comment [RL53]:** According to who?

- i. **Responsiveness:** Willingness to provide customers promptly with help whenever needed
- ii. **Competence:** The employee possesses the necessary knowledge and skills that are required to perform and deliver particular service adequately. It is the measure of how much accurately the employees can perform their duties. This is the test of the abilities to respond to the needs of the customers.
- iii. **Courtesy:** It is the measure of how friendly, respectful, polite and considerate the contact personnel of the hotel are with the guests.
- iv. **Credibility:** Credibility can be defined in terms of the trust of the customers placed in the statements of the employees. It can be taken to be the honesty and believability of the service provider in the perception of the employee.
- v. **Security:** Security means providing the guests freedom from any kind of risk, doubt or danger may happen.



## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

- vi. **Access:** It is the measure of the extent to which employees can be easily found and accessed in case of any help or situation.
- vii. **Communication:** It is the ability of the employees of the company to keep the customers informed about the services of the company. It is necessary to have good listening and communication skills. It also depends upon the terms and languages that can be used in order to deal with different kinds of customers.
- viii. **Understanding:** It is the measure of the extent of efforts that employees are giving to address the needs of particular customers.
- ix. **Reliability:** It is defined as the ability to perform the desired services accurately and dependably.
- x. **Tangibles:** It is about the physical appearance of facilities, communication material, personnel and equipment.

A pool of 97 instruments was generated from these ten dimensions of service quality in

SERVQUAL. Approximately ten dimensions were generated from each item. After reviewing the instrument, it was reduced to about 22 items. There are two statements regarding each item on the instrument. One of the statements measures the customer's expectation of the organization in the particular service area while the other one measured the general perception of the organization in the mind of the customer for which service quality was being measured. A seven point rating scale was proposed for the original instrument from "strongly agree" (7) to "strongly disagree" (1). Suitable to the development of the scale, 50% of the statements were worded positively while the other 50% were worded negatively (Churchill, 1979).

**Comment [RL54]:** Again you are writing summaries of material which is not literature review.

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**Comment [RL55]:** You will need to explain what you used to document/measure each of the 7 in the methods section

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## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Two different kinds of scores are offered by the SERVQUAL on each dimension; one for customer expectation whiles the other one for the customer perception of the services provided by the service provider. Miller (1977) defined ‘expectations’ as ‘the needs and wants’ of the customers. It is the level of services which they want their service provider to offer the services in current service experience or in case of some future event. The customer perceptions about the service which is provided to them by the service providers can be measured directly during the provision of services or after the service has been consumed by the customer. It is the evaluation of the services on the basis of their experience which they gained from providing the services. According to Parasunaman and his colleagues, service quality is the measure of difference between customer expectation and customer perception.

In order to maximize the service experience, it is necessary to increase gap of positive scores and negative score. Negative values in the instrument are the representation of the dissatisfaction of the customer. These values are calculated on the basis of the feedback provided by the customers on this scale (Le, 2010).

Each item has its corresponding weight with respect to its importance in the scale. It is because each dimension has a different impact on the service quality. In order to calculate overall score of service quality, the aggregate of all scores is calculated. The scores can vary for different hotels in the same countries or for all the hotels within same country. It also depends upon the culture and policies of the particular hotel or country. Sometimes, a hotel management scale is used by the management of the hotels to decide upon the relative scale that should be provided to each item in the scale (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research, 1985).

**Comment [RL56]:** Did you do that for your questions – if so explain in the methods section

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**Comment [RL57]:** Use correct referencing

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Apparently, the SERVQUAL model has been designed to measure service quality in 5 dimensions only; however, the fact is that it can be extended to include several other dimensions of service quality. It has been used in several different lodging sectors, and it has been used for the sake of several different measurements. With some modifications in the original instrument, it can be used to measure the quality of internal services in addition to the external services for which it is very popular. It is used to assess the performance of the employees of one department of the company by other departments of the company. It is upon the discretion of the management which dimensions they perceive to be important and how much weight are to be given to each particular dimension. This model is also very effective in designing the service provision and allocating the resources to each of the different dimensions of the service (Le, 2010).

Regardless of the wide implications and popularity in various industries, SERVIQUAL has been criticized by many for operational as well as conceptual aspects. The criticism includes:

- **Direction of service:** SERVQUAL emphasizes the process of service delivery and its improvement rather than results of service experience.
- **Expectations:** This term has a lot of meanings and dimensions and it is almost impossible to cover all the dimensions of expectations of the customers.
- **Moment of truth:** Satisfaction level of customers may vary in different dimensions.
- **Polarity:** Sometimes, the wrong responses are recorded due to the reverse polarity of the scale elements.
- **Data Collection:** It is not always possible to ask customer to fill out the long questionnaire on service experience. It is difficult to do this all the time.

**Comment [RL58]:** Too much reliance on one source ...

**Comment [RL59]:** Who's criticism one author many explain?

### 2.3.2 HOLSERVE

It is a new format for SERVQUAL. It is specifically designed for lodging sector and hotel industry. It is a reliable instrument designed in one-column format questionnaire. In this instrument, eight different dimensions of the SERVQUAL instruments have been added after modification. Three items were removed and there were about 27 items on the scale. It is considered as more user friendly as compared to SERVQUAL because it is a short and stiff instrument (Wong Ooi Mei, Dean, & White, 1999)

It is also a seven point rating scale questionnaire but it is easier for the customer to fill out and respond. It is also considered to be best predictor of overall service quality. Its characteristics, a seven point rating scale with one column questionnaire, are the success of HOLSERVE over SERVQUAL. It has more applications in reality (Wong Ooi Mei, Dean, & White, 1999).

Managers of the hotels should pay attention to the questionnaire when it is being filled by the customer. Based on the range of facilities, managers can develop different kinds of questionnaires for different hotels. For example, in case of 5-star and 7-star hotels, service quality dimensions like sauna services and interior designs can also be included in the scale. However, for 2-star or 3-star hotels, management can ask about the performance of basic facilities like telephone, television and access of internet. Managers can opt to add some more dimensions or remove some of the existing items in the scale on the basis of services provided by the hotel. HOLSERVE also provides facilities of in-depth study through conducting qualitative interviews or focus group discussions with the willing customers of the company. It can be taken

**Comment [RL60]:** So why didn't you use this model?

**Comment [RL61]:** Ok?

as a good starting point towards the assessment and improvement of services provided by the hotel (Le, 2010).

### 2.3.3 LODGING QUALITY INDEX

This instrument was built on the basis of SERVQUAL instrument designed by Parasuraman and his colleagues (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, Servqual, 1988). The basic structure of SERVQUAL was utilized and the eight-step procedure was developed from Churchill (1979) in the development of lodging quality scale. Basic research for development of this scale started with the interviews of travelers who stayed in economy class as well as luxury hotels. The interviews were based on the ten dimensions identified by the SERVQUAL. A pool of 63 items was developed from analysis of results of interviews. The internal consistency and reliability of this instrument were calculated later. The items with higher values of Cronbach were given higher weight in the scale.

After rating different dimensions of the scale, the unimportant items were removed from the scale. Only 43 items were left after the short-listing of unimportant items. The SERVQUAL scale was very popular during the period of 1990s, so researchers decided to collect the data on newly developed scale of SERVQUAL and compute all the items once again. Finally, the LODGING QUALITY INDEX was born that consisted of five dimensions and about 26 items on the final scale. These five dimensions included tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communication. These dimensions are different from the dimensions of SERVQUAL and they provide a more comprehensive account of service quality in lodging sector due to its unique feature related to the hotel industry (Getty & Getty, 2003).

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## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Quantitative data is collected on this scale. If one-third of total answers are negative, it is considered to be low. If two-third or more answers are positive, it is considered to be high. In terms of validity and reliability of this scale, it was found to have good correspondence between the LODGING QUALITY INDEX and satisfaction of the customers. According to Getty and Thompson (1994), customers feel satisfied when they do not experience any problem as compared to the situation in which they face one or more problems. However, they also argued that if the guests of a restaurant in a hotel do not report any problem in the services but they still do not recommend the hotel to their friends, it means that they are not fully satisfied. Statistical data has indicated that the guests who scored high on LODGING QUALITY INDEX also recommended the restaurant to their friends and vice versa (Getty & Thompson, 1994).

This model is also very important for the top management because it helps management to redesign the strategy and make administrative changes successfully. Research indicates that the hotel managers not only want solutions to particular problems; rather, they want solutions in most superior dimensions. This instrument is also very useful in assessing the performance of the hotels. It helps the managers to get an idea of their standing in the lodging industry of a particular region (Le, 2010).

Before implementing any of three models in the lodging sector, it is necessary to understand that their compliance to corporate culture of that particular region is necessary. It is necessary to discover the weak points in service quality proactively before it is experienced by the customers. Customers can get an idea about their weaknesses by gaining continuous feedback from their customers. It is achieved through customer survey, employee survey, complete vision of hotel managers and hotel as a whole is very important to be considered.

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## 2.4 How service delivery in tourism industry affects tourism sustainability

The tourism and hospitality industries have been facing cut-throat competition in Saudi Arabia. The demand for higher service quality in the hospitality and tourism industry in Saudi Arabia is rising (Parayanie *et al.* 2010). Tourist operators and managers associated with tourism industry in Saudi Arabia need to know their customers and to know what are the demands and expectations of tourists with respect to service quality. It is very difficult to identify and cater to all the dimensions of what is needed and expected by the customers because of existence of a lot of diversity among customers based on their personalities, hobbies, preferences, experiences and age. However, researchers in the field of hospitality and tourism have focused their efforts to identify the dimensions that are necessary to be worked out in order to satisfy the customers associated with this industry. Researchers have been faced with major challenges in achieving their goals because customers' needs and wants are continuously changing.

A term, "new tourists" have been coined by Poon (1993) for the tourists who are comparatively more conscious about the service quality. Old breed of tourists believed in mass-production experiences but these new tourists have different and special interests. Such diversity has been translated in terms of different perceptions of service quality and deliver of service by these tourists (Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1991). This new breed of customers in the tourism industry has a different perception of problems in tourism industry and initiatives taken to resolve these problems. Their response to these particular problems also varies from person-to-person. Liden and Skalen (2003) indicated that response of customers to perception of service quality and service failure depended upon their prior experience. Customers who frequently visited hotels showed high level of tolerance to critical incidences of service failures as

**Comment [RL63]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

**Comment [RL64]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

**Comment [RL65]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

compared to customers who visited for the first time. Hotels and tourist operators need to take care of the perceptions of these new customers.

**Comment [RL66]:** This should be connected in your conclusions

However, it is very difficult to achieve service quality because it is not a static objective to be achieved. Service quality is a very dynamic goal which keeps changing over time. Service organizations associated with the hospitality and tourism industry are continuously trying to achieve customer satisfaction, but it is a very difficult goal to be achieved. As Tores *et al.* have mentioned, most of the service organizations are not able to achieve these objectives and they are increasingly focusing on other dimensions of service quality to satisfy them such as delighting them, in order to attract and retain them. Van Hoofe (2002) has suggested that the terms of quality and service are abstract, thus difficult to be achieved. However, service organizations have emphasized achieving different dimensions of service quality. According to Lewis (2004), achieving the different goals of service quality can help service organizations to create an advantage over its competitions.

**Comment [RL67]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

**Comment [RL68]:** For example which ones are they deleting?

Contemporary concepts of service quality management have their roots in two multidimensional models:

**Comment [RL69]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

1. SERVQUAL: an instrument devised by North American School of Thought
2. The Nordic European Model (Gronroos, 1984)

**Comment [RL70]:** What?

SERVQUAL model is based on the perception of the customers and it identifies the gap between the expectation of the service quality and quality of service which is perceived by the customers through actual service delivered by the service provider (Ekinici, 2002). In order to achieve the customer satisfaction, it is suggested that this gap should be minimized. Looking at the significance of quality of service delivered in the hospitality and tourism industry for



sustainability of tourism, the researchers have developed more different kinds of tools including DINESERV, LODGQUAL, and LODGSERV which can be used for this purpose.

### **2.5 Impact of Saudi Culture on Development of Lodging Sector**

The basic foundation of public and private life in most of the Islamic nations is Islam. Islam has an extended influence on the politics in these countries especially in case of theocracies where it is almost impossible to separate religion and the state. In Saudi Arabia, order in society is in complete conformance with the principles of Islamic law. This law has direct and indirect impact on traveling and lodging sector in the country. The religion of Islam has an impact on the experiences and relationships of host and guests. It influences the operations of the lodging industry, and the policy-making and development of this sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

The population of Muslims in the world is more than 1.5 billion which makes Islam is one of the most followed religions on this planet. Most of the Muslim countries are the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Currently, OIC has 57 member countries. Most of these countries are in the Middle Eastern region. This is the region from where Islam started to expand. Saudi Arabia is the place of origin of Islam. It consists of South Asia, South East Asia and some part of Africa (Esposito, 1999). Most of the states which separated from the Soviet Republic are Islamic states. There are sizable Muslim nations across the world. The life of Muslims is directed by the Holy Book of the Quran and the Sunnah or Hadith, containing the deeds and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), or recalled by his family and companions.

### 2.5.1 Muslims as Hosts and Guests

Islam is pervasive in most of the societies where culture and religion are interwoven and laws and Shariah decide what acceptable (Halal) is with respect to leisure. The display of affection in public, shaking hands or physical contact of any other kind between opposite sexes, inappropriate dressing, selling and consuming liquor, consuming pork and other prohibited (Haram) foods, breaking fast in daylight during the holy month of Ramadan, gambling, and sharing rooms by unmarried couple are all prohibited by Islam. It is necessary for both the sexes to cover their torsos and upper portion of their legs all the time (Deng *et al.* 1994).

Frequenting bars or discotheques and other miscellaneous sources of entertainment like that form or situation are prohibited by Islam as well as state law in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries. On most of the occasions and public sites, such as museums and shopping malls, there are segregated sections for men and women. The amount of time for recreation is also circumscribed for the people by their religion. Adherence to these regulations at local levels across different countries of the world may vary depending upon their native cultures. Religious principles may be strictly enforced in some of the states while they may be relaxed in other depending upon the cultural factors of that state.

### 2.5.2. The State, Religion and Lodging Sector

Government has a significant role in the operations and development of the lodging sector in Saudi Arabia. Government is responsible for providing basic infrastructure, amenities and services for the development of lodging sector (Page, 2003). There are several responsibilities of the state in this regard including liaison and coordination with diverse stakeholders, planning, regulation, promotion and industry stimulation. An effective policy by

**Comment [RL71]:** You need to delete or make a case how this is related to your research problem and the questions you asked the participants

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

the state in the lodging sector is the one which sets realistic goals and objectives for the particular lodging sector (Fennel, 1999). Contemporary policies and plans provide the basic framework for developing suitable strategies which are not only effective in the short term, but they can yield very good results in long term. However, the major emphasis of such strategies is maximizing economic benefits (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

Process of making policies is headed by the government, and it is based on the socio-cultural values and ideologies of the ruling elites (Hall, 2000) and others who have some influence due to their power. Such dynamics which make the policies different from nation to nation represent the cultural factors that influence the policy making in lodging sector. There may be several forms of intervention, ranging from laissez-faire policies to strict regulations and control. Some rulers may favor some policies while the others may reject them because of their perception of negative socio-cultural impact of that particular policy on the nation or the state. Policies in the lodging sector are determined by power distribution, institutional machinery, political structures and value system in the state (Elliot, 1997).

~~In addition to political structures, value systems and institutional machinery, religion plays a very important role in determining policies. Government has to ensure religion dictates that the policies are in line with the religious values. Such kinds of religious point of views are very important in lodging sector of Saudi Arabia, contrary to the commercial and the economical points of reference of much of the public sector (Zamani Farahani & Henderson, 2010). Travel and the relationship between the host and the guests are persuaded by the Islamic officials. Saudi Arabia is the one of the examples of this approach to policy making. The religion of Islam also~~

**Comment [RL72]:** Connect these last two paragraphs to your study

**Comment [RL73]:** So what? Explain connection to SERQUAL and the problem of your study?

impacts the attitude of the OIC members that are not theocratic such as the other countries like the Indonesia and the Malaysia.

Some times given Muslim owned hotels are marked preference, because the government does not have much enthusiasm for the non-Muslims foreign hotels, choosing them rejectionist isolationist organizations (Zamani Farahani & Henderson, 2010). This is because the oil rich nations have the little call for the revenue and the socio-culture behavior, with the fear about the erosion of the religious devoutness and the convention. Some of the authorities are the more welcomed for the lodging sectors irrespective of their origin because economic imperatives have prompted a shift in thinking about the international lodging sector, even in the rich states where it was formally shunned. For example Brunei is one of the countries that are seeking to utilize the lodging sector for economic diversification and job creation in the anticipation of reduction in the Sultanate's oil and gas deposits in the next 20-30 years. Some Muslim countries have moved to become a specific favorite and business destination like the UAE represented in Dubai. There have been the signs of better lodging sector in the Saudi Arabia but many OIC members create serious obstacles to enticing the hotels from around the world (Zamani Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

### **2.5.3 Economic and the Political Background**

Saudi Arabia by geography is located in the Middle East, and it is one of the major oil producers of the world. Eighty percent of the export earnings of Saudi Arabia are based on their oil and gas resources, indicative of the heavy reliance of the hydrocarbons, resulting in their efforts for economic diversification. Saudi Arabia is ruled by the theocratic government of a strict character, but they politically display contrast (Janz, Zimmerman, Wren, Israel,

Freudenberg, & Carter, 1996). Saudi Arabia is not similar to the other neighboring countries because it displays the different ideologies in the Islamic world.

The kingdom of the Saudi Arabia is totally monarchy and Al-Saud has created the partnership with the senior clerics since the foundation of the modern Saudi Arabia in 1902. Shia Muslims are in the minority but the Sunni predominate and practice there by the name of the Wahabbians. The judiciary which is made up of the clergy is responsible for the administrations of the Islamic laws. Saudi Arabia has to face the problems between the Shia and the Sunni Islamic dissidents along with the mistrust. Responsibility of the lodging sector in Saudi Arabia is completely assigned to the general commission of Saudi Arabia for tourism and antiquities. (Zamani Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

#### **2.5.4 Domestic tourism in Saudi Arabia**

The local tourism request in 1421 Hijri (2000 G) was approximated to be around 14.5 million excursions, with aggregate spending of SR 22.4 billion. Local tourism in Saudi Arabia is comprised particularly of recreation and holiday tourism, which also includes visiting family members and friends. There is also religious tourism which focuses on visiting places such as Hajj and Umrah. Moreover, business or conventional tourism and medical tourism also exist. Conventionally, local recreation tourism, valued at 6.4 million trips in 1421 H (2000 G), has had a tendency to concentrate on the western part of the Red Sea, especially in areas such as Jeddah and the mountainous environs surrounding Asir and Taif. The eastern coast of the Middle East likewise is equally a magnet of local tourists, particularly from Riyadh and the eastern areas of Saudi Arabia. Local tourism tends to lean towards family and seasonal in most cases. It becomes

~~peak in the month of July and August when largely all schools have closed down for holiday. It also coincides with the two Eid holidays, furthermore, to a certain degree, at weekends. As an illustration, the Asir area has a gentle climate, moderate precipitation, picturesque and generally green field and an extensive variety of relaxation amenities that make it the preferred holiday destination in Saudi Arabia for local tourism. Abha is the primary town in the region of Asir and presents a strategic convergence of tourism in the district. Asir can accommodate a minimum of 1769 rooms, with an extra 1,311 rooms in enlisted flats. Additionally the resort metropolis of Taif, 150 kilometers south east of Jeddah, is Saudi Arabia's conventional summer capital. Located approximately 2,000 meters above sea level in the Hejaz Mountains, it offers the best summer retreat with picturesque scenery which is comparatively a short distance from Jeddah, which is densely populated.~~

-Taif has two "Fantastic" classy lodgings, the 148- room Intercontinental Taif and the 111-room Al Hada Sheraton. Notwithstanding this lodging capacity, Taif has more than 3,416 rooms accessible for rent. Taif has been the center of significant advancement in the recent past, with accentuation on family attractions and amusements, specifically through the improvement of parks, play areas, cookout territories and relaxation parks.

~~The city of Jeddah can be depicted as the main city in Saudi Arabia in general; its history and structural planning of old Jeddah, which acts as an entry point to two sacred cities of Makkah and Madinah, makes both cities the most visited cities in the Kingdom. Jeddah is likewise the Kingdom's overwhelming recreational and shopping hub. The Jeddah Summer Celebration, a secured yearly occasion throughout the previous three years, is a real guest fascination. With 23 carnivals, eight galleries and two zoos, Jeddah has more guest attractions~~

**Comment [RL74]:** Again make some case for why this is included as important literature for your research problem

**Comment [RL75]:** What does this mean?

than some other town or city in Saudi Arabia. In addition, it has 2,300 restaurants and 301 travel executors.

#### **2.5.5 Religious Travel**

~~Some of the widely known religious centers in Saudi Arabia are Makkah Al Mukaramah and Al Madinah Al Munawarah that attract approximately one million local tourists annually who participate in the Hajj and about four million to perform Umrah. This is notwithstanding an expected 3.6 million~~

~~International guests during Hajj and Umrah months are welcomed. So as to adapt to this local and worldwide interest, there has been extensive development and upgrading of lodgings in these holy centers. On average, it is expected that about seventy thousand lodging rooms in Makkah Al Mukaramah, and over eight thousand in Al Madinah Al Munawarah are available. For instance, Makkah Al Mukaramah has a devoted meeting place or Inter-continental Conference facility that offers about 1,650 square meters of conference space. Furthermore, Makkah Al Mukaramah has extra in-lodging gathering offices equipped for 1,370 people. On the other hand, Al Madinah Al Munawarah has in-lodging meeting offices with a limit of 3,170 agents. In total, there are roughly 68 travel agents in Makkah Al Mukaramah, and 23 in Al Madinah Al Munawarah.~~

~~About 1.4 million Hajj pilgrims as well as 2.3 million Umrah dutiful followers from overseas visited Saudi Arabia in 1421 H (2000 G). Before 1421H, those in possession of the Umrah visa were not able to spend more than fifteen days in the Kingdom; they were also not allowed to travel beyond Jeddah-Makkah-Madinah corridor. Nonetheless, these limitations have now been removed to serve the prospects of Muslims of staying in Saudi Arabia to know~~

firsthand its attractions. As such, these pilgrims have been permitted to travel around Saudi for a period of one month, which can be lengthened only for certain circumstances.

Apparently, the government of Saudi Arabia opens doors for relaxation and family tourism after an end to the ritual tourism. As far as the domestic religious travel is an indicator, the preferences for transnational dutiful tourists are Makkah Al Mukaramah and Al Madinah Al Munawarah.

#### **2.5.6 Business Tourism**

Business tourism has a tendency of being impacted by the Hijri season, since there is a general decrease in travel during Hajj as well as Ramadan seasons. This makes numerous lodgings offer rooms at discounted rates of about 50% amid these seasons. The mid-year months of July and August additionally have a tendency to demonstrate a fall in business tourists travel because a number of individuals are discouraged from venturing out as a result of the high temperature or take their occasions either in Saudi Arabia or other foreign countries.

Business tourism has a tendency to concentrate on the urban areas of such as Riyadh, Jeddah, Al Khobar and Dammam. Each of the four urban areas have created a moderately substantial base of settlement to serve the business group, with in excess of 7,000 lodging rooms in Riyadh, approximately 16,000 in Jeddah, and nearly 2,000 in Dammam and Al Khobar. In addition, Riyadh and Jeddah have exhibition hubs; Riyadh exhibition and Jeddah international exhibition, while in Riyadh the inter-regional Riyadh and the Faisaliah conference offers 2,405 and 5,200 sq. meters of devoted meeting space accordingly. Each of the four urban cities has an extensive scope of in-lodging-gathering and capacity offices. In a similar manner as urban areas



around the globe which are a destination to business tourists, these cities have countless agents as well as hotels serving their guests.

On the issue of domestic commercial tourism, transnational business tourism is centered on main cities within the Kingdom such as; Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, and Al-Khobar.

A huge percentage of these visits stem from other GCC nations, even though short-term workers from the west dealing in oil, telecommunications and other sectors equally augment to the number of commercial visitors.

#### **2.6 How strategic is it for Saudi Arabia to use Islamic Values, heritage and conventional hospitality to make domestic tourism sustainable?**

————— The population of Muslims in world is approximately one and half billion as mentioned earlier which makes Islam one of the most followed religions in the world. Most of the Muslim nations are members of Organization of Islamic Conference especially in countries where Islam is a major or at least second major religion. Most of these countries are located in the Middle East. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the Middle Eastern States and it is also known as the place where birth of Islam took place. The life of Muslims is directed by Holy Quran and Sunnah or Hadith which are the deeds and saying of Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) recalled by his family and his companions (Zamani Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

————— Several verses in Holy Quran endorse traveling for the purpose of physical, spiritual and social goals. Those verses include Al-Mulk (Kingship): 15; Younas (Jonah): 22; Muhammad: 10; Ghafer (Forgiver): 82/21; Faater (Initiator): 44; Al-Hajj (the Pilgrimage): 46; Yousaf (Joseph): 109; Saba' (Sheba): 109; Al-Room (The Romans): 42/9; Al-Ankaboot (The Spider): 20; Al-Naml (The Ant): 69; Al-Nahl (The Bee): 36; Al-An'am (The Livestock): 11; and

~~Al-Imran (The Amramites): 137 (Ali, 2005). Travel has been endowed by Islam with various attributes, and these attributes have been evident throughout the history of Islam (Aziz, 2001). One of the five pillars of the Islam bound every Muslim in the world to travel at least once in their lives unless they are unable to do so due to any physical incapacity (Rowly, 1997). However, Islam emphasizes this journey to be purposeful. The purpose should be the service of God which contributes to the unity of Muslim Community and Ummah (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990).~~

~~—————The relationship of tourism with Islam can be utilized to make the tourism industry sustainable in Saudi Arabia. Tourism is compatible and encouraged by the teachings of Islam. However, socio-cultural factors impact interpretations of religious strictures (Hassan, 2005). Islamic tourism has emerged as a major and powerful commercial force especially in Middle Eastern market where it has tremendous prospects (Intel, 2005). The government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia can play a very important role to use tourism as a sustainable resource. It requires development of infrastructure for services and amenities. Extensive coordination among the tourist operators and other stakeholders, planning, regulation, promotion and industry stimulation are required to make Islamic tourism a sustainable tourist resource (Fennel, 1999).~~

**Comment [RL76]:** Don't see the connection to the research problem – do religious tourist have different service expectations?

### 2.7 KSA (Middle East) Tourist Preferences and Service Experiences

The government's sudden efforts on its domestic tourism sector is because it has realized that Saudi is one of the largest exporters of outgoing tourists, who go for holidays to other destinations because the country does not provide the destinations and services that the sophisticated tourist needs (SCTA, 2009c). ~~The average working hours for all civil servants is usually less than 40 hours, with the five working days being between Sunday and Thursday. All~~

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~~government offices, institutions of education, and nearly all private sector facilities remain closed all through the two Islamic holidays, each of which is about ten days long. The first holiday, known as Eid Al-Fitr, starts on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month of fasting (Ramadan) through to the fifth day of Shawwal, which is during the following month. The Eid Al-Fitr holiday is at least ten days long, and it sometimes runs for two weeks (SCTA, 2009h).~~

~~————— Institutions of education usually have a summer holiday lasting for three months, and employees in this sector are usually expected to take their holiday during this summer break. Civil servants are entitled to a paid 30 working days leave annually, and they are allowed to accumulate it for not more than three years. Employees in the private sector are entitled to a paid 15 day annual holiday (SCTA, 2009h). This reveals an awesome truth that Saudis are experiencing increasing amounts of free time, which they use for family vacations, thus spending most of their disposable income on various local or international tourism services and destinations. As a result, it is normal for most Saudi families to spend most of their annual holidays in destinations that are away from the country. Additionally, most families make several short break journeys during the year to the deserts, countryside, and coastal regions (SCTA, 2009a).~~

Saudis, in millions, have been travelling abroad in search of tourist destinations, a factor which causes the Saudi government to lose a lot of **revenue**. Most of these outgoing Saudis have been travelling to the United Arab Emirates, where they learn a lot and find excellent services and treatment, which means that the Saudi government must provide equal or better services to attract these tourists Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!. As a result, the Saudi government is doing its best to tempt domestic tourists to holiday within

**Comment [RL77]:** Connect to theme of your study or delete

**Comment [RL78]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

the Kingdom by building higher quality hotels and new resorts to counter the unhealthy decline in domestic tourism in the country. After all, the government must study the push and pull factors of domestic tourism in the country, whereby the push factors are the internal forces of Saudis and the pull factors are the external forces of the attributes of the tourism destinations (Robinson, 2009).

Some factors or motivations for locals to travel include safety, esteem, self-fulfillment, belonging, and aesthetic needs. The behavior of all tourists is motivated by two variables: the personality of the tourist and the attributes of the tourism product. The first variable may include differences such as habits, cognitive attributes, and the motives influencing the tourists' choices of tourism products or services. The other variable is comprised of the aspects creating a demand for the tourism product, which triggers the ego of the tourists and causes them to become drawn to the product more than another (SCTA, 2009e). Therefore, while developing the tourism industry sector, the government must have these two imperative variables in mind, because they influence tourist behavior strongly.

Without a qualitative improvement of the tourism sector's product portfolio and a wider range of tourism products and services, the government's efforts will be futile. Qualitative improvement does not mean that the tourism sector should have more expensive and impressive facilities; the hotel market in Saudi has undergone different maturation stages, with most of the tourist hotels being in the five-star and four-star classes. However, there is an emerging demand for alternatives in hotel facilities, with most domestic tourists yearning for quality three-star hotels. The three-star hotels that are currently available are not high-quality, because they remain local and unbranded. With the introduction of recognized and branded three-star hotels, domestic

**Comment [RL79]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

**Comment [RL80]:** Delete no mention of service quality – correct?

**Comment [RL81]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

**Comment [RL82]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

**Comment [RL83]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

tourists will feel accommodated in the country's affordable yet first-rate domestic tourism sector (SCTA, 2009h).

The marketers of tourism in the country must fully understand the needs of Saudi domestic tourists in the current tourism market, which is becoming increasingly competitive. The marketers must understand the key motivations for the domestic tourists in the country that will make them choose Saudi as their travel destination. To know the preferences of the tourist in Saudi, one must understand their possible motives and values. For instance, every Saudi person is governed by Islamic law and the Quran, which influences every aspect of life and shapes personal values. Islam is not only a religion to them – it is a complete way of life, even for those who live in non-Muslim governments (Robert, 1995). ~~Among the values of the religion, family is highly valued, as it is considered to be the foundation of the society of Islam and the most basic unit of the society. Marriage is also upheld with great esteem in Islam, and they consider it to be a tool that unites two extended families together. Therefore, considering these two values of family and marriage, it is common in Saudi for families to unite and travel to different places to visit their relatives and also to maintain the highly esteemed bond of kinship. Therefore, tourist destination points must be designed in such a way that they can accommodate large families and still be economical (Sheraih, 2008).~~

~~The Islam religion also encourages travel, as it perceives it as a way of submitting to God by appreciating the beauty and awe of His creation. This is according to the words of Allah in the Quran, where he says in 29:21 that “travel all the earth, see how he made the creation. Surely, Allah has the power above everything” (SCTA, 2009c). The Quran depicts Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, as promoting travel for the sake of knowledge, where he says,~~

**Comment [RL84]:** Says who – is this your opinion – please support with evidence!

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Comment [RL85]:** Did you do this with your sample of employees?

**Comment [RL86]:** Not related to your study unless family values can be connect to different service expectation in SERVQUAL attributes?

*and “If the believing travels in search of knowledge, Allah will lead him to one of the passageways of paradise” (SCTA, 2009c).* Yet, even as the Islam faithful take pleasure in the beauty of Allah’s creation, they should abstain from overconsumption and indulgence. The Islam religion forbids gambling, prostitution, alcohol, and pork. Therefore, tourist destinations must have all these factors and values in consideration.

### **2.8 Importance of Cultural Preservation, awareness and community enrichment in making tourism sustainable**

————— There has been a tremendous increase in awareness of economic and social benefits of tourism which can be achieved through providing people access to the protected and preserved tourism areas. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been blessed with historic towns and settlements which have a lot of potential of being included in the cultural tourism. Most of the settlements have origin from about 1500 years ago and they are also lived in. Today, they are located in the desert areas and falling apart into decay. But they are very important for the cultural tourism. They have townscape, architectural and historic significance. Their significance in cultural tourism is that they can be used as tourism attractions as well as for retail operations for small scale local businesses and handicrafts. Historic quarters situated in the big cities add the value of cultural tourism to cities in addition to the urban tourism. Similarly, traditional settings also add value and appreciation to natural environments and landscape settings. Palaces, forts and traditional buildings can be developed as tourism resources (SCTA, 2009h).

————— In addition to these cultural artifacts that provide sustainability to cultural tourism in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, there are certain elements of soft culture which add the value of cultural awareness and community enrichment. These elements include strongly embedded

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~~tradition of hospitality of Arabs, the Majlis and the Coffee Ceremony. Still others are related to particular areas which represent traditional way of life in coastal areas, deserts or mountains. Three basic contributions of soft elements in development of tourism are (1) attraction of cultural tourism in its own right (performances like annual festival in Jenadriyah, or Arab poetry presented in concert halls; (2) enhancement to the attraction of the heritage product; and (3) promotion of economic activity (Paul & Rimmawi, 1992).~~

~~———— Cultural awareness and community enrichment play a magnificent role for the preservation of cultural artifacts such as handicrafts and traditional industries. Preservation of these cultural artifacts means celebrating local distinctiveness and conservation of local heritage. Efforts to preserve and conserve these cultural artifacts show the efforts of Saudi Government to keep their cultural heritage part of their modern life. They contribute in two dimensions. One of these dimensions is cultural value and the other one is the economic dimension. SCTA (2009h) has identified the major issues faced by the cultural tourism which are hindering its contribution as a sustainable segment. These problems include increased imports, falling prices and decreased profitability, and increased use expatriate labor (SCTA, 2009).~~

**Comment [RL87]:** Remove unrelated to your topic. Include a transition to the next section

### 3.0 Methodology

~~It is important to plan the methodology of a given study. The study process is divided into several phases including:~~

**Comment [RL88]:** Explain what this chapter will include and why

#### 3.1 Research Design

A **Mixed Method** (Sequential **Explanatory**) research design was used in this research study.

**Comment [RL89]:** Are you sure? Did you collect data from your sample at one point in time and then a second point in time ... collecting two different types of data – this is not what you are explaining later on in this chapter?

Mixed method research designs have become very popular in recent years especially in studies of health and social sciences. A mixed method design can be defined as, "...a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" or integrating both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of research problem" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003; Creswell, 2005). A rationale of integrating both kinds of data is grounded in the fact that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods are sufficient. A mixture of both the methods can be used capture in-depth details and trends of the situation. Strengths of both the methods can be combined to achieve more robust analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

**Comment [RL90]:** You did not do mixed methods study you may have had mixed questions, but your study appears from what you have written to be a qualitative study – if you interviewed or conducted focus groups in a hotel conference room still not clear

Approximately 40 different mixed methods research designs have been reported in the literature (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Among these, there are six mixed methods designs, including three sequential and three concurrent designs are most frequently used. One of the most popular designs among these six research designs is sequential explanatory design. It involves collecting and analyzing data using quantitative method initially and then collecting and analyzing qualitative data. **There are two consecutive phases in this research design** and most of its characteristics are well described in the literature (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2005). This kind of mixed methods research design has been found to be effective, and has

**Comment [RL91]:** You did two phases – if so explain when each was conducted?



implications in social as well as behavioral research (Klassen & Burnaby, 1993; Janz et al., 1996).

Despite the straightforwardness and popularity of mixed-methods research designs, most of them are not easy to implement. There are some methodological issues that are associated with implementing mixed-methods designs. Some of the issues associated with sequential explanatory mixed-methods design include: the priority given to qualitative and quantitative collection of data and analysis in the study, their sequence, and the stage(s) at which the results of both of the studies are to be combined (Morgan, 1998; Creswell et al. 2003) (Morgan, 1998; Creswell et al., 2003). A detailed discussion on priority, implementation issues and combining the results of both of the studies is in the next section, “Sequential Explanatory Mixed-methods Design”.

### 3.1.1 Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design

This research design is comprised of two distinct phases: a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. In this kind of research design, the researcher collects quantitative data at the first phase and analyzes it. The qualitative phase is built on the basis of the results of the quantitative data. Qualitative data is collected and analyzed (Creswell et al., 2003). According to Creswell (2003), “The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants’ views in more depth. Straightforwardness and opportunities for the exploration of the quantitative results in more detail are among the key strengths of this research design. This design is very useful especially when unexpected results arise from the quantitative study (Creswell, 2003;

**Comment [RL92]:** So how did you overcome these challenges?

**Comment [RL93]:** Really?

**Comment [RL94]:** You did that ... that means you conducted a quantitative study and used those findings to conduct interviews - ???

**Comment [RL95]:** You need to explain how you did this not just define what this method is

Creswell, 2005; Moghaddam *et al.*, 2003). Feasibility of resources to collect and analyze both types of data lengthy time, are the two major limitations of this research design (Ivankova *et al.*, 2006).

### 3.1.2 Procedural Issues in using Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design

Major procedural issues faced by the researcher in using the mixed-methods sequential explanatory design include priority, implementation and integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches. This section is comprised of determination of approach, qualitative or quantitative, which has more emphasis in the design used in study, then determining the sequence and finally determination of phase(s) at which the results of both of the studies will be combined. Our decision on these procedural issues is guided by the research question and purpose of the study as well as methodological discussions in the literature (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell *et al.*, 2003; Ivankova *et al.*, 2006).

**Comment [RL96]:** How did you do this?

#### 3.1.2.1 Priority

“Priority refers to which approach, quantitative or qualitative (or both), a researcher gives more weight or attention throughout the data collection and analysis process in the study” (Ivankova *et al.*, 2006). This decision can be very difficult but it can be based on the interest of the researcher, what researcher seeks to emphasize in the study, and/or the audience of the study (Creswell, 2003). In this particular research design (sequential explanatory design) priority is typically given to the quantitative approach because quantitative data collection is carried out at first phase and it is the major aspect of the study. The qualitative data collection follows the quantitative phase but in a minor capacity (Ivankova *et al.*, 2006).

**Comment [RL97]:** Which method did you give priority to and why?

However, the researcher may decide on the issue of priority based on the goals and/or scope of the study (Morgan, 1998; Ivankova *et al.*, 2006). This design provides the facility of making this decision either at the design stage of the study or later, during the process of collection and analysis of data (Ivankova *et al.*, 2006). In case of this study, the decision of priority is based on interest of researcher, goals and scope of the study. On the basis of interest of researcher, priority has been given to the quantitative phase. Quantitative data collection and analysis was the major emphasis of the study.

**Comment [RL98]:** Really – how so – look at your questions all of your main SERVQUAL questions are qualitative?

Data were collected through the SERVEQUAL questionnaire at the first stage of the study. See appendix 1. After the completion of the data collection, the results of the study were used to design the research at the second phase. Qualitative interviews were conducted at the second stage to ask people (employees of Cigalah) about the perception of service quality in the lodging sector.

**Comment [RL99]:** There was a stage two?

**Comment [RL100]:** Ok who did you administer the first phase survey to?

### 3.1.2.2 Implementation

Implementation refers to the sequence of the qualitative and quantitative phases in the study. There are two phases in sequential explanatory design. In the first stage, quantitative data were collected and analyzed. The second phase was build to gathering qualitative data upon the first stage, and data that were collected at qualitative phase were related to the quantitative study and collected through purpose sampling (Morgan, 1998; Creswell *et al.*, 2003; Ivankova *et al.*, 2006). The quantitative-qualitative sequence for this study was decided according to the purpose of the study. Research question of this study sought for the contextual field-based explanation of the statistical results. Hence, it was necessary to have statistical results in order to carry out their contextual field-based study at later stage.

**Comment [RL101]:** From who?

**Comment [RL102]:** You didn't do this as far as I can tell – this would mean you administered a quantitative study then analyzed these result to create your qualitative interview questions? There is no evidence of this in later chapters?

**Comment [RL103]:** What are these?

### 3.1.2.3 Integration

Implementation refers to the decision regarding the determination of phase(s) at which the results of both of the studies were combined (Green *et al.*, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2003; Ivankova *et al.*, 2006). The integration can be carried out either at the introduction of quantitative and qualitative phase while formulating the purpose of the study. (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003), at interpretation stage (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003) or at an intermediate stage (Hanson *et al.*, 2005) depending upon the nature and purpose of the study.

In this study, integration was carried out as an intermediate stage **to** connect the quantitative and qualitative studies based on the purpose and scope of the study, which was to carry out contextual field-based study of statistical results. The qualitative study was based on the results from quantitative **study**; qualitative data were collected from the purposefully selected samples to carry out contextual field-based study. Outcomes of both of the studies were integrated during discussions of outcomes of entire **study**.

**Comment [RL104]:** No evidence of this in future pages?

**Comment [RL105]:** No evidence of this in the pages that follow?

**Comment [RL106]:** Really what pages?

### 3.2 Research Philosophy

~~Research philosophy is based on the basic approach of carrying out a study. It is essential to understand theory as well as how it is connected to study ethics (Ghuri & Gronhaug, 2010). There are various theories that take an important role in administration of research. In this study, the research comprised of 24 participants who gave their opinions on service experiences and the tourist preferences.~~

**Formatted:** Strikethrough

**Comment [RL107]:** So what is your research philosophy that this study is based on? This says nothing?

**Formatted:** Strikethrough

### 3.2.1 Cigalah

The study was centered on domestic tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, specifically in the light of the service experiences and the tourist preferences therein. It was also more specific by surveying on Cigalah Group in Jeddah, SA.

Cigalah is a well known and reputable company which is less than thirty minutes from the King Abdul-Aziz International Airport and is easily accessible to the central business district (CBD) and to popular shopping malls. Cigalah is a member of the Yousuf M.A.Naghi & Sons Group which has its origins back in 1911 and nowadays Cigalah is managed by Yasser Naghi, the son of the founder Yousuf. The organization, whose head quarter in Jeddah is made up several companies and divisions covering a diversified range of activities.

These include:

- Consumer products division
- Pharma & healthcare division
- Watch, textile & retail division
- Gulf medical
- Zawaq Foods Company (Fully fledged manufacturing and packing operation)
- Al Mamoon – Insurance brokers

Cigalah is one of the biggest successful companies in Saudi Arabia. The researcher found it an important and valid area to study not solely for the unparalleled numbers of its huge profits and limitless goals that have been achieved but also the noticeable diversity of its employees.

**Comment [RL108]:** You need to make it clear that this was really just a convenience and that you somehow got permission because nothing above really support s that they are a good place to do a study about hotel quality and the SERVQUAL model!

This study was more specific and centered on Cigalah Group Jeddah using one of the most widely used service quality models, which is known as the SERVQUAL model. As mentioned in the literature review, this model uses-utilizes five aspects: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. ~~Tangibles refer to the equipment and physical facilities of the location; reliability is the accuracy and dependability of the hotel/destination to deliver the services they have promised; responsiveness is promptness of services and willingness to assist customers; assurance is about the trust and confidence with which the customer is served; and empathy is about the effort to know the customers, and understand their needs (Sheraih, 2009). These parameters of the SERVQUAL model are useful in assessing the gap existing between the expectations of the customers' and their perceptions regarding the services received. When the decision makers in the hotel industry mightily and deeply consider inputs and data of SERVQUAL, then the outcomes of all types and kinds will be positively affected. This consideration helps build the loyalty of tourists and their long term relationship with the destination (Robinson, 2009).~~

### 3.3 Research Approach

~~Precision of theory is demonstrated by the design of a research particularly in the presentation of results and conclusions. A study may have evidence that is predisposed on components based on studies that are inductive, deductive or both. Inductive research is where hypothesis is developed through observation. In addition, inductive studies contain a review of pre-existing sources of data (Sekaran, 2003). This is vital as it highlights the research anomalies. On the other hand, deductive study involves statistical observations and it is a research of social settings or actual organizations. The objective of this research incorporated the SERVQUAL to~~

**Comment [RL109]:** No need for more literature review since its already said in chapter 2 instead justify how you asked about the 5 aspects

~~assess the service experiences and the tourist preferences. In this case, the scholar employed both deductive and inductive strategies to execute as well as structure the objectives of the study. In other words, the scholar saw the participants as potential clients in the market and at another time as opponent players in the field with different types and ways of thinking. Overall, the scholar did not ignore the deductive and inductive typology before designing the research, neither during conducting the study nor analyzing the results.~~

**Comment [RL110]:** Unless you can explain it specifically don't include it

### 3.4 Research strategy

This is the preparation used by the scholar to respond to research questions. The research involves comprehensible objectives. In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire tool to survey the sample group to gather quantitative data. As such, it is important for the scholar to understand it is about the approach rather than meeting the objectives of the study (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2000).

One of the important strengths of quantitative approaches is the ability to produce causality statements, through the use of controlled experiments. Nevertheless, they are not totally objective because the researcher is subjectively involved in the very choice of a problem as worthy of investigation and in the interpretation of the results (Hughes, 1997).

**Comment [RL111]:** You are not producing causality statements are you – you would likely need more than 24 participants ....

~~The precision of the qualitative method is based on the issues being investigated. The scholar used this method to provide a broad experience as well as the objectives of the research. Qualitative techniques are widely used in social studies to help researchers investigate both cultural and social scenarios. Qualitative techniques include ethnography and action studies. Owing to the fact that this study aimed at understanding customer's expectations and their perceptions of hotel services, a qualitative interviewing pattern was utilized. This is because it is~~

**Comment [RL112]:** Just explain your qualitative phase if there was one

~~comprised of reflecting on and assessing cases in order to gain understanding of human practices (Saunders, et al. 2003) and to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale, 1996).~~

### 3.5 Methods

#### 3.5.1 Primary data

The study was carried out via a **pragmatist** approach. **Quantitative** data were recorded while interviewing the **participants**. This was done by conducting interviews with the participants; the interviews contained 10 main questions **covering** the five parameters of the SERVQUAL model. The approach was used to get **sufficient data** from the answers to each question. The interviews were performed with the all male and female respondents of all different position groups: employees, assistants, managers and executive **heads**. However, **qualitative** information was collected using a questionnaire survey sample. This was done using self-administered questionnaires which were distributed to the respondents who did complete them without intervention **of the researcher**.

All respondents were selected by the researcher with the much appreciated support and nice courtesy of the general manager from the company's **lobby**, which was found to be the most convenient and central place from which to find male and female respondents of all different position groups. However, the questionnaires were distributed evenly between males and females to avoid biased results. Though the people at the lobby were not all employees, the questionnaires were only given to those who identified themselves as employees. This collection of selected employees **was recommended by their leaders** **to** be ideal candidates for such a study as their tasks require traveling inside and outside Saudi Arabia regularly. The selected

**Comment [RL113]:** What does this approach mean?

**Comment [RL114]:** Need to make this clearer – were you administering a quantitative survey or recording (with a device) an interview – for someone not familiar with your methods this is hard to understand – remember the methods section should be specific enough that another researcher could duplicate your data collection by reading this chapter

**Comment [RL115]:** The questions should be included somewhere in this chapter or mention that they are in the appendix

**Comment [RL116]:** What do you define as sufficient data?

**Comment [RL117]:** Why did you choose these particular positions to answer for example question 1?

**Comment [RL118]:** Without intervention means? Some respondents you interviewed and some filled out the survey on their own? If so how many did you actually interview?

**Comment [RL119]:** This is still very confusing for the reader ... quantitative data was recorded however qualitative was collected – looking at 9.0 Appendix 1: Official survey you have a qualitative study! Did you actually record what they said and if so how? Audio tape or taking notes?

**Comment [RL120]:** How did you secure the "nice courtesy" of the general manager? You walked in and said *hi can I wait in your lobby and ask your employees questions?*

**Comment [RL121]:** You're writing above that you selected the participants in the lobby then you're saying the candidates were recommended by their leaders ... so which is it? What leaders? multiple people?



respondents were willing to take the time to respond. Some of the respondents were chosen while waiting for their turn to be getting in other offices, waiting for someone or so on.

### 3.5.2 Secondary data

Secondary information is important as it adequately explains the research issues. It includes journals, books and internet sources. Nevertheless, various information sources used in this study are secondary and a verification procedure was done to these sources to enhance issues of reliability (Berg, 2001). Published books on the issue of tourists' preferences and service experiences is important because it offers indication of other studies previous done on the topic. To enhance the opportunity of getting vital information, the scholar visited local libraries and the Supreme Commission for Tourism and Antiquities. Nonetheless, it was important to gather secondary information from the internet because there were few published books on this subject.

### 3.5.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the entire 24 respondents individually. The interviews were held privately at the company's conference chamber. Furthermore, interviews were chosen after discussing the nature and the purpose of the research with their managers. The managers recommended the participants according to their suitability, availability and willingness to respond, cooperate and share their preferences and service experiences as tourists with the researcher.

#### 3.5.3.1 Advantages of interviews

This technique of data gathering is precise and cost effective since it seeks to connect the researcher and respondents via cordial and friendly interviews in convenient environment. The

**Comment [RL122]:** Are you making this up? How do you know what they were waiting for and why would it even matter 😊 So you just showed up in the lobby of a random company in Saudi Arabia and asked people if they were employees and then started to ask them questions?

**Comment [RL123]:** You should explain how the questions you asked specifically came from what literature on SERVQUAL

**Comment [RL124]:** OK so you selected employees from the lobby and then you somehow found a conference room to interview them?

**Comment [RL125]:** What does this sentence mean?

**Comment [RL126]:** So you selected them in the lobby and then found their manager and asked if it was ok – really?

**Comment [RL127]:** How did you really select them? Did you interview all 24?

**Comment [RL128]:** Instead explain how long each interview took ... how did you record the interviews? How did you analyze the interviews?

~~technique can be custom made to satisfy the requirements of the study and in turn present comprehensive and accurate information where the participants remove walls and speak openly.~~

### 3.5.3.2 Disadvantages

~~It is time consuming to carry out interviews to gather qualitative data. To gather accurate information, there is a need for developing as well as executing a research plan. Some studies may provide data which could be quite important but not easily accessed by the respondents.~~

### 3.6 Research Ethics

In any given study, research ethic is an important element. Therefore, it is vital to make sure that data is kept **confidential**. Moreover, the scholar has to ensure that the respondents are over 18 years **old**. This is because the 1998 data protection act provides that individual information should kept confidential or failure to do so could lead to legal problems such being charged in a court of law. Conducting some research can negatively harm respondents. As such, it requires that a detailed analysis is conducted to establish the chances of any harm to respondents, possibility to harm must be reduced (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

**Comment [RL129]:** Ok explain how you kept the data and the participants information confidential

**Comment [RL130]:** Why 18?

**Comment [RL131]:** Ok explain how you did this?

### 3.7 Reliability of data

Reliability of data represents the degree to which information is utilized to present consistent findings (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). To ensure that views provided by respondents are reliable, different secondary scholarly sources were **used**.

**Comment [RL132]:** How did you make sure your interviews were reliability?

### 3.8 Validity

Validity of data involves demonstrating similarity between findings as well as the actual observations (Gratton & Jones, 2004). This was done by ensuring that the rich data of the written survey and the recorded 20 minutes interview **with** each participant led to valid outcomes. This

**Comment [RL133]:** Explain how this was done in detail ... no idea from this chapter how data was recorded or how the data collected was analyzed ,, did you conduct the interviews in English or Arabic ... how did you translate the questions?

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was achieved when the respondents answered the general and personal questions honestly and covered the SERVQUAL dimensions clearly. Additionally, they explained some circumstances and situations they faced and some stories were narrated when needed for a well-founded conclusion that matches reality.

**Comment [RL134]:** You cannot know whether they were being honest or not can you?

**Comment [RL135]:** What does this even mean?

**7. Gender** Male [ ]  
Female [ ]

**8. What year were you born?**

**9. How long have you been living in KSA?**

**10. Please identify your status of residency.** Local [ ]  
Resident [ ]

**11. Please identify your position in the company.**

There is no explanation of your phase one results and how they influenced your phase two results of your claimed mixed methods results.

**Comment [RL136]:** You I don't believe ever complete report this data

**Formatted:** Highlight

### 4.0 Analysis

In a bid to determine tourists' preferences and service experiences in Saudi Arabia by carrying out a study on the clientele anticipations and their view of hotel services, the study was applied on Cigalah Group which is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Out of all respondents evaluated, 18 out of 24 respondents about 76% were from Saudi Arabia, while five out of 24 about 24% percent were foreigners.

**Comment [RL137]:** Is this the start of chapter 4 if so start on a new page

**Comment [RL138]:** Why was this group selected – what is it?

**Comment [RL139]:** Where were they from?

~~Whereas this section sets out to quantify the position on the ground based on the results as indicated on the interviews, it is also evident that when it comes to different themes of questions, respondent's views are quite unique.~~

**Comment [RL140]:** This paragraph says nothing related to your methods

General characteristics of the participants of the study indicated that 67% of the respondents had ~~stayed at?~~ upscale type of lodging properties when traveling within Kingdom of Saudi Arabia while this percentage was 50% for the people who traveled outside the Saudi Arabia. Most of the participants (67%) indicated that their primary purpose of staying in hotel was business-related while 33% stayed for luxury. Participants who traveled outside the Saudi Arabia stayed in hotel for luxury about 50% of times. Participants spent about 50 nights per year on average who traveled within the country, but participants who traveled outside the country spent more nights in hotels i.e. 80 nights per year. ~~Most of the participants, about 76%, who were included in the study, were Saudi nationals and the remaining were foreigners.~~

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**Comment [RL141]:** Already stated in previous paragraph

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#### 4.1 Tangibles

~~(State of equipment and furnishing at the hotels in Saudi Arabia and or the Middle East)~~

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##### *2Qs. for Tangibles*

1. In your opinion, do you feel that the equipment and furnishing are modern looking at the hotels you stay at in Saudi Arabia and (SA) or the Middle East (ME) ?
2. How is the décor appearance and atmosphere compared to other hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

**Comment [RL142]:** Are you reporting findings or explaining how you were going to access a certain attribute of SERVQUAL – you should explain how you design your questions to measure a certain point of servqual in the methods and report findings in chapter 4

The issue of the state of the grandeur, luxury and elegance, particularly how the decoration touches of the hotel look, how upscale the furniture and accessories appear ~~and so on.~~

**Comment [RL143]:** Don't use *and so on* anywhere in your thesis.

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## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

relates to why SA has not been a tourist destination per se. A minority of the Saudi respondents were not sure of their views about the aesthetic appearance of equipments.

**Comment [RL144]:** Support your conclusion with evidence from the data you collected.

While nine out of 24 (about 38%) of respondents posited that hotels in Saudi Arabia and Middle East have some of the finest equipments and furnishings. Support with quotes or data ... what kind of equipment and furnishings did they identify? that represent modernity, and such hotels have been on the forefront to embrace quality services, much more should be done to attain international standards. One of the participants of the study said:

**Comment [RL145]:** Wow that's a big jump how did you get to that conclusion? What does that mean? Support with interview data!

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**Comment [RL146]:** Who recommendation is this? Yours?

*"In general, yes. Equipment and Furnishing are modern, particularly in hotels that carry good reputation among people or famous hotels such as Marriott, Helton, Inter-Continental etc.*

*Actually, in my opinion, hotels need more services and modern stuffs "furnishing and equipment" to attract more tourists."*

**Comment [RL147]:** In you methods explain that each interviewee was given a coded number as use those codes to label quotes when used.

However, a minority of the respondents simply gave vague responses that lack explanations. For example one of the Non- Saudi participants criticized saying:

**Comment [RL148]:** ☹ If your interviewing them? You need to have asked so it would be impossible for this question to be valid – does this make sense?

*"No. Not sufficient. The market is available for new propositions in the luxury market."*

It is difficult to interpret what they said sometime. A reason of such vague response may be due to the impact of Saudi culture and the extreme privacy that most of Saudi families ask for during their stays. The prevalent "Partition Walls" in the restaurants and cafes for example may explain the point partially at least.

**Comment [RL149]:** How can that be if you were talking to them?

Most of the hotels in Saudi Arabia are designed on Western themes. It is quite possible that the people have not been exposed to these themes and they may find those themes alien. The themes are attractive but they are not actually representative of the native culture. There can be

**Comment [RL150]:** These last two sentences don't make any sense – please expand and remember to avoid your opinion instead use primary or secondary data.

**Comment [RL151]:** remember to avoid your opinion instead use primary or secondary data to support

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another reason which can result in the mixed answer and this reason is that only a few people have ever been out of the country. As one of the participant indicated:

*“Honestly, I haven’t been out of Saudi Arabia, but nowadays, there is the internet. We live today in globalization era where we can see a lot of places easily so that I would say that I will give the décor appearance and atmosphere over here 3.5 out of 10.”*

People who have never been out of the country responded according to what they perceived

about service quality of the hotels and restaurants in the West or over the internet. They did not have any idea about the actual service quality of hotels in other countries, thus some of them maybe are unable to compare the service quality of Saudi Arabia with other countries.

Twenty five percent (how many respondents?) of the respondents asserted that hotels in Saudi Arabia and Middle East have modern sophisticated facilities that are equal in specifications compared to others outside. The remaining 13% of respondents among these quorums contended that standards are far much lower than expected. Two of the leading respondents (executives) believe that the previous factor is a considerable reason explains why the foreign tourists come in low numbers.

#### 4.2 Reliability of hotel services

##### 2Qs. for Reliability

1. How fast and reliable do you find the hotel’s services at the hotel you stay at in Saudi Arabia/the Middle East?
2. Do the hotel staffs show interest in solving any of your problems with any of their services? How do you compare that to other hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

**Comment [RL152]:** Why didn't you ask why they gave a 3.5? Is the previous sentences your explanation of this reply?

**Comment [RL153]:** How many people? Refer to the “people” in your study with a consistent term: participants, respondents, interviewees –ok?

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**Comment [RL154]:** Support these two sentences with evidence from multiple interviewees

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**Comment [RL155]:** Support with evidence – i.e. quotes

**Comment [RL156]:** You can't identify anyone as having a “leading” or more important response ... you haven't even mentioned any of the respondents position in your work so far ... that being said someone who has reported more trip out of the country may have more insights into comparing standards in country and out of country

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**Comment [RL157]:** Are you reporting findings or explaining how you were going to access a certain attribute of SERVQUAL – you should explain how you design your questions to measure a certain point of servqual in the methods and report findings in chapter 4

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When it comes to the question of reliability in terms of services rendered, 10 of 24

(almost 44%) of respondents appreciate the fact that services rendered by hotels are updated.

Most of the participants of the study who visited hotels found them cooperative and said that the staff was interested and very keen to solve the problems that they faced in the hotels. The reliability scores of such hotels were very good.

However certain issues emerged with 7 out of 24 (about 31%) of respondents such as not meeting the client needs, although the general feeling was that various hotels have been trying their best to offer services that are rather appealing to the client. One of the participants reported on the reliability as:

*“Often Hoteliers are cooperated and show interest and present service for hotel guests.”*

Another positive indicator pointed out is the pegged on the cooperation of workers who work strategically to meet the demands of a diverse clientele base. Subsequently, 25% of respondents alleged that services rendered are below the required standards. Some of them describe their dissatisfactions about services saying, “I dislike services in SA’s hotels... KINDA not competitive and below expectations!” They nevertheless, the researcher tried, failed to illuminate on the actual reasons.

### 4.3 Responsiveness of the staff to issues

#### 2Qs. for Responsiveness

1. How do the hotel staffs offer a service and or take action upon any of your complaint during your stay at in SA/ME?

2. Are the hotel staffs ever too busy or willing to assist and respond to your requests? How do you compare that to other hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

**Comment [RL158]:** How do you know they appreciate?

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**Comment [RL159]:** If most found them cooperative you should be able to support this claim with multiple 3-4 interviewee quotes

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**Comment [RL160]:** If they said this provide evidence to support this claim.

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**Comment [RL161]:** Rewrite doesn't make sense and you need to support "not meeting"

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**Comment [RL162]:** Did you ask them to elaborate

**Comment [RL163]:** Where does this indicator come from?

**Comment [RL164]:** Why caps – did you conduct interviews or not?

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**Comment [RL165]:** Are you reporting findings or explaining how you were going to access a certain attribute of SERVQUAL – you should explain how you design your questions to measure a certain point of servqual in the methods and report findings in chapter 4

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On the issue of responsiveness, respondents gave divergent views about the services rendered with respect to how complaints are taken. Four respondents (about 19%) of respondents indicated that Saudi Arabia and Middle East hotels have one of the poorest responsive mechanisms. Most of the respondents in this category cited a case where different workers are delegated with responsibilities to follow up issues that come with miscommunication to the end. It is indicated by one of the participants of the study as:

*“There is a very little response or it is too late. Customer service in Saudi hotels leaves a lot to be desired. They try to satisfy the customer as fast as they can, but if they are busy, they assign other staff to fulfill their tasks. Then, they follow-up to make sure that everything is under control which delays the service. Another reason is that there is not enough staff in the hotel.”*

Similar kinds of comments were received from other participants who contributed to such a low percentage of the people who scored the responsiveness of the hotels in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East as satisfactory. For instance, one respondent recounted that:

*“There is a very little response or it is too late. Customer service in Saudi hotels needs a lot to be desired.”*

In any case, organizations that lack effective response mechanisms tend to lose on what clients real want. By and large, complaints from the clients help organizations to realign their strategies for the better, with a view to meeting client needs. Any organization that takes the client complains for granted is destined to collapse. Nonetheless, 9 participants (about 38%) of respondents noted that responsiveness is a critical component of corporate structures in this industry.

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Comment [RL166]: You need to read everything clearly it takes so long to correct all of the simple mistakes each time you send this ... respondents of respondents?

Comment [RL167]:

Comment [RL168]: Use clearer language

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Comment [RL169]: Are these quotes from one or many respondents?

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Comment [RL170]: Two respondents literally said and used the exact same words in English or are you translating Arabic responses on your own – if so don't use "x" and explain that in your methods section – were the interviews done in Arabic or English?

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Comment [RL171]: Is this your opinion, a finding or something not appropriate in your thesis unless support with data?

Comment [RL172]: Is this your opinion, a finding or something not appropriate in your thesis unless support with data?



On a more positive note, some participants asserted that assistance is offered to clients well, although the corporate culture in Saudi Arabia and Middle East is far different when compared with the way it is applied in other countries. One of the respondent's viewpoint is:

*"All in all, they are good in offering the assistance to the customer. In addition, I see some hotels in SA are better than the hotels outside the Middle East, but mostly they are the same."*

**Comment [RL173]:** How are you able to draw a connection to corporate culture? Is this just an opinion it's not supported by your data presented so far?

While 8% of the respondents vaguely participated in this part, one participant had no comment at all.

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**Comment [RL174]:** How can someone vaguely participate - please explain this to the reader?

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#### 4.4 Assurance

~~(The level of staff product awareness)~~

##### ~~2Qs. for Assurance~~

~~1. — How do you find the hotel staffs' awareness about the hotel's products and services at the hotels you stay at in SA/ME?~~

~~2. — Concerning the reception staffs' courteous treatment towards you and their way of welcoming you upon your entry, how does the behavior of the hotel staffs instill confidence in you and how would you compare that to your former experiences in hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?~~

-The aspect of assurance may be somewhat clearer to the participants, who talked about their experiences in general when they reside in hotels inside SA and outside the ME. For instance, 8 participants (about 35%) of respondents reported that hotel staff in Saudi Arabia are well aware of the products as well as services offered at their respective hotels. Concerning the reception staff's courteous treatment towards visitors, 15 participants (about 65%) reported various views; 13% reported that that they are welcoming and offer assistance; however,

**Comment [RL175]:** Make sure SA and ME are document as an acronym that will be used throughout the paper.

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**Comment [RL176]:** Meaning?

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

respondents assured that hoteliers in SA are almost same like those in the developed countries. Twenty percent of the respondents reported that they trusted front desk staff and do not notice any different experience between hotels in Saudi Arabia and those outside the region. According to some of the respondents of the study:

*“They are welcoming the customers with a nice way and offering their assistances and the customer needs, and comparing with the other hotels outside the Middle East. They are almost the same.”*

*“They welcome the guests and offer their assistances nicely. They are also aware and strict when it comes to the customers’ needs.”*

*“I always trust them and can't blame them for any spontaneous mistakes. Additionally, they usually don't mention any negatives only positives. I never notice any different experience between hotels here in KSA and other hotels outside the Middle East.”*

On the other hand, approximately 32% reported that hotel staff were not interested to satisfy their **guests**. Some of the staff were neglectful or disregarded guests’ complaints.

Additionally, one of the respondents also indicated that, according to her experience, one of the hotel maids was not responsive. The other respondents went on to allege that the behavior of reception staff in any hotels around the world is very vital as it gives the visitors an impression of their services. But in this case, hotel experiences in SA, the services are not standard; where as the majority of Egyptian staff, who are widespread in this industry, are not responsive at all.

Another respondent of the study said:

*“The behavior of the front desk staff is very important. It leaves the guest with the first and last impression of the hotel services, but unfortunately the services here in SA are not very good.”*

**Comment [RL177]:** What phase was this from?

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

*Most Egyptian staff here are not responsive. They harm the country's image badly by their ineffective repellent performances."*

**Comment [RL178]:** Are both comments from the same respondent – isn't this data qualitative?

Anyhow, the marketers of tourism in the country must fully understand the needs of Saudi domestic tourists in the current tourism market, which is becoming increasingly competitive. The marketers must understand the key motivations for the domestic tourists in the country that will make them choose Saudi as their travel destination. This requires understanding their possible motives and values.

**Comment [RL179]:** Is this a random opinion or something gained from the data collection.

### 4.5 Empathy

**(Attentiveness of employees to clients)**

#### *2Qs. for Empathy*

1. How do the hotel staffs pay attention and listen to your needs while staying at hotels in SA/ME?
2. How would you compare the hotel staffs' ability to understand your personal and specific needs with that of other hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

**Comment [RL180]:** Are you reporting findings or explaining how you were going to access a certain attribute of SERVQUAL – you should explain how you design your questions to measure a certain point of servqual in the methods and report findings in chapter 4

With respect to how hotel staff meet the needs and ability to understand individual tourist specific needs, it was evident that on average they are trying. The responses indicated that 38% of participants reported that hotel staff are good at satisfying the needs of customers.

**Comment [RL181]:** Focus on numbers out of the 24 which phase is this data from?

However, some of them alleged that not much is done; in fact the staffs do not respond or delay in service delivery. Here is a participant's opinion:

*"Not very much, many times I ask for urgent needs, but unfortunately they are either late or careless."*

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Comparing the ability of hotel staff in understanding the personal as well as specific needs with other hotels outside the Middle East, 25% respondents indicated that most of the staff are experts and know how to meet the needs of customers. In addition, these hoteliers are proactive and attempt to resolve issues in a timely way. Some participants think that:

*“Employees in hotels in SA listen with lovely smiles on their faces. I’m quite confident that most of them are experts and know how to satisfy customers.”*

As such, it is important for the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia to offer equal or better services to attract millions of Saudis traveling to other regions. However, when local or residents in Saudi Arabia travel to other regions, they look forward to be heard and welcomed when they travel in big groups or exactly the same when they travel individually or as a couple. For more interpretation, Saudis are governed by Islamic laws that influence their way of life. Religion is highly valued because it is regarded as the basis of the society. Likewise, marriage is upheld and seen as a platform that unites two extended families together. Therefore, family and marriage are very important. It is also common in Saudi Arabia for families to unite and travel to different places to visit their relatives and also to maintain the esteemed bond of kinship. Thus, tourist destination points must be designed in such a way that they can accommodate large families and still be cost-effective. Furthermore, when local or residents in Saudi Arabia travel to other regions, they look forward to more self-esteem, self-fulfillment, belonging, and aesthetic needs. These needs are discussed constantly in many of the hotels, travel and tourism gatherings, advertised sarcastically in most of the Middle East media, and reported unanimously by the participants of the research in this thesis. Therefore, it is important that tourism stake-holders,

including the government, the investors and the hotels' operators in Saudi Arabia should consider these needs since they largely impact on tourists' behavior, satisfaction and pleasure.

**Comment [RL182]:** What is this section meant to be?

#### 4.6 Drivers for traveling

Based on the findings the majority of travelers, 16 out of 24 (about 67%) stay in upscale hotels most of the time. Thus, the government may invest more in this hotels category. If the government approves an expansion plan for more superior modern fashioned hotels and resorts, this mainly will include heavy investments in real estate, including more hotels. This will attract more visitors and create numerous jobs within the country, thus boosting the economy therein to a large extent. ~~The hypothetical expansion plan is a good reflection of the increasing demand for hotels, destinations, and services that are of high quality.~~ Of those who travel outside Saudi Arabia, around 12 out of 24 stay in upscale hotels, 17% and 33% stay in middle scale and budget hotels, respectively. Of the total people interviewed, 8 out of 24 (about 34%) reported that they travel for leisure purposes and 16 out of 24 (about 67%) to do business.

**Comment [RL183]:** Is the interpretation of your data? What about your sample if they are employees of a large firm wouldn't this be related to their responses?

**Comment [RL184]:** What is this meant to be?

**Comment [RL185]:** Are you studying tourist or travelers or hotel customers please revise throughout this study

### 5.0 Discussion

#### 5.1 Saudi Domestic Travel

In this paper, various family business segments are demonstrated in this secondary data in Figure 5.1. However, those segments with a big percentage of stay are the two eldest, who in most cases are entitled for holiday tourism or for reasons of undertaking an Umrah. Within

**Comment [RL186]:** What is a family business segment

surrogate divisions, there will be specific terminals offering prospective Conventions, Displays, Conference as well as Incentive (MICE) excursion showcased in the business travel continuum, and these are likely to be incorporated as corner open doors.

**Comment [RL187]:** I have no idea what you are talking about relative to SERVQUAL here?

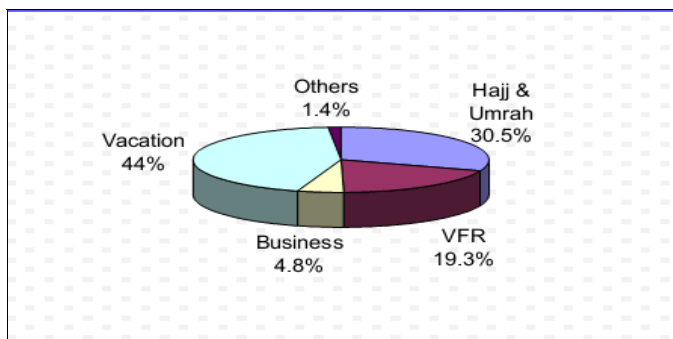


Figure .5.1 - Domestic Market Mix (Trips)

Table 5.1: Estimate of the Travel & Expenditure Flows During 1421Hijri (2000G)

**Comment [RL188]:** Why is this included in the discussion section – you need to discuss your results!

Trip Purpose	Trips (millions)	Expenditure (SR billions)
Saudi Domestic Travel	14.54	22.4
Saudi Travel Abroad *	4.57	19.7
Inbound International Travel into Saudi Arabia,	6.29	12.8

### 5.2 Saudi Travel Abroad

**Comment [RL189]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

The idea of Saudis touring overseas is pertinent to the level where few focus group discussions were accomplished, after the individual private interviews, to acknowledge the facets included. Such focus groups discourses involved male and female. However, on accounts of male groups, there were gatherings that draw back and singles that comprised of all Saudis.

### 5.3 Economical Aspect

The impression among the locals of citizens and foreigners, during the focus group discussion, is that touring in Saudi Arabia, would be rather costly compared to visiting any neighboring GCC nations. Moreover, the acknowledgement is that the Saudi product is anchored largely on high wages. By and large, touring abroad among Saudi nationals is viewed as an economical venture worth attempting, and as a result one can even stretch their stays abroad.

**Comment [RL190]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

### 5.4 Safety and Security

Saudi Arabia has one of the most stable political and social climates as informed by Islamic ethos of a culturally friendly and tolerant society. Apparently, these circumstances as well as low crime rates support the preconceived environment of safety and security. The assurance of safety and security is therefore the number one precondition of tourism progression.

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**Comment [RL191]:** I don't understand why this paragraph is here relative to your study?

### 5.5 miscellaneous discussions connected to secondary data

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**Comment [RL192]:** What is this section?

- Enhance Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

The issue of effective Cross-Cultural Communication is equally significant if domestic tourism is to be realized. While conducting any business does not require an identical style from one culture to another, business associations are strengthened when all organizational employees (particularly technical, sales and executive teams) are competent as well as fully understanding of some of the areas which are likely to cause communication problems as well as conflict among cultures. Equally, communication is enhanced when employees are given opportunity to take part in common areas (Simeon and Fuiju, 2000). As such, it should start with managing ethnocentrism, to preclude business communication difficulties that often start when the involved

**Comment [RL193]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

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parties in a given culture are not in position to comprehend cultural differences related to traditions, perception and so forth.

Basically, business is strengthened when individuals from various cultures find new techniques to existing difficulties; get solutions through integrating cultural perception and learning to perceive issues from other individuals' standpoint. The aspect of cultural awareness becomes critical if domestic tourism has to thrive in Saudi Arabia. While practical knowledge is a branch of cultural awareness and information exchange techniques, awareness of different cultural practices should therefore involve information exchange as well as opportunities to comprehend various cultures. During this process, discussions are commonly employed. In this case, the objective is to strengthen personal awareness of their cultural practices and other cultures. This is basically a platform for inspiring individuals' views of different cultures.

In business communication difficulties often start when the involved parties in a given culture are not in position to comprehend cultural differences related to traditions, perception and so forth. Fundamentally, difficulties may arise when involved parties stick to ethnocentric standpoint of conducting business. Ethnocentrism involves the principle that an individual's culture is in some way naturally better than other cultures (Seymen, Aytemiz and Oya, 2006). One can allege that ethnocentrism greatly affects those unaware of various cultures, thus it's a main aspect in organizational communication. Nonetheless, difficulties as a result of misinterpretation of aspects in communication may influence even the informed group of the society. Ethnocentrism is illusory since individuals of a given culture see their practices as valid, because those practices are perfect for them. Individuals seem to acknowledge the values of other cultures as absolute standards. Owing to the fact that every culture has a set of principles,

**Comment [RL194]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

**Comment [RL195]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?



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often somewhat contradictory compared to those of other cultures, the element of correct and wrong, imprudent and wise become vague. In business, issues arise concerning the right cultural practices, and are fixed by a wise approach to those cultural perceptions of the society. Considering that no person has the ability to accept subtle types of ethnocentrism which shapes them. Businessmen should be particularly cautious in carrying out business in different cultures. It is of great importance to attempt to surpass culturally instilled ways of seeing the society. As such, all individuals require understanding the manner in which discernment of a message varies based on culturally accepted opinions (Nankervis and Baird, 2002).

Business communication particularly in international business is filtered by various components that can affect views of the involved participant. By examining on time the functions of these components in business, an organization can enhance its capacity to express messages as well as carry out business in different cultures. Some of these components include;

- Break Language Barrier **Hindrances**

Language is one of the major barriers in conducting business across cultures. Moreover, it's hard to undervalue the importance of an understanding of language differences in global business communication. Actually, business experts' advise organizations to put in place necessary measures such as enlisting a translator. In general, language difficulties across cultures can be categorized as gross conversion issues, understated differences from one language to another; and cultural differences among speakers of a similar language (Moon and Peter Wooliams, 2000).

Errors to do with gross **conversion**, although regular are less likely to lead to conflict among individuals compared to language problems for different reasons. Without a doubt,

**Comment [RL196]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

**Comment [RL197]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

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nonsensical aspects of various gross conversion errors frequently highlight issues which are difficult to overlook. An organization can back down and re-examine the communication area which provoked the error. Even though they are identified without difficulty, nonetheless, gross conversion errors are time consuming. In addition, these errors entail lack of respect particularly for the culture whose language is converted.

**Comment [RL198]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research? Connect your findings to this

Understated shadings which are important in business negotiations are as well undermined if involved participants do not have equal control over the language. Certainly, misinterpretations are likely to arise due to dialectical variations. However, when other participants with control with non-natives assume that understanding of this difference is present, conflict originating from misinterpretation is possible.

Views regarding dialects as well as accents create difficulties in business communication. The belief that certain an accent indicates loyalty or awareness to a country or region is prevalent in different languages. Additionally, national unfairness and class differences are frequently strengthened by social outlining of language. As a result, regional discrimination and racism, particular accents in USA allied with minority groups, rural and urban regions may strengthen pessimistic typecast in business or education. On the contrary, certain cultures use social outlining to distinguish different economic classes. Therefore, England's different accents are related to upper, middle and lower classes. However, these differences are often unfamiliar by aliens.

**Comment [RL199]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

- Use Technological Advances Prudently

During the focus group phase, participants also discussed that the organization should also endeavor to use technological tools in a smart way

**Comment [RL200]:** You also conducted focus groups? Do you understand that this is not the case?

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The manners in which individuals use available resources differ significantly from one culture to another. Culturally-embedded favoritism concerning innate and technological settings can lead to communication difficulties (Moon and Wooliams, 2000). A number of environmental aspects can greatly affect the development as well as behavior of a given culture. In fact, landscape, climate, population density and available natural resources all lead to history and current conditions of a country or region. In any case, transport and logistical aspects and territorial arrangement are influenced by climate and landscape. For instance, mountainous nation with loads of natural water bodies will indeed develop diverse main forms of transport compared to dry and land-locked nations with flat topography. While mountainous regions would certainly develop shipping-based transport modes, dry and land-locked ones would give attention to on roads and rail networks. Population density and available natural resources affect every country's perception on export or local markets. Regions with large local markets and loads of resources for instance are most likely to see some sectors quite differently compared to those with one of those features.

Several organizations fail to change their communication channels so as to accommodate environmental differences and cultures due to inflexibility towards culturally adopted perception of technology (Loden, 2006). Undeniably, many cultures have widely divergent perceptions of technology and its purpose in larger society. For instance, in controlled cultures like in Europe, technology is usually seen as a natural way of influencing the environment positively. In subjugated cultures like in Asia and central Africa, environment is naturally seen as positive while technology is perceived with uncertainty. On the other hand, in harmonized cultures particularly in native America, there is a balance between environment and technology. In

**Comment [RL201]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

**Comment [RL202]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

**Comment [RL203]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

**Comment [RL204]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

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essence, in all the above cultures technology or environment are naturally superior and people from these culture consider themselves as an ingredient of the environment. Evidently it is risky to assume the guiding philosophies of cultures too (Mavin and Girling, 2000). For instance, whereas Europe is considered a controlled culture which believes that technology positively strengthens a society, there are some people in that society who don't support that notion.

### - Outlive Nepotism at Workplaces

In workplaces, social association is always a cultural orientation. As such, organizations should not overlook that views held in one's culture are universal on issues such as kinship ties, discrimination, class stratification, political groupings, gender disparities or work structures. These aspects have influential effects on business. Recruiting workers based on their resumes, for instance, is regarded as the main employee staffing model in UK, Europe and Canada- all countries with somewhat weak concepts of familial associations as well as ties (Lewis, 1999). Furthermore, in these cultures, nepotism is considered biased and is expected to safeguard those who are less competent by way of familial involvement. On the contrary, it would appear highly improper to advise individuals from GCC nations, Central Africa or southern Europe to hire a stranger rather than a relative. For members of these cultures, nepotism fulfils personal responsibilities as well as ensuring that there is a predictable degree of reliance and answerability. The idea that a stranger seems to be competent based on a superior resume and comparatively short interview does not influence the principle.

### - Communicate the Issue of Power Convincingly

Various cultures believe that the distribution of power in society is totally different. Understanding of the power in a culture influences communication in a given organization

**Comment [RL205]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

**Comment [RL206]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

considerably, because they form the views of how a message will be interpreted based on the type of the message. This implies that the conception of power affect the messages that executives as well as others use in organizational communication. In cultures with decentralized power like Sweden, an individual might expect more engaging communication management approaches, depending on power-based models.

### - Beware of Nonverbal Communication

The most noticeably changeable aspect of cultural communication is nonverbal conduct. Understanding of a culture communicated via what an individual perceives depicts only a particular percentage of what they communicated. In fact, body language, dress code, and other nonverbal signals all convey information regardless of the type of culture. The hospitality industry in Saudi that hires employees from various cultural backgrounds should expand considerable effort to understand the attitudes in those cultures prior to the employees carrying out any business activities.

### - Training

Attribution training is based on the idea that misconception emerges from diverse perceptions of a similar event. In addition, attribution training compels individuals' efforts to comprehend a situation by considering other cultures, hence minimizing the incidents of misconceptions. Therefore, attribution training aims at ensuring that different cultures provide acceptable communication to those from other cultures. As a result, training in social skill tries to recognize the essential skills required in perfecting service, establishing events and presenting views. This strategy involves role-modeling as well as video recording. Training in social skills is flexible; as such it has the capacity to satisfy personal needs. Moreover, it is done regularly

**Comment [RL207]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

making sure that useful incidents are included as examples and it concentrates on promoting individual skills rather than the personal insufficiency that may result from other strategies.

**Comment [RL208]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

Basically personal learning approaches are divided differently. To start with, cultures may choose to be separated or remain in the expatriate camps and hence decrease the contact with host culture. In the same time, individuals from different cultures can be as well as natives. This means that they completely interact with the host culture. Finally, individuals can possibly adapt and adjust their behaviors (such as opinions of host cultural practices) during an intercultural episode. In this case various indicators may without doubt interact to determine the appropriate coping approach for everyone, however an understandable adjustment and adaptation approach offers opportunities for real cultural adaptation to take place and minimizes the likely consequences of reverse cultural shock.

**Comment [RL209]:** You need to discuss your findings from the data you collected with secondary data and literature – not sure what this section does for your research?

## 6.0 Recommendations

### 6.1 Recommendations Based on Primary and Secondary Data

**Comment [RL210]:** Stick to these!

The Saudi Arabian government should expand its tourism sector; this is to ensure that it accommodates more visitors. The expansion plan could include a huge investment in real estate, whereby more hotels will be constructed. ~~This would attract more visitors and create numerous jobs within the country, thus boosting the economy therein to a large extent. In this case, the~~

**Comment [RL211]:** This comes from your primary data?

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~~government should plough massive investments into its numerous heritage sites; this project is likely to benefit only a limited number of foreign visitors. The goal will be to encourage domestic tourism. Saudi Arabia boasts about its rich archaeological and historical heritages, which are certain to simulate domestic tourism if the government does reinvest into these sites.~~

~~The political issues in Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and the surrounding areas in the Middle East region may have caused a significant increase in hotel room occupancy in Saudi Arabia as people seek more peaceful environments; this has not been a reason for the Saudi government to be proud of its domestic tourism sector. Therefore, the government should make efforts to reconstruct its tourism sector to make it a vital part of the Kingdom's economy. The government's expansion plans are a perfect reflection of the increasing demand for hotels, destinations, and services that are of high quality.—~~

Millions of Saudis have been traveling abroad in search of tourist destinations, an aspect which causes the Saudi government to lose a lot of revenue. Most of these outgoing Saudis have been traveling to the Emirates, where they learn a lot and find excellent services and treatment, which means that the Saudi government should provide equal or better services to attract these tourists. As a result, the Saudi government should aim at attracting domestic tourists to holiday within the Kingdom by building better infrastructure, higher quality hotels and new resorts to counter the unhealthy decline in domestic tourism in the **country**.

There is need to consider certain factors when developing the tourism **sector**, the government should highlight on these imperative variables, because they influence tourist behavior largely. For instance, factors or motivations for locals to travel include safety, esteem,

**Comment [RL212]:** You need to make recommendation related to your study methods and the findings from your study!

**Comment [RL213]:** LIKE SERVICE QUALITY!

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self-fulfillment, belonging, and aesthetic needs. The behavior of all tourists is motivated by two variables: the personality of the tourist and the attributes of the tourism product. The first variable may include differences such as habits, cognitive attributes, and the motives influencing the tourists' choices of tourism products or services. The other variable is comprised of the aspects of creating a demand of the tourism product, which triggers the ego of the tourists and causes them to become drawn to the product more than another.

**Comment [RL214]:** What?

~~Tourism marketers in Saudi Arabia should adequately center their preferences on domestic tourists in the current tourism market, which is becoming increasingly competitive. The marketers should recognize the key motivations for the domestic tourists in the country that will make them choose Saudi as their travel destination. To know the preferences of the tourist in Saudi, one must understand their possible motives and values.~~

**Comment [RL215]:** Rewrite chapter 6

### 7.0 Conclusion

The research was planned to investigate the service experience and expectations of Saudi Arabia domestic tourists in the lodging sector. The purpose of this research was to work out on the dimensions of service quality of the Saudi Arabian lodging sector. One of the most widely used models of service quality measurement SERVQUAL was used in this study and centered on Cigalah Group in Jeddah, SA. Service quality of hotels was studied on the basis of the experiences of the travelers was recorded using SERVQUAL individual interviews, focus group and questionnaires for a survey with 24 respondents giving divergent views.

**Comment [RL216]:** OK then what are your recommendation in chapter 6 based on this activity and its findings?

**Comment [RL217]:** What tourist did you interview?

**Comment [RL218]:** You did three types of data collection? Please explain when and how you conducted focus groups?



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An explanatory sequential mixed method research design was used for this purpose. It is a mixed methods design which involves SERVQUAL interviews and questionnaires to record qualitative and quantitative responses to record the opinions of participants on the quality of service provided by the Saudi hotels.

**Comment [RL219]:** I don't see these two different phases in your study?

Results of quantitative study indicated that travelers-within Saudi Arabia preferred high quality hotels. Most of the times they preferred to stay because of a business purpose rather than luxury. Results of the study also indicated that people who traveled abroad for pleasure preferred luxury hotels for the sake of leisure.

**Comment [RL220]:** They do? Based on what? I prefer high quality 5 star hotels but my school pays for mid-scale understand the point?

Results of the quantitative study were used as the basis for the qualitative study. Interviews were conducted with participants about their service experiences on different dimensions of service quality. Different gaps in service quality were identified during the interviews especially on the dimensions of empathy and responsiveness. Sixty seven percent of the participants indicated satisfaction on service quality in Saudi hotels. Thirty three percent found service quality to be dissatisfying. Saudi travelers who travelled abroad rated the service quality offered in the Saudi hotels inferior to hotels abroad.

**Comment [RL221]:** No evidence of this

**Comment [RL222]:** How so?

While it is true that quality of service is important in these parts of the world, the standard of quality is far below average in comparison to that in developed economies.

**Comment [RL223]:** Support how you came to this concluded from your mixed methods?

**Comment [RL224]:** What would show it wasn't in your study?

The research also revealed that response mechanisms should be reviewed for purposes of efficacy. The issue of furniture and equipments should be evaluated in a way that affirms international standards. By and large, the hospitality corporations in the region should embrace a multiplicity of cultures if the boomerang of domestic tourism is anything to go by.

**Comment [RL225]:** What does this mean?

**Comment [RL226]:** Rewrite - support

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Conversely, best practices should triumph over anything else. If the region meets the required standards, domestic tourism in this region will materialize into a serious economic tool.

According to the mixed research primary data and in addition to some secondary data, it is incumbent upon the Saudi Arabian government in partnership with the business community to expand its tourism sector; this is to ensure that it accommodates and satisfies more visitors from diverse cultures. The expansion should be followed by a huge investment portfolio in real estate, whereby more hotels will be constructed. This will not only attract more visitors but also create numerous jobs within the country, thus boosting the economy therein to a large extent.

Another factor that comes out strongly is that the political unrest issues in the Middle East region is highly likely to create a significant increase in hotel room occupancy in Saudi Arabia as people seek more peaceful environments where they are welcomed, by and large, this has not been a reason for the Saudi government to be proud of its domestic tourism sector. On one hand, millions of Saudis have been traveling abroad in search of tourist destinations, an aspect which causes the Saudi government to lose a lot of revenue. At this point, the private sector in conjunction with the government, should stress quality of service if domestic tourism can remain sustainable. This is necessary because most of Saudis nationals travel to other Emirates, where they learn a lot and find excellent services and treatment implicitly. The Saudi government in tandem with the private sector should provide equal or better services to attract these tourists.

On the other hand, there is a need to consider certain factors when developing the tourism sector, the government should highlight these imperative variables because they influence tourist behavior largely. For instance, factors or motivations for large group locals to travel include self-esteem, self-fulfillment, belonging, and aesthetic needs as large families every

**Comment [RL227]:** Any sign that KSA hotels are not meeting best practices -- Sixty seven percent of the participants indicated satisfaction on service quality in Saudi hotels is that a good number compared to other regions?

**Comment [RL228]:** How does your study support building more hotels?

**Comment [RL229]:** From where does this come out strongly?

**Comment [RL230]:** Is there any reason to believe this is due to hotel service quality? You can't say from 24 employees of a company in KSA

**Comment [RL231]:** Unsupported opinion

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

now and then complain that they get less attention than individuals in the hospitality and tourism field in general. Hospitality firms in Saudi Arabia should adequately center their preferences on domestic tourists in the current tourism market, which is becoming increasingly competitive.

**Comment [RL233]:** Unrelated to your study

**Comment [RL234]:** Your work is still unclear, and unfocused.

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**Comment [RL235]:** Please use the same font style throughout notice how these are different?

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## 9.0 Appendix 1: Official survey

### SECTION A

#### SERVICE-QUALITY DIMENSIONS

## SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

(In this section, please answer according to your opinion)

### ***2Qs. for Tangibles***

1. In your opinion, do you feel that the equipment and furnishing is modern looking at the hotels you stay at in Saudi Arabia and or the Middle East?
2. How is the décor appearance and atmosphere compared to other hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

### ***2Qs. for Reliability***

2. How fast and reliable do you find the hotel's services at the hotel you stay at in Saudi Arabia/the Middle East?
2. Do the hotel staffs show interest in solving any of your problems with any of their services? How do you compare that to other hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

### ***2Qs. for Responsiveness***

2. How do the hotel staffs offer a service and or take action upon any of your complaint during your stay at in SA/ME?
2. Are the hotel staffs ever too busy or willing to assist and respond to your requests? How do you compare that to other hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

### ***2Qs. for Assurance***

- 3-1 How do you find the hotel staffs' awareness about the hotel's products and services at the hotels you stay at in SA/ME?

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4.2. Concerning the reception staffs' courteous treatment towards you and their way of welcoming you upon your entry, how does the behavior of the hotel staffs instill confidence in you and how would you compare that to your former experiences in hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

**2Qs. for Empathy**

3. How do the hotel staffs pay attention and listen to your needs while staying at hotels in SA/ME?
4. How would you compare the hotel staffs' ability to understand your personal and specific needs with that of other hotels you have visited outside the Middle East?

**SECTION B**

**GENERAL INFO**

(Tick where appropriate)

1. What is your primary type of lodging properties/hotels you stay at when traveling in KSA/the Middle East:
  - Upscale
  - Mid-scale
  - Budget
2. What is your primary type of lodging properties/hotels you stay at when traveling outside KSA/the Middle East:
  - Upscale
  - Mid-scale
  - Budget
3. What is your primary purpose for hotel stay in KSA/the Middle East?
  - Leisure
  - Business
  - Other
4. What is your primary purpose for hotel stay outside KSA/the Middle East?
  - Leisure
  - Business
  - Other
5. Approximately, how many nights do you stay in hotels in KSA every year?

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6. Approximately, how many nights do you stay in hotels outside the Middle East every year?

7. Gender  Male

Female

8. What year were you born?

9. How long have you been living in KSA?

10. Please identify your status of residency.  Local

Resident

11. Please identify your position in the company.

12. Please include your email or cell phone number for follow up interview if needed.