The Impact of Culture on Tourists' Evaluation of Hotel Service Experiences

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Abstract—The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of tourists' culture on perception and evaluation of hotel service experience and behavioral intentions. Drawing on Hofested's cultural dimensions, this study seeks to further contribute towards understanding the effect of culture on perception and evaluation of hotels' services, and whether there are differences between Saudi and European tourists' perceptions of hotel services evaluation. A descriptive cross-sectional design was used in this study. Data were collected from tourists staying in five-star hotels in Saudi Arabia using the self-completion technique. The findings show that evaluations of hotel services differ from one culture to another. T-test results reveal that Saudis were more tolerant and reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction, were more likely to return and recommend the hotel, and perceived the price for the hotel stay as being good value for money as compared to their European counterparts. The sample was relatively small and specific to only five-star hotel evaluations. As a result, findings cannot be generalized to the wider tourist population. The results of this research have important implications for management within the Saudi hospitality industry. The study contributes to the tourist cultural theory by emphasizing the relative importance of cultural dimensions in-service evaluation. The author argues that no studies could be identified that compare Saudis and Europeans in their evaluations of their experiences staying at hotels. Therefore, the current study would enhance understanding of the effects of cultural factors on service evaluations and provide valuable input for international market segmentation and resource allocation in the Saudi hotel industry.

Keywords—Culture, tourist, service experience, hotel industry, Hofested's cultural dimensions.

I. INTRODUCTION

IN recent years, the tourism and hospitality industry has witnessed an increasing number of inbound tourists from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, driven by the current rapid pace of internationalisation of service firms, understanding the impact of cultural values on service provision becomes extremely important for service organisations [1]. Number of studies have found that cultural factors play an important role in influencing tourist behavior [2], tourists' buying behaviour [3], evaluations of service [4]-[7] and decision-making [8], [9], particularly in hotel evaluation [10].

Reference [5] shows that customers' cultural orientation affects their service quality expectations. Similarly, it has been found that customers with Western cultural backgrounds are more likely to rely on tangible cues from a physical environment to evaluate service quality as compared to their

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Asian counterparts [6]. Other authors examined the impact of expectations on perceived service quality at three major hotels in Hong Kong [11]. Using cross-cultural samples, the authors classified Hong Kong visitors into three cultural groups, namely; Europeans, Asians, and English heritage cultural group. They found that "expectations" and perceptions of service quality vary across the three groups. Their findings imply that culture plays a critical role in determining visitors' expectations and shaping their perceptions about the hotel services. Therefore, an understanding of the effects that cultural factors have on customers' evaluation of hotel services would help in allocating the required resources and defining market segmentation [12]. At the same time, knowledge of the influence of cultural differences on tourists' perceptions and behaviour could be used in the design of cross-cultural training programs among employees in the tourism and hospitality industry [1]. Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to identify the differences between Saudis' and Europeans' evaluations of hotel services. More specifically, while a number of studies investigate how cultural dimensions influence perceived quality [1], customer satisfaction [13], and behavioural intention [14], [15], the difference between Saudis and Europeans in terms of their evaluation of the hotel services has not yet been captured adequately in the service & marketing literature. Five-star hotels have been selected for this study as they are the dominant players in Saudi Arabia. As of 2018, there were a total of 2138 hotels in Saudi Arabia, of which around 15% were five-star hotels [16].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Culture

Culture is mental concepts that influence the relationships with other people, the environment and the concept of time [17]. In the broadest sense, it refers to everything that has been created by humans and is socially transmitted. Hofstede [18, p.21] defined culture as; "the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment". Hofstede emphasized that culture includes systems of values and they are among the building blocks of culture. More recently, Solomon et al. [19] defined culture as a combination of values, wants, perceptions and behaviours that people learn in a society. Giddens [20] further states that "no societies could exist without culture. Without culture, we would not be human at all, in the sense in which we usually understand that term. We would have no language in which to express ourselves, no sense of self-consciousness, and our ability to think or reason would be severely limited".

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Culture has been found to influence both external (behavioural) and internal (representational) aspects of relationships [21]. It was recognized that: norms, roles, customs, understanding and expectations of interactions in relationships are defined by culture [22]. Moreover, cultural theory [23], [24] has described different forms of social solidarity that shape people views and influence their judgements. It argues that people react to different actions in accordance with the way society is perceived and the legitimacy that they ascribe to institutions and rules of procedure. Cultural theory consists of two components. The first component is the theoretical believe that adherence to specific type of social relation generates a distinctive way of looking at the world. That adherence to certain view or "cultural bias" legitimizes a corresponding type of social relation. The second component is the definition of four viable cultural groups (hierarchism, egalitarians, fatalists, and individualists) based on two dimensions, "group" and "grid". Thompson et al. [24] interpreted these dimensions as:

"Group refers to the extent to which an individual is incorporated into bounded units. The greater the incorporation, the more individual choice is subject to group determination. Grid denotes the degree to which an individual's life is circumscribed by externally imposed prescriptions. The more binding and extensive the scope of the prescriptions, the less of life that is open to individual negotiation" (p.5).

Cultural theory claims that the distinction of grid/group types is a function of social organization which influences the way in which group types look at the world and reinforce their beliefs and outlooks. There are two different versions of cultural theory. First "stability" version which holds that individuals attach themselves to organizations with the same type of cultural bias in all areas of their life—whether work or social life—and therefore adhere with their cultural bias whatever the social context. The second version is "mobility" which claims that individuals might attach themselves to organizations with differing social arrangements in different spheres of their lives, and thus might show different cultural biases in different contexts over time [25]. By applying cultural theory to the study context, it can be argued that customer from society with high social relations can adhere to their cultural bias and expand their social relation while dealing with others.

The importance of studying culture has occurred as a result of global competition and increasing globalization of business [26], [27]. In hospitality marketing, cultural factors are fundamental in determining customers' behaviours. It is because hotel's services are delivered by people, then these factors are influencing customer' attitude towards the service component of their hotel experience [6]. According to some researchers, social rules and customer expectations that are related to service encounters are varying from culture to culture [28]. For example, service styles in Asia are more people-oriented than in West [6], [27]. Hence, to ensure the provision of appropriate level of service, managers must take account of cultural differences.

B. Cultural Dimensions

The most comprehensive study of how culture can influence values in different societies was carried out by Hofstede [18]. The author developed a model that identifies primary dimensions to differentiate cultures. Hofstede [18] identified four dimensions of culture namely: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity. Later, Hofstede [17], [29] added a fifth dimension after conducting an international study with a survey instrument developed with Chinese employees and managers. The new dimension was independent of the four identified in the IBM studies and was called "long-versus short-term orientation". Table I provides a description of each of the five cultural dimensions as identified by Hofstede [17], [18], [29].

TABLE I
CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Dimension	Description
Power Distance	The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a society expect and accept that power is distributed equally. Larger power distance implies a greater disparity of distribution of wealth among members of the society
Individualism	Pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. In contrast, in collectivist societies, people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.
Masculinity	Pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct: Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focussed on material success, whereas women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with quality of life. The opposite is femininity, which pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap: Both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with quality of life.
Uncertainty Avoidance	The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain situations. Feelings are, among other things, expressed through nervous stress and in need of predictability: a need for written and unwritten rules. When uncertainty avoidance is strong, societies form institutions that create security and avoid risk. In "weak" societies, members are more tolerant of risk. They will not work as hard and accept behaviours and opinions different from their own.
Long-term Orientation	The extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term view. Long-term orientation is represented by values such as perseverance, ordering relationships by status and observing that order, thrift and having a sense of shame. Short-term orientation toward the past and present is represented by values such as personal steadiness and stability, saving face, respect for tradition and reciprocation of greetings, favours and gifts.

Adapted from [17]-[18], [29]

C. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a key consequence of service quality and can determine the long-term success of a service organisation [30]. Since the 1970s, a plethora of research is dedicated to the study of satisfaction [31], [32]. The consensus is that customers' satisfaction result from comparing a product's/service perceived performance to their own expectations. In other words; Customer Satisfaction = Perception of Performance - Expectations [33]. The importance of customer expectations is well emphasized in the literature. For example, Kasper et al. [34] defined expectations as what customers feel a service provider should provide,

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which they make demands on certain service. As a result, expectations set comparison standards for the evaluation of service quality and satisfaction [35]. LeBoeuf [25] stated that:

"Every customer comes with certain expectations about the quality of the goods, the services, and the hotel experience of dealing with your business. When you exceed his expectations, he perceived the quality as relatively high. When you fail to meet his expectations he perceives the quality as relatively low. In the back of every customer's brain is a scale that compares what gets with what he expected" (p.52).

Consequently, customers' evaluation of the experienced service is influenced by their expectations about the quality level of that service [36], [37]. If a customer's perception is matched by his/her expectation, then the customer is satisfied with the service. If the experience was better than expected, then perceived service quality is high and the customer is delighted. If the experience did not meet expectations then service quality is perceived to be poor and the customer is dissatisfied [30], [38].

D. Behavioural Intentions

Behavioural intentions are the predisposition to future behaviors [15]. They can be either favourable or non-favourable. Favourable behavioural intention is associated with the ability of the service provider to get his customer to say positive word of mouth about the service provider (or the service), remain loyal, and spend more. Non-favourable behaviour, on other hand, is a result of customer dissatisfaction and may trigger unfavourable behavioural intentions from the customer side; such as negative word of mouth, switching to another service provider, or reducing the amount of dealing with such provider [39]. The two most frequently used behavioural intentions that are associated with the post consumption evaluation process are: intention to recommend and intention to return. Past studies suggest that customers are willing to recommend the company or the service if their perception of service quality is high [38], [40] and remain loyal (intention to return) to the company [35]. Conversely, other researchers argued that when perceptions of service quality is low, customers are not willing to recommend or return the same service organisation and more likely to switch the service provider [39].

E. Relationship between Culture, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction and Behavioural Intention

A number of studies investigate how cultural dimensions influence satisfaction and perceived quality [5], [6], [12]. A research that examined how consumers in the United States and Japan evaluate service encounters found different behavioural-based service encounter dimensions for the two countries and identified significant cross-cultural differences along these dimensions [41]. Another study examined the impact of culture evaluation of complex services and explained cultural differences between Western and Asian customers in terms of individualism versus collectivism, power distance and high-versus low-context communication

[6]. More specifically, the study findings reveal that customers with a Western cultural background are more likely on tangible cues from the physical environment than would Asians.

Donthu and Yoo [5] studied the effect of customers' cultural orientation on their service quality expectations using the SERVQUAL scale. The authors found a negative relationship between power distance and responsiveness and reliability and note a positive relationship between individualism and empathy and assurance. More recently, Tsang and Ap [1] examined cultural differences between Asian and Western tourists' perceptions of relational quality service provided by guest-contact employees [5]. Based on a study of international tourists visiting Hong Kong, as hypothesised, the authors found that Asians gave significantly lower ratings for relational quality service attributes as compared to Western counterparts. Among Asians, quality of interpersonal relationships was a key factor in determining service-encounter evaluation while Western customers place higher emphasis on goal completion, efficiency and time savings.

The cultural influence on behavioural intentions toward services is well documented in the service literature. For instance, customers from cultures with lower individualism or higher uncertainty avoidance tend to have higher intention to praise the service provider. In addition, the authors found that customers from cultures with higher individualism or lower uncertainty avoidance tend to switch, engage in negative word of mouth or complain if they received poor service quality [20]. Some other researches investigate the impact of cultural differences on behavioural intentions in tourist hotels among different cultural groups and found that the different groups were different with regards to their behavioural intentions [9], [42].

III. METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional design was used in this research as it attempts to investigate the differences between Saudis and Europeans evaluations of hotel services. Data were collected from tourists staying in five-star hotels across Saudi Arabia covering the three main regions: midland (e.g. Riyadh, Qassim); eastern (Jeddah, Mekkah, Tife) and western (Dammam, Khubar, Al Ahsa). Self-completion technique was used to administer the questionnaires and gather responses. Some questionnaires were handed directly to respondents and a few were emailed to prospective participants.

The questionnaire was first pre-tested on 10 participants from various nationalities. As a result of the pilot test, changes were made to reflect respondents' comments. A non-random sample was used because it was not possible to obtain a list of or the number of tourists staying at the targeted hotels. 228 questionnaires were distributed. 130 surveys were completed, 15 of which were discarded due to excessive missing data resulting into 115 questionnaires retained for analysis.

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IV. MEASUREMENT

A. Overall Perceived Service Quality

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a 7-point scale (1 = extremely dissatisfied, and 7 = extremely satisfied) with a number of service attributes capturing employees' attitudes and the hotel physical conditions in general.

B. Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's measure of cultural values is one of the most commonly used scale among researchers. Past studies have shown the applicability and validity of Hofstede's scale across multiple contexts and societies [7], [25]. Accordingly, Hofstede's original scale items were adapted to fit a service context (Hofstede's cultural dimensions were originally developed to measure work-related values). The scale consists of 16 items representing the four cultural dimensions of: Individualism, Power distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity [14]. Respondents were asked to rate their level agreement or disagreement with each of the 16 statements on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree.

C. Behavioural Intentions

Tourists' behavioural intentions were measured using 2 statements. First, intention to recommend was measured by using the statement: "In the future, how likely is it that you would recommend this hotel to your friends/family?" [-3 = Extremely Unlikely and +3 = Extremely Likely]. Intention to return was captured by the following question: "In future, how likely you would return to this hotel?" [-3 = Extremely Unlikely and +3 = Extremely Likely].

Overall satisfaction was captured on a 7-point scale using the statement: "Please indicate your overall satisfaction towards the hotel" [-3 = Extremely Dissatisfied and +3 = Extremely Satisfied]. Finally, an overall value for money measure was included: "Overall, how would you rate the value for money at staying in this hotel?" [-3 = Poor Value for Money and +3 = Good Value for Money].

V. FINDINGS

A. Profile of Respondents

A total of 115 respondents participated in the survey, with 65 (56%) from Saudi origins and 50 (44%) Europeans. Table II presents the profile of respondents by nationality.

From Table II, both the Europeans and Saudi samples consist of higher proportion of males (Europeans: 76%; Saudis: 77%) than females (Europeans: 24%; Saudis: 23%). Saudi respondents were relatively younger (80% were between 16-34 years of age) as compared to Europeans (76% were between 35-55 years of age). In terms of occupation, Saudi respondents were mostly government officers (85%) while the majority (62%) of European respondents worked in the private sector. Furthermore, European respondents were well educated with 46% holding a PhD, 18% a Master's degree and 36% a Bachelor degree. As for Saudi respondents,

in terms education, 8% studied up to a PhD level, 32% hold a Master's degree and 60% a Bachelor degree.

TABLE II
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS (FINDINGS)

Demographics	Saudis		Europeans	
	N = 65	Percentage (%)	N = 50	Percentage (%)
Gender				
Male	50	77	38	76
Female	15	23	12	24
Age				
16-24	15	23	-	-
25-34	37	57	8	16
35-45	6	9	20	40
46-55	6	9	18	36
Above 55	1	2	4	8
Occupation				
Government Officer	55	85	2	4
Private Sector	-	-	31	62
Academic Staff	4	6	10	20
Student	6	9	4	8
Skilled Manual	-	-	2	4
Professional	-	-	1	2
Education				
PhD	5	8	23	46
Master degree	21	32	9	18
Bachelor degree	39	60	18	36

B. Service Attribute Satisfaction

Respondents rated their level of satisfaction with the hotel services on a 7-point scale, where 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied and 7 = Extremely Satisfied. The interpretations of mean scores are shown in Table III.

TABLE III
INTERPRETATION OF MEAN SCORE

Mean (Average) scores	Interpretation
Below 3.00	Extremely Dissatisfied
Between 3.00 and 3.99	Dissatisfied
Between 4.00 and 4.49	Acceptable
Between 4.50 and 5.99	Satisfied
Above 6.00	Extremely Satisfied

Table IV compares the level of satisfaction between Saudis and Europeans on each of the following six attributes. In terms of satisfaction score, which is calculated by including only ratings of 5, 6 and 7 from respondents, a score between 60 and 70% is considered as satisfied, 70-80% as very satisfied and above 80% as extremely satisfied.

TABLE IV
SERVICE ATTRIBUTE SATISFACTION (FINDINGS)

Statements	Saudis		Europeans	
	Mean	Satisfaction Score (%)	Mean	Satisfaction Score (%)
Physical appearance of the hotel	5.60	78	4.44	44
Physical condition of hotel facilities	5.32	72	4.06	46
Individual attention given to customers by employees	4.91	53	4.06	46
Courtesy of employees	5.18	60	4.04	6
Hotel décor	5.23	78	3.08	2

From Table IV, Saudi respondents rated their level of

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satisfaction with the six service attributes higher in comparison to Europeans. In terms of satisfaction scores, with the exception of the statement "individual attention given to customers by employees", scores were 60% or above. In contrast, European customers rated the various service attributes as acceptable (average scores between 4.00 and 4.49) and was not very impressed with the hotel decor (M = 3.08). Satisfaction scores were extremely low (below 50%). Such findings clearly show that Europeans have different expectations, compared to Saudis.

VI. SATISFACTION, INTENTION TO RECOMMEND, INTENTION TO RETURN AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The purpose of this analysis is to compare Saudi and European evaluations of satisfaction, intention to recommend, intention to return and value for money. An independent sample t-test was carried out (Table V) to determine whether significant differences exist between Saudi and European tourists' evaluations.

TABLE V
OVERALL SATISFACTION, INTENTION TO RECOMMEND, INTENTION TO RETURN AND VALUE FOR MONEY COMPARISON BETWEEN SAUDIS AND EUROPEANS (FINDINGS)

		N	Mean	SD	t statistic	Sig.
Overall Satisfaction [a]	Total	115	.94	1.43	3.5	.001
	Saudis	65	1.29	1.76		
	Europeans	50	.48	.54		
Intention to Recommend [b]	Total	115	.19	1.90	10.03	.000
	Saudis	65	1.29	1.70		
	Europeans	50	-1.24	.98		
Intention to Return [c]	Total	.53	.52	1.71	7.05	.000
	Saudis	65	1.31	1.76		
	Europeans	50	-.50	.95		
Value for Money [d]	Total	115	.87	1.70	2.10	.038
	Saudis	65	1.15	1.73		
	Europeans	50	.50	1.59		

[a], [b], [c] Measured on a 7-point Likert scale: Extremely Unlikely [-3] to Extremely Likely [+3]
[d] Measured on a 7-point Likert scale: Poor Value [-3] to Good Value [+3]

From Table V, there are significant differences between Saudis' and Europeans' evaluations of satisfaction (t = 3.5, p = .001), intention to recommend (t = 10.03, p = .000), intention to return (t = 7.05, p = .000), and perceptions of value for money (t = 2.10, p = .038). More specifically, Saudis exhibit higher levels of satisfaction (M = 1.29), are more likely to return (M = 1.31) and recommend (M = 1.29) the hotel; and perceived the hotel as being good value for money (M = 1.15). In contrast, Europeans display lower satisfaction levels (M = 0.94); are unlikely to recommend (M = -1.24) and return to the hotel (M = 0.50); and felt the hotel was acceptable in terms of value for money.

A. Cultural Differences

Respondents had to rate their level of agreement/ disagreement on a 7-point scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree, with a series of statements representing four dimensions of cultural orientations (Table VI).

TABLE VI
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SAUDIS AND EUROPEANS

Statements*	Total		Saudis		Europeans	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Individualism Vs Collectivism						
Being accepted by members of my group is very important for me.	5.42	1.25	6.15	1.08	4.46	0.68
I believe that group welfare is more important than individual reward.	4.23	1.93	4.57	2.13	3.78	1.56
I value group success over individual success.	4.01	2.19	4.95	2.14	2.78	1.56
I see myself as unique individual and enjoy being different from others.	4.91	1.79	4.48	1.31	5.48	2.15
Power Distance						
I believe that younger should pay more respect and listen to advice of elders.	5.23	1.44	5.74	1.85	4.58	.95
Issues of equity such as prestige and power are everyone's right.	5.33	1.44	4.77	1.56	6.06	.82
In my society, low class people are often afraid to express disagreement with high class people.	3.83	2.25	5.52	1.40	1.64	.69
My society allows the growth of discrimination in wealth, citizen's power and jobs opportunity.	4.31	1.54	4.52	1.83	4.04	.99
Uncertainty Avoidance						
Generally, I try to avoid ambiguity.	4.80	1.63	4.92	1.75	4.64	1.47
In dealing with others, I used to show level of tolerance even if I will lose some of my rights.	5.18	1.19	5.95	.89	4.18	.69
I used to choose the easiest way to solve my problems.	3.53	2.35	4.20	1.80	2.66	2.69
I can easily influenced by different opinions.	2.52	1.76	3.19	1.90	1.52	.81
Masculinity Vs Feminity						
In my society woman has limited power.	4.10	1.77	4.92	1.14	3.02	1.88
The father should be the head of any family.	3.91	2.8	6.06	1.67	1.12	.85
Women should not behave independently and must follow men.	2.39	2.04	3.40	2.20	1.08	.57
I believe that position of authority should be reserved for men.	2.76	2.31	4.06	2.32	1.06	.42

* Items measured on a 7-point scale: Strongly Disagree [1] to Strongly Agree [7]

From Table VI, as expected, Saudis exhibit strong characteristics of a collectivist society. Respondents rated the statement "Being accepted by members of my group is very important for me" highest (M = 6.15; SD = 1.08). In contrast, Europeans value individual success over group success (M = 2.78; SD = 1.56); believe in individual reward (M = 3.78; SD = 1.56); and enjoy being different from others (M = 5.48; SD = 2.15). Furthermore, Saudi respondents had a more masculine orientation, as compared to Europeans. For example, Saudis rated the statement "The father should be the head of any family" highest (M = 6.06; SD = 1.67) while Europeans were in disagreement with the same statement (M = 1.12; SD = 0.85). Europeans also strongly disagree with the idea that position of authority should only be reserved for men (M = 1.06; SD = .42). In terms of uncertainty avoidance, Saudis tend to show more tolerance (M = 5.95; SD = 0.89) than Europeans (M = 4.18; SD = 0.69). Saudi respondents also exhibit a higher preference for easy ways to solve problems (M = 4.20; SD = 1.80) as compared to Europeans (M = 2.66; SD = 2.69). Finally, power distance appears to be large among

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Saudi respondents. For instance, Saudis were in agreement with the statement "In my society, low class people are often afraid to express disagreement with high class people" highest (M = 5.52; SD = 1.40) while Europeans rated the same statement lowest (M = 1.64; SD = 0.90).

VII. Discussion and Implication

The main purpose of this research is to investigate whether there are differences between Saudi and European tourists' perceptions of hotel services. The results have shown that evaluations of hotel services differ from one culture to another. More specifically, the current findings are in line with previous studies emphasising the relative importance of cultural dimensions in service evaluations [5], [6], [12]. T-test results reveal that tourists from different cultural backgrounds evaluate their experiences differently. More specifically, Saudi customers reported higher levels of satisfaction than Europeans. On the other hands, Europeans were less likely to return and recommend the hotel than Saudi counterparts. The results also show that Saudis perceived the price for the hotel stay as being good value for money as compared to European. In general, Saudis evaluated hotel attributes higher when compared to Europeans.

The results of this research highlight the impact that cultural dimensions have on hospitality service encounters. Therefore, in an effective culture management system, hotel management needs to pay more attention to the contribution that cultural difference awareness can make to the hotel service experience and overall customer satisfaction. Nowadays, guest-contact employees in hotels interact with tourists from an increasing number and diversity of cultures. Findings of this research indicate that Saudis and Europeans differ in their evaluations of hotel services. An understanding of the influence of culture is important for hotel employees "not only to develop ability and knowledge for the provision of appropriate and culturally sensitive services to international tourists, but also to avoid or reduce tensions and build mutual understanding among international tourists and hosts with different cultural values" [43, p.323]. Furthermore, findings of this research illustrate major differences in customer evaluations of hotel experiences across cultures. As a result, from a managerial perspective, it is very important for hotel employees to be very sensitive to the cultural value orientation of their customers. Researchers involved in cross-cultural studies in the tourism and hospitality sectors have emphasised the importance of providing cultural training for tourism and hospitality industry employees [6], [44]. For example, it has been found that cultural training programs help guest-contact employees to better understand one's own culture and the culture of the tourists and appreciate the differences between cultures [43]. In the long-run, with effective training, hotel employees would better understand the preferences of non-Saudi tourists and thus enhance their overall experiences.

VIII. Research Limitation

No research project is without limitations. Despite the important contribution of this study, the results remain limited in scope and variance. The findings of this research, therefore, cannot be generalised to the wider tourist population due to the relative small sample size and specific to only five-star hotels evaluations. Greater insights may be developed from replication of this study to encompass a wider variety of hotel categories. Furthermore, in this research, service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions were only studied at one point in time. Consequently, we may not capture the longitudinal effects of customer evaluations of service providers. Another limitation of this research is that we compared Europeans with Saudi nationals. Additional studies should focus on one specific European country, for example, United Kingdom. Furthermore, in this research, we adapted Hofstede's scale to measure cultural differences. Despite its popularity among researchers, Hofstede theory has received much criticism. For example, [45] posits that Hofstede's sample is not representative given that the original study was based on only one company (IBM) and within one industry. As such the findings with IBM, does not necessarily mean that it reflects the national tendency. In addition, Hoftede's theory was criticised for being over-simplistic [46]. Culture is very complex and could be represented in terms of more than five dimensions. Finally, the variables we employed to operationalise customer satisfaction, intention to recommend, intention to return and value for money are single-item measures. Future studies should incorporate multi-item measurement scales to better capture the richness of these constructs.

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