

**Impact of the quality of major cultural and sporting events on tourists’
satisfaction in the Kingdom: Applied to the activities of the General
Entertainment Authority**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Research Problem.....	4
Importance Of The Study.....	4
Objectives Of The Study	6
Primary objective.....	6
Other objectives	6
Research Hypothesis	6
Questions Of The Study	6
Literature Review.....	7
Methodology	9
Research Structure.....	9
Study Limitation.....	10
References	11

Introduction

In recent decades, tourism has presented a competitive space for organizations and countries. As a result, the tourism sector has rapidly developed, outperforming many sectors around the world. Globalization has seen growth in the tourism sector with every corner of the world becoming more accessible. As a result, countries are taking tourism seriously and efforts to ensure tourism satisfaction is achieved have become more pertinent. For the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, tourism efforts have been directed toward economic diversification with the need to move the country from oil dependence becoming more significant (Tabash et al., 2023). Notably, the Kingdom enjoys superiority in the region regarding investments from the private sector in the tourism sector. With continued investments, more tourist sites will be developed attracting more visitors even from offshore. However, it is important to ensure that the satisfaction of tourists is in line with the growth to attain sustainability in the sector. Essentially, tourist satisfaction refers to a scenario where the expectations of tourists are met by the experience acquired from their tourist activities.

According to Rehman et al., (2023), tourist satisfaction can only be equated to the conformity between tourist destination characteristics and tourist expectations. From this, it is outright that the destinations' characteristics have an impact on tourist satisfaction. Thus, tourist satisfaction should be viewed in the dimension of objective factors like features of the service or product, and the dimension of subjective features such as the needs and emotions of the tourist. The current study focuses on subjective factors which include the major cultural and sporting events. Notably, this is based on the study by Singh et al. (2023) that postulates that influencing the quality of the subjective tourism factors can impact the objective factors and as a result determine the

extent of tourist satisfaction. Therefore, the study is in line with the betterment of tourist satisfaction in Saudi Arabia by using major cultural and sporting events.

Research Problem

The need to diversify the economy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is now more important than ever. Various authorities set up by the Kingdom have a role to play in ensuring various sectors of the economy grow and assist the country in doing away with oil dependence as the major driver of the economy. One of the bodies tasked with bettering the tourism sector is the General Entertainment Authority which calls for ideas that can help in growing the entertainment sector. Essentially, tourism plays an important role in the entertainment industry, influencing overall tourist satisfaction. It is crucial to note that despite the efforts that have been made by the authority, the success level attained is not maximum and there's still room for improvement. Further, there have been minimal recommendations to the authorities regarding sporting and cultural events. Notably, this points to a research need to assist in enhancing the information available to the authorities regarding these two events that have an impact on tourist satisfaction.

Importance Of The Study

The perception of tourist destinations is crucial because it affects travelers' choice of destination as well as their degree of satisfaction. Destinations frequently vie with one another based on something other than the mental image—the imagery—that they can imprint on the minds of prospective travelers (Hassan et al., 2023). As a result, tourist destination marketers spend a lot of money cultivating a positive and appealing image that entices potential visitors to visit, return, or develop destination loyalty. Even though the relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction has been

extensively studied, authors contend that there are still unexplored areas in this area. A logical investigation of a set of presumptions and beliefs is known as theoretical research. Notably, this kind of study involves defining or theorizing how a destination's image is formed and how that affects satisfaction among tourists.

Each study has a unique significance, and the current study has the following significant contributions. First, a key idea in consumer behavior research and related buyer behavior research is the image of a product or service. Selecting a product or service is the primary goal of consumer behavior research. In the context of tourism, it makes sense that the image of a destination plays the most significant role in decision-making since the perception of a product or service is a important factor in the selection options related to any product, place, person, or service. An abundance of papers on the subject can be used to dilute the significance of destination image for marketing. As the preceding sections have shown, there is increasing competition among destinations; therefore, it is more important than ever for destinations to establish a unique image to stand out from the competition. The selection of a destination is heavily influenced by its image. Thus, the current study will assist in shaping the image of cultural and sporting events for the Kingdom as a tourist destination.

There isn't much research available on most studies that have looked at the factors that influence a destination's image and results, or how it affects tourist satisfaction. For example, there has only been one study on the effects of destination image in Saudi Arabia over the past ten years. Therefore, the current study is in line to contribute to existing literature regarding the enhancement of tourist satisfaction from a different perspective.

Objectives Of The Study

Primary objective

Establish the nature of the impact of the quality of cultural and sporting events on tourists' satisfaction in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Other objectives

1. Evaluate the mediating role of tourist satisfaction between quality-based cultural and sporting activities and tourism's sustainability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
2. Examine the impact of tourism satisfaction on the planning of sporting and cultural events.

Research Hypothesis

The quality of cultural and sporting activities affects the level of satisfaction among tourists visiting the events in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Questions Of The Study

1. What is the nature of the influence of the quality of cultural and sporting events on tourists' satisfaction in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
2. What is the mediating role of tourist satisfaction between quality-based cultural and sporting activities and tourism's sustainability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
3. What is the impact of tourism satisfaction on the planning of sporting and cultural events?

Literature Review

Saudi Arabia benefits from a strategic location at the confluence of three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. Its large territory and lengthy history have given it access to a wealth of historical and natural resources (Ali & Salameh, 2021). The authenticity offered by Saudi Arabia's diverse cultural heritage—including its attire, cuisine, beverages, and entertainment—is one of its best features as a travel destination. Saudi Arabia is a stable nation in a volatile area, which is encouraging the growth of the tourism industry (Aliedan et al., 2021). Being a major oil producer allows the nation to have close political and economic ties with other Muslim and/or Arab nations as well as with the rest of the world. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a productive participant in global associations like the Group of Twenty, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries). A global inflow of expats and expertise also supports dense political and commercial relationships. According to Al-Hazmia (2020), this heightens the need for an enhanced tourist experience for local and international tourists.

While there are general motives shared by tourists worldwide (such as the desire to escape familiar surroundings), the specific factors influencing these motives vary based on the socio-cultural backgrounds of the tourists. The study by Wu & Mursid (2020) was one of the few that discussed the impact of Arab tourists' social environments. Their research revealed that travelers sought refuge from socio-cultural limitations, such as attire and romantic customs prohibitions. Strong social norms and religious precepts on social interactions and self-presentation dominate Arab culture, especially in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations (Alkhalaf & Orams, 2021). Cultures are shaped in large part by social norms, which are the unwritten rules guiding group behavior. Scholars believe that cultural and social norms

play a major role in making consumer behavior (Sudigdo & Khalifa, 2020). While making decisions, consumers frequently consider the expectations and actions of others. In societies where people have stronger social ties and make decisions not only for themselves but also for others in the community, this influence becomes more significant. However, even though researchers acknowledge this influence, little is known about how social norms influence choices, particularly when it comes to the behavior of Saudi tourists. In recent times, there has been a surge in research on social norms and their impacts. Nonetheless, a lot of these studies concentrated on topics like environmentally friendly behavior (Naser Alsaïd & Ben Amor, 2020). Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on the impact of social norms on Saudi Arabian tourists. Notably, this study tackles these gaps in the literature by concentrating on how social-cultural norms and practices affect the decisions made by visitors from within Saudi Arabia. The results of the study will aid scholars in comprehending how Saudi Arabia's tribal structure and religious way of life influence travelers' preferences for vacation spots. To this end, it is important to look at how tourists' behaviors are influenced by their religion.

Researchers' interest in comprehending the viewpoints of Muslim tourists has grown because of this trend. Even though research is increasing, many of these studies focus on Islamic religious tourism, halal tourism, Shariah-compliant services, and traveler experiences in Muslim countries (Ledhem & Moussaoui, 2020). Furthermore, while numerous research studies have discussed the influence of Islamic faith on the tourist's behaviour, writers have also emphasized the necessity of acknowledging that Islamic travelers from various cultural backgrounds exhibit a range of behaviors (Bokhari, 2021). As a result, even though Muslims around the world practice the same religion but belong to distinct sects, the extent to which Islam influences their behavior

varies. Notably, this emphasizes how critical it is to discuss the various ways that Islam affects visitors from various cultural backgrounds. The Islamic faith has a significant impact on people's daily lives. According to Wahyono & Razak (2020), the effects of religion extend beyond the promotion of spiritual beliefs, values, and traditions. They also include the development of practices that ought to be ingrained in politics, social structures, economics, finance, and way of life. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, so it has a major impact on individuals' behavior. This includes the choices and actions they make when traveling; as a result, Saudi Arabia's tourism and hospitality service providers have adopted Islamic values. All these form considerations for the intended study.

Methodology

The study will utilize study the methodology of an online survey. Notably, the selection of this research method is influenced by the cost implication. Minimal costs are likely to be spent when the method is adopted. Further, the method is likely to reach a broad audience within a small timeframe. The online survey method will utilize online questionnaires as study tools. The questionnaires will contain questions that are sufficient to collect information that will make it possible to answer the study questions. The study will adopt a design of using online study platforms to send the questionnaires to the target population. The target population will entail random Saudi citizens who have engaged in tourism activities in the past. Essentially, their anonymity will be respected and maintained for the study.

Research Structure

Following the Introduction Chapter, Chapter 2 examines the literature to give a general overview of sports and cultural tourism and potential implications that should

be considered by the general entertainment authority. The research methodology and the process for conducting the study survey are covered in Chapter 3. For the actual study, Chapters 4 and 5 will be included. The main conclusions and findings of this study will be examined in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will wrap up this thesis by summarizing the key findings and suggesting areas for additional research.

Study Limitation

The intended study will face several limitations. First, due to a resource constraint, the study will only focus on domestic tourists. However, the overall objective of the study is to influence the activities of the general entertainment authority regarding attaining tourist satisfaction without drawing a line between domestic and international tourists. Notably, these points to a possible misfit should be there a difference regarding the factors that influence tourist satisfaction among domestic and international tourists. Second, the study has a limitation of researcher bias. Since the researcher is also a domestic tourist in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, personal opinions and preferences can spill into the study. However, objectivity will be maintained throughout the study.

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