

The effect of culture on accommodation service quality perception and expectations

Nael M Sarhan^{a*} and Amer Al Shishany^b

^aDepartment of Business Administration, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science, The Hashemite University/Zarqa, Jordan

^bDepartment of Business Administration, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science, Director of The Hashemite University Career Center (HUCC), The Hashemite University/Zarqa, Jordan

CHRONICLE

Article history:
Received: April 29, 2020
Received in revised format:
April 30 2020
Accepted: May 30, 2020
Available online:
May 30, 2020

Keywords:
Arab Culture
Accommodation Service Quality
Hierarchical Multiple Regression

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between Arab tourists' culture and accommodation service quality expectations, and perceptions. Data was collected using a survey from a population sample of 305 respondents and analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression. The results of this study confirmed that demographic characteristics such as age, education level, cultural values of achievement, power, tradition and conformity were the key factors in determining Arab tourists' expectations. The study delivers vital insights for both tourism and service accommodation sectors in sustaining the incoming flow of Arab tourist to Australia. The implications of these results for industry are also discussed.

© 2020 by the authors; licensee Growing Science, Canada

1. Introduction

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) (2019), in 2018, the Tourist and Travel sector grew at 3.9%. This sector, also, contributed to the global gross domestic product (GDP) by \$8.8 trillion and provided 319 million jobs to the world economy. As for Australia, tourism has had great impact on the Australian economy. Tourism in Australia has directly contributed to Australia's GDP with \$60.8 billion and 996,000 Australians were, directly and indirectly, employed. Moreover, Australia's tourism accounts for over 8% of total Australian exports of \$39.1 billion, and for every tourism dollar, 44 cents were spent in Australian regions (Australian Government Austrade, 2020). One of the benefits of tourist spending is the upsurge of foreign exchange earnings and job creation (Phau et al., 2014). The tourist customer is critical to the sustainability and survival of tourist service firms (Legcevic, 2008) as a travel experience that meets or exceeds a tourist's expectations is positively viewed (Andereck et al., 2012). The academic literature and the tourism industry, particularly the accommodation sector, recognizes the increasing importance of customer cultural values and their effect on customer expectations and perceptions of service quality (Truong & King, 2010). In the accommodation sector, the pursuit of customer expectations and perceptions of service quality is a primary objective of accommodation management (Han et al., 2008). Cultural values are often considered to be the underlying determinant of tourist expectations, perceptions and behavioural intentions (Reisinger, 2009). Particularly in the decline of international tourist travel due to the global financial crisis (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009) and global pandemics such as swine flu (Page et al., 2012), perceived personal safety, value for money, and political unrest (Phau et al., 2014). Today's accommodation managers would benefit by being aware of their ability to influence service culture and the costs incurred when ignoring a tourist's cultural norms (Patterson & Mattila, 2008). Most studies link culture to nationality which can be problematic as increasingly boundaries are becoming less dominant with the world moving towards being a global village (Laesser, et al., 2014). This study acknowledges that criticism but asserts the population sample under investigation in this study is Arab tourists who commonly share Islam as their dominant religion and thus share strong cultural values.

* Corresponding author. Tel:+96253903333/4558
E-mail address: nael@hu.edu.jo (N. M Sarhan)

Cultural values have been studied from various tourism perspectives (Truong & King, 2010). Yet research into the impact of tourists' expectations and perceptions in the Australian tourism and accommodation sector context has been limited particularly for tourists from the Middle East. This tourist cohort is classified as the sixth largest number of global inbound tourist arrivals to Australia and the dollar value they spend whilst visiting Australia is expected to grow significantly (Tourism Research Australia, 2008). Our study addresses this gap by examining the influence of cultural values on service quality expectations and perceptions in relation to Gold Coast accommodation service quality by Arab tourists. The three hypotheses driving this study are:

H₁ There is a positive relationship between cultural values and service quality expectations.

H₂ There is a positive relationship between cultural values and service quality perceptions.

H₃ Gender, age, education level, profession, country of origin and cultural values are predictive of each factor of expectations and perceptions among the Arab tourists.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Association between Culture and Service*

With the growing interest in the notion that cultural values are an important factor in providing appropriate services and success, service providers need to understand the customer's cultural values (Patterson & Mattila, 2008). Truong and King (2010) confirmed that the expectations and perceptions of service quality may differ among cultural groups. For example, Sabote-Ortiz et al. (2014) showed that the dimensions of "uncertainty-avoidance" and "individualism/collectivism" cultural dimensions have an impact on overall perceived value in the hospitality industry. Their study supports Patterson and Mattila's (2008) findings showing the importance of cultural values in customer perceptions of service quality. The exploration of the association between culture and service quality, in the accommodation sector, has further to go in order to fill the significant gaps still existing in the literature (Truong & King, 2010). As the literature is fragmented, the intention of this study is to extend the existing literature by simultaneously measuring and identifying the relationship between cultural values, and each factor of service quality expectations and perceptions, held by Arab tourists. This is done by using the Best Worst Scale (BWS), which is the scale recommended for studies addressing cultural research (Lee et al., 2008). Therefore, this study used Schwartz's (1992) cultural values, on the individual level, to measure the relationship between cultural values and service quality for Arab tourist.

2.2 *Demographic Factors and Service*

Literature shows that demographics may influence tourist expectations and perceptions. The more significant demographic factors include age, gender, profession and education level (Ariffin & Maghazi, 2012). Age is considered one of the factors that contributes to tourists' demands (Liu and Yen, 2010). Studies addressing age as an independent variable have sought to identify the impact of different age groups on the tourist expectations and perceptions. Shaw and Williams (2002) proposed that middle-aged tourists have high demand expectations and low perceptions, while older and retired tourists have fewer expectations and higher service quality perceptions. In contrast, Liu and Yen (2010) conducted their study on leisure farming tourists living in Taiwan and found that young tourists' age had a higher total tourist satisfaction than that of older tourists. In addition, to the tourists' age, gender was considered as one of the factors that contributed to the tourists' expectations and perceptions. This outcome was confirmed by a number of studies such as Ariffin and Maghazi (2012) who proposed that the expectations of accommodation service quality level are influenced by individual aspects such as gender. Other demographical variables identified as a predictor of expectations and perceptions among tourists are education level, profession, and country of origin or nation (Liu & Yen, 2010). Tourists' education level, profession and country of origin are significantly correlated to the tourists' perceptions (Liu & Yen, 2010). In summary, the literature shows that tourists' cultural background and their demographic characteristics impact on their expectations and perceptions. Thus, tourism service providers have to take into consideration these factors to understand tourists' expectations and perception.

3. A Conceptual Model

Based on the literature and utilising two established scales with reliable track records, we developed the study's conceptual model in order to examine the relationship between cultural values and each factor of expectations and perceptions. To measure cultural values at the individual level, Schwartz's (1992) ten values scale (power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security) was utilised. Soutar and Louviere's (2008) Best-Worst scale (BWS) was used to measure Schwartz's values. Service quality expectations and perceptions were measured by using the five dimensions of service quality (tangible, empathy, assurance, reliability, and responsiveness). The SERVQUAL scale was used to reveal tourist expectations and perceptions, and to uncover the gap between them (Parasuraman, et al., 1991).

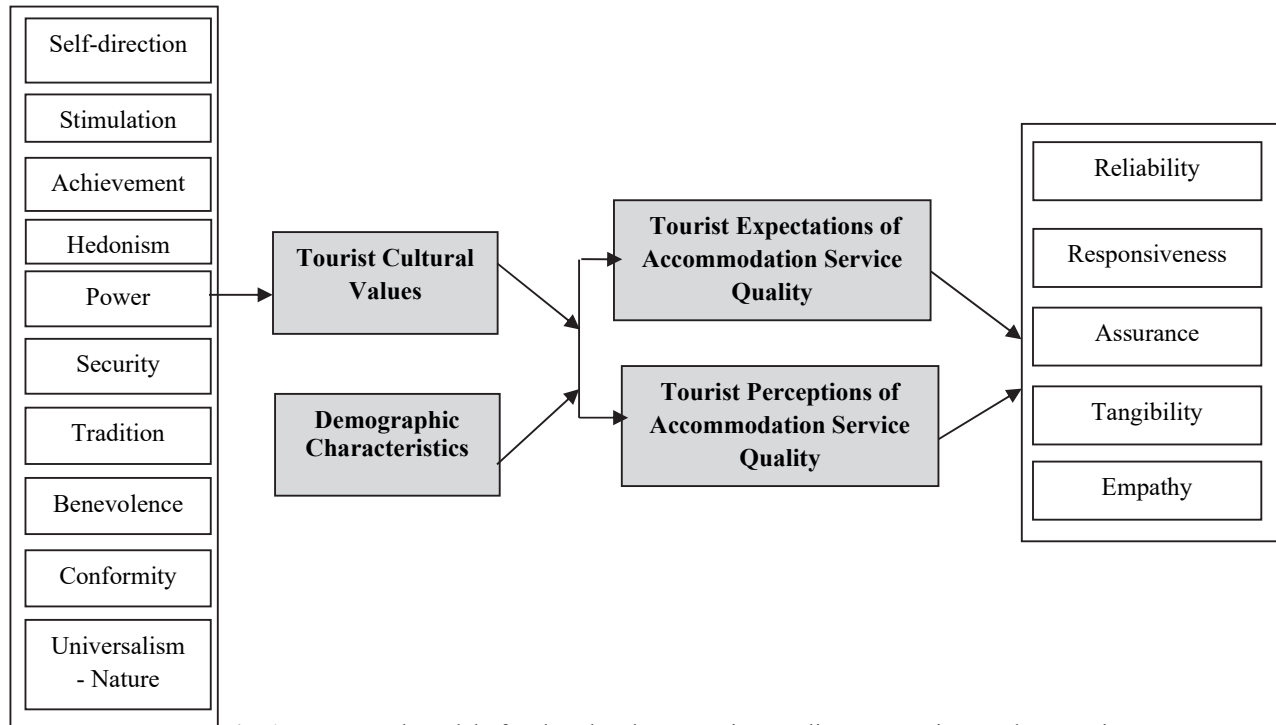


Fig. 1. Conceptual Model of Cultural Values, Service Quality Expectations and Perceptions

3.1 Sample

With a response rate of 61%, a total of 305 usable responses were received from Arab tourists who visited the Gold Coast, Australia and stayed at hotels and holiday apartments for at least one night.

3.2 Instruments

Schwartz's (1992) ten values scale, and the Lee, Soutar and Louviere (2008) Best-Worst Survey (SVBWS) were used in this study. The SVBWS allowed for each participant to see each value type six times and each pair of value types three times. This resulted in 66 measures of the 11 value types. The 11 subsets that were used in this study cover Schwartz's (1992) 10 cultural values: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism-nature, universalism-social concern, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. In this scale the participants only can choose the most and least important values for them, avoiding the middle answers (Cohen, 2009). To measure service quality, the SERVQUAL scale includes the expectations (SQE) and perceptions (SQP) were used. The service quality scale has subsequently been widely used within different service contexts (Legcevic, 2008). Mey et al. (2006) have adapted Parasuraman et al.'s (1991) questionnaire in order to apply it to the Malaysian accommodation services sector. The scale that was adapted by Mey et al. (2006) contains 25 items, instead of the 22 items that was developed by the Parasuraman et al.'s original scale for each of the expectations and perceptions scales. Therefore, this study used the 22 items adapted by Mey et al. (2006) and related to Parasuraman et al.'s (1991) original 22 items for each of the expectations and perceptions scales. This scale covered the five dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible. Expectations and perceptions items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The Cronbach alpha internal reliability of the scale was reported by previous research as between .71 and .91 (Mey et al., 2006).

3.3 Analysis

Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was performed to test the internal consistency of the service quality expectations and perceptions attributes. They were at desirable level of .70 or above, ranging from .70 to .90. An independent sample t-test was conducted to determine if significant mean score differences exist between the Arab tourist who stayed at hotels and holiday apartments in their cultural values, expectations and perceptions. Bivariate analysis including Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was used to identify the relationship between the cultural values and demographic characteristics as independent variables with the expectations, and perceptions as dependent variables. Multivariate analysis was conducted including hierarchical multiple regression (R^2) analysis using a model-building (Hair et al., 2010), to predict the relationships between demographic variables and cultural values as an independent variables and each factor of SQE and SQP as a dependent variables among the Arab tourist. Hierarchical regression is considered as the most appropriate technique when the aim is to explore how the predictors combine in their influence on the dependent variable.

4. Results

4.1 Respondents' Profile

The data shows that there were 167 respondents (54.8%) who preferred to stay at hotels while 138 (45.2%) preferred to stay at the holiday apartments. This sample of Arab tourist respondents was composed of 62.3% males and 37.7% females from hotels, while holiday apartment's respondents were 53.6% males and 46.4% females. The majority of the respondents 85% were aged between 20-49 years old for both hotels and holiday apartment's respondents as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 305)

Characteristic	Hotels %	Holiday apartments %	Characteristic	Hotels %	Holiday apartments %
Gender			Occupation		
Male	62.3	53.6	Management	29.9	29.0
Female	37.7	46.4	Professional	30.9	23.9
Age (years)			Trader/proprietor	22.2	17.4
20-24	15.6	17.4	Retired	5.4	1.4
25-29	13.8	20.3	Student	11.4	25.4
30-34	21.0	20.3	Other	0.6	2.9
35-39	16.2	12.3	Country of origin		
40-49	18.6	15.2	Saudi Arabia	5.4	18.8
50-59	11.4	12.3	Kuwait	21.0	15.9
60 or over	3.6	2.2	Qatar	18.0	16.7
Education level			Bahrain	13.2	10.1
Secondary school	18.6	13.8	Oman	13.2	11.6
Bachelor degree	66.5	61.6	UAE	29.3	26.8
Higher education	15.0	24.6			

The majority of respondents in both hotels and holiday apartments had bachelor degrees. Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents who stayed at hotels were professionals (30.9%), while the majority of the respondents who stayed at holiday apartments were managerial professions (29.0%). The largest group of respondents from both hotels and holiday apartments came from UAE were 29.3% and 26.8%, respectively.

4.2 Arab Culture

The result shows that the respondents from both hotels and holiday apartments agreed that the most important value was universalism-social concern ($M=.41$, $SD=.442$), and ($M=.327$, $SD=.447$), while they disagreed on the least important value. The least important value for the respondents who stayed in hotels was self-direction ($M= -.041$, $SD= .191$), while the least important value for those who stayed in holiday apartments, was achievement ($M= -.045$, $SD= .237$), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
SVBWS (N = 305)

Value item	Hotels			Holiday apartments			t	p
	Rank	Mean	St. Deviation	Rank	Mean	St. Deviation		
Universalism-Social concern	1	.417	.442	1	.327	.447	1.76	.080
Tradition	2	.185	.272	5	.079	.301	3.22	.001
Conformity	3	.180	.262	2	.173	.281	.216	.829
Security	4	.161	.416	3	.158	.409	.073	.942
Benevolence	5	.132	.252	4	.094	.236	1.37	.173
Power	6	-.313	.461	6	-.341	.469	.531	.596
Hedonism	7	-.268	.303	7	-.181	.360	-2.26	.025
Stimulation	8	-.178	.212	8	-.141	.253	-1.38	.170
Universalism-nature	9	-.168	.378	9	-.080	.350	-2.09	.038
Achievement	10	-.091	.403	11	-.030	.400	-1.33	.184
Self-direction	11	-.041	.191	10	-.045	.237	.159	.874

An independent t-test for differences showed that the Arab tourist visiting the Gold Coast and staying at hotels and holiday apartments were different in three of eleven of the cultural values of tradition, hedonism, and universalism-nature as shown in Table 2.

4.3 Arab Tourist's Expectations and Perceptions Gap

For both hotel and holiday apartment respondents' expectations, the result in Table 3, shows that the highest dimension of expectations was tangibility with mean score of 47.14 ($SD=3.873$) and ($M=44.40$, $SD=6.344$), while the lowest mean score was the empathy dimension for hotels ($M=15.26$, $SD=1.593$) and Holidays Apartments ($M=14.27$, $SD=2.399$). However, the

respondent service quality perceptions of both hotels and holiday apartments were less than their expectations. Both hotels and holiday apartments respondents assigned the highest perception score on the dimension of tangibility for Hotels (M=40.57, SD=5.427) and Holidays Apartment (M=35.61, SD=8.782), while the lowest perception score was on the dimension of empathy for Hotels (M=12.38, SD=2.887) and Holiday Apartments (M=10.75, SD=3.641). The results indicated that there is a gap between the respondent expectations and perceptions. For hotels, the largest gap was on the dimension of reliability (-7.8), and the lowest gap score was on the dimension of assurance (-2.18). However, the highest gap in the holiday apartment was on the dimension of tangibility (-8.782), while the lowest score was on the dimension of responsiveness (-2.63), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Tourist Expectations and Perceptions Gap

Dimensions	Hotels					Holiday Apartments				
	E Mean	E. Std. Deviation	P Mean	P. Std. Deviation	Gap (P-E)	E Mean	E. Std. Deviation	P Mean	P. Std. Deviation	Gap (P-E)
Reliability	27.29	2.830	19.49	5.401	-7.8	25.50	4.27	17.81	5.914	-7.69
Responsiveness	15.40	1.321	12.62	2.908	-2.78	14.47	2.319	11.84	2.784	-2.63
Assurance	15.31	1.416	13.13	2.304	-2.18	14.54	1.921	11.80	3.011	-2.74
Empathy	15.26	1.593	12.38	2.887	-2.88	14.27	2.399	10.75	3.641	-3.52
Tangibility	47.14	3.873	40.57	5.427	-6.57	44.40	6.344	35.61	8.782	-8.79

Note: a negative gap indicates that respondents' perceptions did not meet their expectations

4.4 Arab Tourist's Culture and Service Quality

In order to test the first two hypotheses, **H1**: There is a positive relationship between cultural values and service quality expectations; and **H2**: There is a positive relationship between cultural values and service quality perceptions, Bivariate Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) analysis (two-tailed) was performed. The results from the first hypothesis indicated that cultural values of stimulation, achievement, power, tradition and conformity were significantly correlated with service quality expectation (SQE). The result from the second hypothesis shows that cultural values of achievement, power and universalism-nature were significantly correlated with the service quality perception (SQP) as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
The Relationship between the Independent Variables and SQE and SQP(N=305)

Independent Variables		SQE	SQP
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.088	.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.125	.552
Age	Pearson Correlation	-.186**	.224**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000
Education level	Pearson Correlation	-.186**	-.153**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.008
Profession	Pearson Correlation	.063	-.238**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.276	.000
Country of origin	Pearson Correlation	-.007	.161**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.910	.005
Self-direction	Pearson Correlation	-.022	-.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.699	.622
Stimulation	Pearson Correlation	-.083	.142*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.148	.013
Hedonism	Pearson Correlation	.056	-.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.334	.446
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.158**	-.187**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.001
Power	Pearson Correlation	.171**	.154**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.007
security	Pearson Correlation	-.104	.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	.883
Tradition	Pearson Correlation	.029	.124*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.618	.031
Conformity	Pearson Correlation	.009	-.196**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.881	.001
benevolence	Pearson Correlation	.072	-.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.207	.692
Universalism-nature	Pearson Correlation	-.272**	-.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.597
Universalism-social concern	Pearson Correlation	-.060	.066
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.299	.254

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hierarchical multiple regression (R^2) analysis was employed to test the last hypothesis, **H3**: gender, age, education level, profession, country of origin and cultural values are predictive of each factor of expectations and perceptions among the Arab tourists. As a result, gender, education level, profession, country of origin, stimulation, achievement, power, tradition and conformity were correlated with SQE. Table 5 indicated that there were positive relationships between age, country of origin, stimulation, power, tradition and SQE (B value: 1.04 and .23, 4.89, 6.36, 6.00 respectively), and a negative relationship between education level, profession, achievement, conformity and SQE (B value: -2.65 and -7.22, -7.69 respectively). Assessment of the standardised beta coefficients within this model shows that value of power has slightly more impact in the model (beta = .229, $p < .000$).

Table 5

Initial and Parsimonious Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Independent Variables that Predict SQE (N=305)

Initial Model					Parsimonious Model						
Predictor variables	Standardised Coefficients Beta	SE	B	P	R ²	Predictor variables	Standardised Coefficients Beta	SE	B	p	R ²
Step 1					0.12	Step 1					0.09
Age	.200	.43	1.50	.001		Age	.256	.41	1.92	.000	
Education Level	-.141	1.07	-2.60	.016		Education Level	-.194	1.03	-3.59	.001	
Profession	-.146	.51	-1.28	.013							
Country of Origin	.088	.41	.63	.124							
Step 2					0.22	Step 2					0.20
Age	.139	.42	1.04	.015		Age	.173	.40	1.29	.002	
Education Level	-.143	1.02	-2.65	.010		Education Level	-.168	.98	-3.10	.002	
Profession	-.087	.49	-.76	.127							
Country of Origin	.033	.40	.23	.555							
Stimulation	.088	3.22	4.89	.130							
Achievement	-.225	1.97	-7.22	.000		Achievement	-.238	1.96	-7.63	.000	
Power	.229	1.69	6.36	.000		Power	.237	1.69	6.61	.000	
Tradition	.135	2.73	6.00	.029		Tradition	.134	2.64	5.97	.024	
Conformity	-.161	2.84	-7.69	.007	Conformity	-.204	2.67	-9.75	.000		

The initial model showed that age, education level, achievement, power, tradition, and conformity were statistically significant and predicted SQE among the Arab tourist. However, examination of hierarchical regression analysis indicated that profession, country of origin and stimulation were statistically non-significant ($p = .127, .555, \text{ and } .130$ respectively). Therefore, further analysis was undertaken in relation to the predictors that highly correlated with SQE. The results from parsimonious hierarchical multiple regression model (see Table 5) indicated that there were positive relationships between age, power, tradition and SQE (B value: 1.29 and 6.61, 5.97 respectively), and a negative relationship between education level, achievement, conformity and SQE (B value: -3.10 and -7.63, -9.75 respectively). Assessment of the standardised beta coefficients within this model shows that value of achievement has slightly more impact in the model (beta = -.238, $p < .000$). It can be concluded that age, education level, achievement, power, tradition and conformity predicted 20% of the service quality expectation among the Arab tourist.

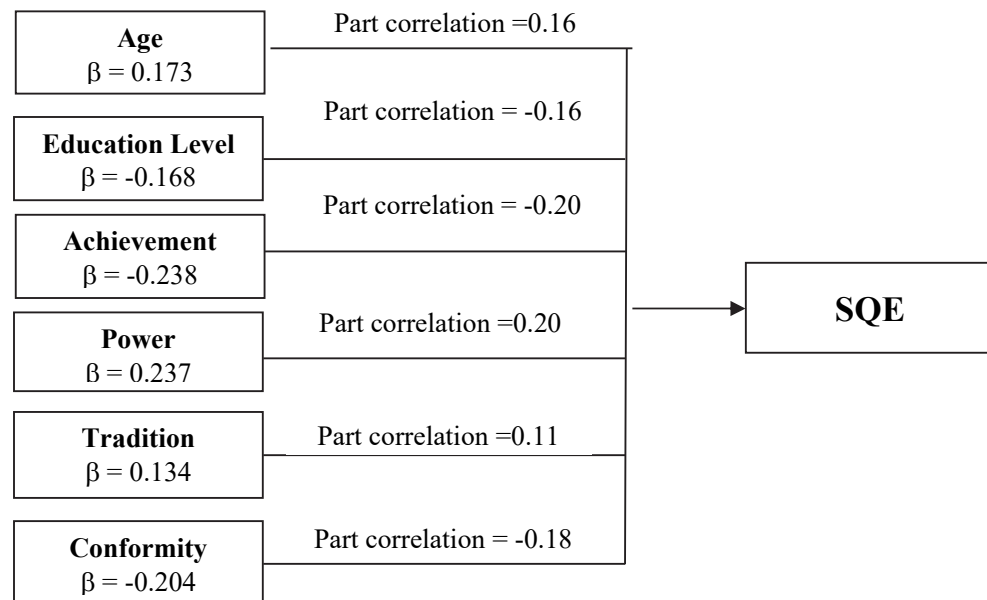


Fig. 2. Summarises the Multivariate Results between Independent Variables and SQE

As shown in Table 4, that the dependent variable of age, education level, achievement, power and universalism-nature were correlated with the dependent variable of SQP. As indicated in Table 5 indicated there were positive relationships between achievement, power and SQP (B value: 1.39 and 3.25 respectively), and a negative relationship between age, education level, universalism-nature and SQP (B value: -1.34, -2.16 and -8.99 respectively). Assessment of the standardised beta coefficients within this model shows that value of universalism-nature has slightly more impact in the model ($\beta = -.211, p < .000$).

Table 6
Initial and Parsimonious Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Independent Variables that Predict SQP (N=305)

Initial Model						Parsimonious Model					
Predictor variables	Standardised Coefficients Beta	SE	B	P	R ²	Predictor variables	Standardised Coefficients Beta	SE	B	p	R ²
Step 1						Step 1					
Age	-.170	.51	-1.54	.003	0.04	Age	-.186	.51	-1.68	.001	0.03
Education Level	-.094	1.27	-2.09	.102		Age	-.161	.49	-1.45	.004	
Step 2						Step 2					
Age	-.148	.51	-1.34	.010	0.12	Age	-.161	.49	-1.45	.004	0.10
Education Level	-.097	1.23	-2.16	.081		Universalism-nature	-.256	2.33	-10.91	.000	
Achievement	.036	2.44	-1.39	.569							
power	.096	2.12	3.25	.128							
universalism-nature	-.211	2.50	-8.99	.000							

The initial model showed that age and universalism-nature were statistically significant and predicted SQP among the Arab tourists. However, examination of hierarchical regression analysis indicated that education level, achievement and power were statistically non-significant ($p = .081, .569, \text{ and } .128$ respectively). Further results from parsimonious hierarchical multiple regression model indicated that there were negative relationships between age, universalism-nature and SQP (B value: -1.45 and -10.91 respectively) (see Table 6). Assessment of the standardised beta coefficients within this model shows that value of universalism-nature has more impact in the model ($\beta = -.256, p < .000$). It can be concluded that age and universalism-nature predicted 10% of the service quality perceptions among the Arab tourists.

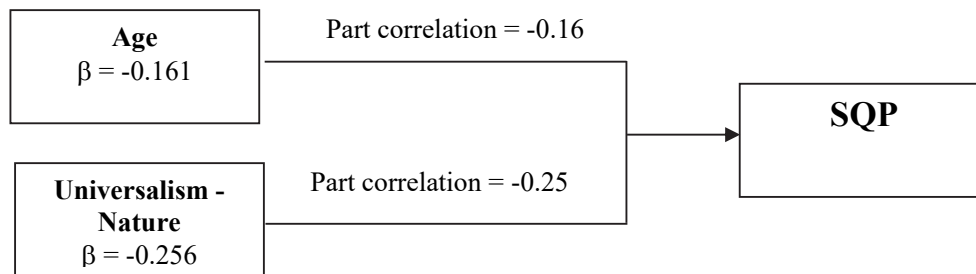


Fig. 3. Summarises the Multivariate Results between Independent Variables and SQP

5. Discussion

The results of our study demonstrate that the most important cultural values for the Arab tourists who stayed at Gold Coast hotels and holiday apartments were: universalism-social concern, tradition, conformity, security and benevolence. Overall consistent results were found with previous studies such as: Schwartz (2003) who proposed that Arab people are conservative people who like to share the way of life of other members of their society. Arab people belong to a collectivist culture, which can explain why the Arab tourists consider that universalism-social concern, tradition, conformity, security and benevolence are the most important cultural values in their lives (Hofstede, 2001). On the other hand, the research's findings demonstrate that the cultural values of power, hedonism, stimulation, universalism-nature, achievement and self-direction were considered as the least important values for the Arab tourists. This result supports the results of the previous studies such as Triandis and Suh (2002), who proposed that the Arab people have low individualism, which is the reason why these cultural values were the least important values for them. The literature proposes that Arab people possess large power distance (Schwartz, 1992). In this instance, the findings in this study did not support the literature and clearly showed that the power distance was considered the least important value for the Arab tourists in their lives, which may indicate that the Arab tourists who travel abroad may have different values from those people who do not travel outside their countries, or they may disagree on which values influence their lives. An independent t-test result indicates that there are significant differences in three of the Arab tourists' cultural values, of tradition, hedonism, and universalism-nature, which appear to influence their choice of a particular type of accommodation. This outcome may indicate that the Arab tourists in our sample come from a strong culture, have the same cultural values, and are different in only three of eleven of their cultural values. The findings from this study propose that the Arab tourists' expectations are higher than their perceptions towards accommodation service quality level, which caused a significant negative gap. Thus, tourists' perceptions did not meet their expectations towards Gold Coast hotels' and

holiday apartments' service quality level. These outcomes were consistent with the findings of Mey et al. (2006) who found that the hotel guests' perceptions of service quality were lower than their initial expectations. Hence, the Arab tourists' gap between their expectations and perceptions suggests that more effort should be put in by accommodation managers to improve the accommodation service quality level. Moreover, the results show that the highest gap between the Arab tourists' expectations and perceptions was in the tangibility factor. The result supports earlier findings by Sheng-Hsiung et al. (2005) who suggested that the tourists from Asia pay more attention and care to accommodation physical facilities and equipment. Indeed, the results of this research showed that tourists such as those from the Middle East have particular needs derived from their cultural values, including 'praying five times per day, eating halal food, care more about the hygienic issues', which is all related to the physical facilities and equipment and explains why these people care about the physical facilities. This indicates that the tourism and accommodation sectors in the Gold Coast and Australia are lacking these facilities, which contributes to the large gap between Arab tourists' expectations and perceptions towards accommodation service quality. The findings of an independent t-test of expectations and perceptions shows that the hotel and holiday apartment managers need to recognize and understand that there are different needs for the tourists who prefer to stay at hotels from those who prefer to stay at holiday apartments. For example, the tourists who prefer to stay at hotels always look for more facilities to be available in their accommodation place such as internet, business centre and restaurants, while the tourists who prefer to stay at the holiday apartments always look for a more comfortable place, more privacy, more space in 'the room size', cooking facilities and more luxurious accommodation.

Results show that there is a relationship between age and service quality expectations and perceptions among the Arab tourists. The result is consistent with the findings of Liu and Yen (2010), who agreed that age is one of the factors that contributes to tourists' expectations and perceptions in relation to the accommodation service quality. Furthermore, the results reveal that education level is one of the predictors of service quality expectations. These results support the previous study by Kastenholz (2002) who proposed that tourists with higher education have higher expectations as a result of their travel experience, which is more than the tourist with less education. However, the result shows that the tourists who rank highly on the power cultural value have high expectations towards the accommodation service quality. These outcomes are inconsistent with the previous findings of Kueh and Voon (2007), who proposed that there is a significant negative relationship between the cultural values of power and the service quality expectations. The difference between this study results and the previous study is that the sample of this study is the Arab tourists who belong to the large power distance culture, while the study of Kueh and Voon (2007) used Asian youths who are likely to score lower in power distance. Moreover, the results revealed that the tourists who subscribe to the cultural values of tradition have high service quality expectations. The result is inconsistent with the findings of Liu, et al. (2001), who demonstrated that the people who belong to the tradition (collectivism) culture have less expectations than the people who belong to self-direction and stimulation (individualism) culture. However, the results revealed that there was no positive relationship between cultural values and service quality perceptions while the results showed that there was a significant negative relationship between the cultural values of universalism-nature of the Arab tourists and the service quality perceptions. This outcome was consistent with the findings of Truong and King (2010). These findings indicate that tourism destination managers should consider allocating appropriate resources to ensure the growth and stability of their destination tourist customers (Botti et al. 2012).

6. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

This study's findings provide useful marketing and managerial implications for tourism managers and hoteliers who provide service to international tourists such as Arab tourists. In recognising and catering for the specific cultural needs of a tourist cohort, there are significant management and marketing implications at both a macro and micro level. At a macro level, the findings reveal that the Arab tourists' cultural values determine the importance of service quality expectations and perceptions to the tourists and thus affect their travel experiences. However, the findings indicate that the Arab tourists' perceptions did not meet their expectations. Thus, tourism and accommodation managers should give more attention to the tourists' cultural values and carefully consider them in their decision making process, especially in relation to allocating quality efforts and resources in order to minimise this gap. For example, to better serve a market segment with people who have the same cultural characteristics as the Arab tourists, tourism and accommodation managers should direct quality efforts and resources primarily to tangibility, including the physical facilities and equipment, which was the highest gap. The required innovations to implement into this tourism service sector suggest changes to various fundamentals such as combining technological and non-technological innovations in addition to adopting a problem-solving approach (Carvalho & Sarkar, 2014). In efforts to draw Arab visitors to the Gold Coast, Stolz (2011) reported that the Gold Coast Tourism's advertising campaign promotes their 'Arab lounges' as being sympathetic to the needs of Arab tourists. Gold Coast Tourism international marketing director Price (2011) states that the Middle East has become a profitable tourist market for the Coast over the past decade, delivering tens of thousands of visitors, including wealthy Arab sheiks and their entourages. Therefore, many Gold Coast hotels and theme parks now had prayer rooms and served halal food to cater for Muslim visitors. The importance of this factor is that the Arab tourists' have specific needs that have impacted on their expectations and perceptions, namely: facilities including greater hygiene, the kitchen and its equipment, privacy, providing halal food, place for worship, which are all part of their culture. Thus, the tourism and accommodation managers should be aware of the cultural segmentation of their market. Thus, a marketing message that includes elements of similarity - home culture, employing some similar looking people and those who can speak their mother tongue, providing similar food in the mix, may attract more potential tourists (Ng et al., 2007). At a

micro level, managers of accommodation offerings are likely to maximally enhance the appeal of their particular accommodation through offering what is perceived as important and relevant to the Arab tourists in meeting their particular needs. Ardern (2011) noted that almost 60 per cent of the Hilton Surfers Paradise hotel guests in July were from the Middle East. A large number of the 15,000 Arab tourists visiting Australia head to the Gold Coast during Ramadan including members of the Qatar royal family. Armed with this insight, both the tourism industry and accommodation managers can effectively translate an understanding of the needs of Arab tourists as a basis for strategy development in contributing to the service tourism industry's continued establishment and growth. This may contribute to enhancing the service quality level. Finally, this study focused on the relationship between the Arab tourists' cultural values and their expectations and perceptions towards the Gold Coast accommodation service quality. Findings indicate that the demographic factors of age, education level and cultural values on the one hand and service quality expectations and perceptions on the other are the major factors affecting tourists' travel experiences. This study has introduced a new in-depth idea about the Arab tourist cultural values and into tourism and marketing theory. Future research may consider following this example and utilise more extensively the theory of culture and service quality, which will assist in the emerging interest in tourism and marketing studies. We may conclude that tourism and accommodation managers have to pay more attention to staff training to be aware about the culture differences between the tourists and their needs. Our study has addressed the three hypotheses, confirmed aspects of the literature and significantly contributed to extending the existing literature.

References

- Andereck, K., McGehee, N. G., Lee, S., & Clemmons, D. (2012). Experience expectations of prospective volunteer tourists. *Journal of Travel Research, 51*(2), 130-141.
- Ardern, L. (2011). Middle Eastern tourists head to Hilton. *Gold Coast Magazine*. 5th August, 2011, pp. 16-18
- Ariffin, A. A. M., & Maghzi, A. (2012). A preliminary study on customer expectations of hotel hospitality: Influences of personal and hotel factors. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 31*(1), 191-198.
- Australian Government Austrade (2020) <https://www.tra.gov.au/>. (Accessed on the 3rd of May 2020 at 12.45 pm)
- Botti, L., Goncalves, O., & Ratsimbanierana, H. (2012). French Destination Efficiency: A Mean-Variance Approach. *Journal of Travel Research, 51*(2), 115-129.
- Carvalho, L. M. C., & Sarkar, S. (2014). Market structures, strategy and innovation in tourism sector. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 8*(2), 153 - 172.
- Cohen, E., & Goodman, S. (2009). Applying best-worst scaling to wine marketing. *International journal of wine business research, 21*(1), 8-23.
- Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Babin, B. J., & Black, W. C. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis: A global perspective* (Vol. 7).
- Han, X., Kworntnik Jr, R. J., & Wang, C. (2008). Service loyalty: An integrative model and examination across service contexts. *Journal of Service Research, 11*(1), 22-42.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences* (2 ed.). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Kastenholz, E. (2002). The role and marketing implications of destination images on tourist behavior: The case of northern Portugal. (PhD), Universidade de Aveiro.
- Kueh, K., & Voon, B. H. (2007). Culture and service quality expectations. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal, 17*(6), 656-680.
- Laesser, C., Beritelli, P., & Heer, S. (2014). Different native languages as proxy for cultural differences in travel behaviour: insights from multilingual Switzerland. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 8*(2), 140 - 152.
- Lee, J. A., Soutar, G., & Louviere, J. (2008). The best-worst scaling approach: An alternative to Schwartz's values survey. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 90*(4), 335-347.
- Legcevic, J. (2008). Measuring customer satisfaction and service quality: The case of Croatia. *Journal of American Academy of Business, 14*(1), 123.
- Liu, B. S. C., Furrer, O., & Sudharshan, D. (2001). The relationships between culture and behavioral intentions toward services. *Journal of Service Research, 4*(2), 118-129.
- Liu, C. H., & Yen, L. C. (2010). The effects of service quality, tourism impact, and tourist satisfaction on tourist choice of leisure farming types. *African Journal of Business Management, 4*(8), 1529-1545.
- Mey, L. P., Akbar, A. K., & Fie, D. Y. G. (2006). Measuring service quality and customer satisfaction of the hotels in Malaysia: Malaysian, Asian and non-Asian hotel guests. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 13*(2), 144-160.
- Ng, S. I., Lee, J. A., & Soutar, G. N. (2007). Are Hofstede's and Schwartz's value frameworks congruent?. *International Marketing Review, 24*(2), 164-180.
- Page, S., Song, H., & Wu, D. C. (2012). Assessing the impacts of the global economic crisis and swine flu on inbound tourism demand in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Travel Research, 51*(2), 142-153.
- Parasuraman, A., Berry, L., & Zeithaml, V. (2002). Refinement and reassessment of the SERVQUAL scale. *Journal of Retailing, 67*(4), 114.
- Patterson, P. G., & Mattila, A. S. (2008). An examination of the impact of cultural orientation and familiarity in service encounter evaluations. *International Journal of Service Industry Management, 19*(5), 662-681.
- Phau, I., Quintal, V., & Shanka, T. (2014). Examining a consumption values theory approach of young tourists toward destination choice intentions. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 8*(2), 125 - 139.

- Price, G. (2011). "Gold Coast Tourism Pitches Arab Lounge to Draw Middle Eastern Visitors." *The Courier Mail, Business*. 16th May, 2011. pp 6-7
- Reisinger, Y. (2009). *International Tourism: Cultures and Behavior*. Burlington: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Ritchie, J. B., & Hudson, S. (2009). Understanding and meeting the challenges of consumer/tourist experience research. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 11(2), 111-126.
- Sabiote-Ortiz, C. M., Frías-Jamilena, D. M., & Castañeda-García, J. A. (2016). Overall perceived value of a tourism service delivered via different media: A cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(1), 34-51.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25(1), 1-65.
- Schwartz, S. H. (2003). Mapping and interpreting cultural differences around the world. Comparing cultures: dimensions of culture in a comparative perspective. *Vinkin H, Soeters J& Ester*, 2004.
- Shaw, G., & Williams, A. M. (1994). *Critical issues in tourism: A geographical perspective*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Tsaur, S. H., Lin, C. T., & Wu, C. S. (2005). Cultural differences of service quality and behavioral intention in tourist hotels. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 13(1), 41-63.
- Stolz, G. (2011). Gold Coast Tourism Pitches Arab Lounge to Draw Middle Eastern Visitors. *The Courier Mail, Business*. 16th May, 2011.
- Tourism Australia (2012). Quarterly Update, Visitor Arrivals. http://www.tourism.australia.com/en-au/research/5236_6558.aspx . Accessed 14th September, 2012.
- Tourism Research Australia (2008). Tourism Forecasting Committee (pp. 98). Canberra: Tourism Australia.
- Triandis, H., & Suh, E. (2002). Cultural influences on personality. *Annual Reviews in Psychology*, 53(1), 133-160.
- Truong, T. H., & King, B. (2010). Cultural values and service quality: Host and guest perspectives. *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 10(1), 15-32.
- World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC). (2019). Travel & Tourism continues strong growth above global GDP. <https://www.wttc.org/about/media-centre/press-releases/press-releases-/2019/travel-tourism-continues-strong-growth-above-global-gdp/>.



© 2020 by the authors; licensee Growing Science, Canada. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).