

The Influence of Social Responsibility and Quality of Life on the Saudi Tourism Industry

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Abstract

This paper will examine the influence of social responsibility and quality of life on the Saudi tourism industry. The theories relevant to the report will be discussed such as social responsibility and quality of life in the Saudi context to give an overall picture of the tourism industry in Saudi. Over recent years, more Saudis are deciding to stay in their own country for holidays, etc., and the influences for this must be examined. The research methods design will be conducted through qualitative research using semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling to gain insight into the consequences of social responsibility and quality of life in Saudi. This paper found that as identified in the key objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 (2022), there is a lot being established within the goals of social responsibility, including the promotion of sporting activities boosting arts and culture, the development and diversification of entertainment opportunities, improvement of living conditions for expatriates, the development of the tourism sector, preservation of the country's Islamic, Arab, and national heritage, improvement of urban landscapes, upgrading service quality, and enhancing the community immunity against drugs.

Keywords: social responsibility, quality of life, Saudi tourism industry, culture.

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1.0 Introduction

This paper will examine the role of social responsibility and quality of life in Saudi Arabia. Understanding the theories of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is necessary to provide a study representative of social responsibility and quality of life in a Saudi context. Other theories must also be examined in the context of life in Saudi, such as perceptions, response strategies, and social priorities and expectations. According to Emtairah et al. (2009), there are key drivers associated with corporate social responsibility, not only business but socio-economic factors in Saudi Arabia. As organizations are becoming more aware of the need for corporate social responsibility, Saudi Arabia businesses understand this need to leverage business strategy with its Islamic and cultural values. These will be defined in the content of this paper. The challenges of CSR in respect of the Saudi context are also necessary to understanding if Saudi Arabia can overcome difficulties and fully embrace strategic CSR initiatives. However, Khan et al. (2013) identify corporate social responsibility (CSR) as an accepted global view that is ingrained in the values, policies, and practices of an organization. CSR is becoming more established as a theory and relevant to how organizations can play a role in society. CSR looks beyond the narrow economic and business goals. Khan et al. (2013) suggest that the role of organizations in promoting CSR is crucial to providing a view of how the organization is socially responsible. Tilakasiri et al. (2011) state that those organizations with a favorable public image are those with CSR policies. CSR is seen as a vehicle for development through public-private partnerships and a means of purposeful engagement of organizations in society. Much more emphasis is being placed on the role of organizations in the community as demands on public resources are increasing. The ability of the traditional role of government for responsibility for the improvement of living conditions is less viable due to the lack of public resources. CSR is a crucial factor in corporate and strategic decision-making that takes the form of the consideration by organizations of how they can improve the relationship between the environment, customers, and the wider community while safeguarding the success of the business. Recognition must be given to how a country such as Saudi Arabia operates. Saudi Arabia has distinct religious, cultural, political, and value systems. These systems are critical to the operation of the country and how these impact social and economic development. Nalband & Al-Amri (2013) reference the importance of the influence of religion and its domination in everyday life of Saudis. CSR policies within the country are heavily influenced by religion through inspiring the concept of giving for the improvement of society. This has a significant bearing on social responsibility and the quality of life in Saudi. Fadaak (2010) and Montagu (2010) found that many organizations working to improve life in the country are often one-off operations and cannot be sustained over a long-term period. CSR has become a popular concept around the globe, and Saudi Arabia is no stranger to this. However, Saudi Arabia is in a unique position where religion plays a significant role as opposed to how much influence it has in other countries. CSR policies are influenced by religion and helping others. This is in line with CSR policies, particularly those from charitable organizations. However, social responsibility and quality of life are important in Saudi, and it is evident

in the development of partnerships in the public and private sectors to support future development work in Saudi. In the country, there is a clear reference that Islamic values that are expressed through philanthropy are critical elements of CSR (Nurunnabi et al., 2019). Understanding religious, cultural, and social factors are pivotal to this research. To fully plan this study, it is necessary for research objectives to be identified. The identification of these objectives will provide the researcher with a destination for the requirement of the research. The objectives of this study are; 1) Examine the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Saudi, 2) Establish the relationship between CSR and quality of life, 3) Understand the challenges associated with CSR in Saudi.

2 Literature Review

Research (Matten & Moon, 2004; Crişan-Mitra et al., 2020; Prisecaru, 2021) suggests that government and organizations have a key role in society which has changed in both the developing and developed world through CSR's strategic significance. This section will examine the importance of social responsibility and quality of life in the Saudi tourism industry. Crucial factors which must be examined are theories associated with CSR and the identification of any cultural and socioeconomic influences in Saudi to understand the impact that these concepts have on the tourism industry. As identified, religion plays a significant role in Saudi life, and this is reflected in the CSR policies of organizations. Islamic values have an established influence in the country, and CSR is embedded in its religious and socioeconomic values (Allui & Pinto, 2022), which will be examined throughout this paper.

2.1 Importance of social responsibility on the Saudi tourism industry

Al-Ghamdi & Badawi (2019) cite that it is no longer the quality or price of a product but rather the main competitive advantages of an organization are its ethical and social practices that stimulate a response from the consumer. According to Kassem et al. (2021), current research on social responsibility focuses on business ethics and responsibility, which has been criticized for its bias in neglecting the tourist perspective. Fennell (2008) identifies social responsibility in tourism as the protection of the natural environment and the necessity of equitable distribution to local communities. Kassem et al. (2021) identify Saudi as one of the largest markets for international tourism and domestic tourism in the country is growing. Saudi Vision 2030 (2016) identifies three main components for strategic development within Saudi Arabia, these are a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. It is through this strategy that Saudi can provide a vision for the future of the country and its businesses. Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 (2016) envisages a future with an awareness of accountability, responsibility, and transparency in government and business, which is evident in the CSR of organizations in the country. One of the main objectives of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 (Pinto & Allui, 2020) is related to CSR – the aspiration of the Saudi government for businesses to not be directed solely by profits, but that they should contribute to societal and economic development. Organizations are expected to contribute to a sustainable economy by implementing social practices and providing the youth of the country with opportunities that will allow them to build successful careers. Khizindar (2013) identified that the Saudi government has implemented a comprehensive strategy that has diversified the economy of Saudi Arabia and decrease the dependence on oil. Research suggests that there have been considerable global changes in strategic corporate management and CSR, providing a commitment to sustainable development in sectors such as ethical, economic, and ecological (Abram & Jarzabek, 2016; Tepelus, 2019; Hassan et al., 2020). According to Paskova & Zelenka (2019), there are a series of approaches to the implementation of CSR by tourism organizations – information and analytics, system, compensation, delegation, prevention, education, regulation, and marketing. According to Karim & Islam (2020), natural resources at a tourism destination is essential to CSR, but this can lead to overexploitation. Hassan et al. (2020) suggest that CSR policies are necessary to support local communities, protect the environment, and provide fair working conditions for employees, and the implementation of these policies have been significant to the tourism industry.

2.2 The value of quality of life on the Saudi tourism industry

Saudi Vision 2030 (2022) identifies the strategy for quality of life within Saudi Arabia. This program seeks to improve individuals' and families quality of life through the creation of a vital environment that will develop and support new lifestyles and livable options. This will nurture the quality of life with the participation of citizens, residents, and tourists in such activities as entertainment, cultural, urban activities, sports tourism, and other activities. With these diverse options in place, social and economic impacts will include job creation, the diversification of economic activity, and a boost to Saudi cities as ranked among the most livable places on the globe (Saudi Vision 2030, 2022). These developments do not only exist for natural resources and activities but to produce a clear focus on the development of the tourism sector. The Quality of Life Program empowers heritage, sports, culture, entertainment, and tourism. The Saudi government holds great hope for the support of initiatives by private sector organizations. The efforts by private organizations will impact the Saudi quality of life and secure high living standards through urban landscape beautification, enhancement of city services, and city humanization

(Saudi Vision 2030, 2022). The key objectives of this program are set out by Saudi Vision 2030 (2022: n.p.)

1. Promoting sports activities in the community,
2. Achieving excellence in several sports regionally and internationally,
3. Boosting Saudi contribution to arts and culture,
4. Developing and diversifying entertainment opportunities to meet the needs of the population,
5. Improving the living conditions of expatriates,
6. Developing the tourism sector,
7. Preserving and introducing the Kingdom's Islamic, Arab, and national heritage,
8. Improving the urban landscape in Saudi cities,
9. Upgrading the quality of services provided in Saudi cities,
10. Enhancing community immunity against drugs.

As identified in these objectives, there is an attempt to improve the quality of life for those who live in Saudi.

2.3 Theoretical Background of Social Responsibility and Quality of Life on the Saudi Tourism Industry

Saudi Arabia is promoting social responsibility, which is linked to the quality of life. From the research, Saudi has been developing itself as a destination for both domestic and international tourism, which, through the opportunities available, will bolster the quality of life. There is a rich heritage in the Kingdom, and the Saudi government is proud to bring this to the forefront through the development of tourism. Su et al. (2018) identify that concern has been rising in tourism over such issues as climate change, depletion of natural resources, fair trade, and human rights issues, which has brought attention to CSR in the industry. Sheldon & Park (2011) cite that business practices are vital in the tourism industry due to it being dependent on cultural and environmental resources. Su et al. (2018) suggest that it is difficult for a tourist destination to be sustainable without the support of the community, through the support and participation of local residents. According to Su et al. (2018), the perception of quality of life is of concern regarding the noneconomic outcomes in the development of tourism. Social responsibility in the tourism industry faces challenges where stakeholders can significantly influence the economy, environment, society, and culture of the destination.

3.0 Methodology

This section will identify the methodology of the study, examining the research question and objectives in more detail. The requirement of this research is that it can be easily replicated for future and further study. The methodology will be presented in the format of identifying the research method and how the research will be conducted. Qualitative research methods will be used through the administration of semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling will be used. There is a necessity that a plan must be in place so that the researcher can work to a schedule of actions they are required to do to complete this study. However, understanding the approach of the research allows for plans and procedures within the research that are necessary for the understanding of the steps that lead from broad assumptions to how the data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Creswell, 2014). Saunders et al. (2009) place emphasis on the provision of a solid structure to the research. Qualitative research, according to Cropley (2015), is how individuals make sense of their experiences through their own expressions. Polit & Beck (2017) identify the role of qualitative research as an examination of phenomena, which is usually in-depth and holistic through a collection of narratives using a flexible research design. The research method examines the experiences, perceptions, processes, behaviors, and meanings that are attached to them. The researcher has greater flexibility to adjust the design according to the context of the research. Data collection and analysis, according to Moser & Korstjens (2017), is a simultaneous process. The role of qualitative research is involved variables that are patterns and forms. In comparison with the positivist paradigm associated with quantitative research, qualitative research is linked with the naturalistic or constructivist paradigms. Polit & Beck (2017) identify that the constructivist view suggests that there are many interpretations of reality, and the goal is to understand how reality is constructed by the individual. In deciding on the application of the approach, it should be noted that qualitative and quantitative research are not rigid and can often complement one another. This research will be conducted using qualitative research methods in the format of semi-structured interviews. However, Identification of the data collection method is a necessity for this research, and the researcher must remain objective and without bias during this research. Punch (2013) states that the method of research should be based on the underlying theory or theoretical framework that the researcher uses. Busetto et al. (2020) identified four methods of qualitative research methods – document study, observations, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. Busetto et al. (2020) identify the use of semi-structured interviews as a way to gain insight into the subjective opinions, motivations, and experiences of an individual. This is rather than responses that are factual or behavioral. Semi-structured interviews will be administered to tourism operators in Saudi Arabia, who will be asked a series of questions to identify demographics. After this process is completed, the participants will be asked questions regarding how relevant social responsibility and quality of life are to the tourism industry in Saudi. It is hoped that the researcher can administer 20 interviews. Due to time restrictions and deadlines, the researcher may

have to meet the participants in a neutral venue so that the necessary number of interviews can be gathered. It may even be appropriate for the researcher to make contact with participants using Zoom or another video chat app to facilitate any challenges the participants may have in meeting the researcher face to face. For the necessity of collecting data, the interviews will be recorded with the data being transcribed. Within the research, the method of data collection must be broadly defined and open (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). It is important that a sampling strategy is chosen so that it can generate information that is consistent with the methodological approach. The size of the sample is different for each study; thus, data saturation is an important measure. There are a number of sampling strategies available, however; purposive sampling has been chosen for this study as participants are selected by the researcher on the merit of which potential participants are most informative. It is also necessary to identify the mode of analysis for this study. Moser & Korstjens (2018) identify the main types of analysis as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and content analysis. The most appropriate analysis for this study is ethnography. The next section will examine the findings of the interviews and the reporting of key factors.

4.0 Findings

This section will reflect on the results produced by this study, and observations will be made on the findings. It is appropriate to mention again that this study will use qualitative research methods in the format of interviews that are open-ended using the purposive sampling method to collect the data and ethnography to analyze it. Twenty participants from tourism organizations were interviewed in an attempt to understand social responsibility and quality of life in Saudi. The objectives stated at the commencement of this research were to:

- Examine the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Saudi,
- Establish the relationship between CSR and quality of life,
- Understand the challenges associated with CSR in Saudi.

Analysis of the results will be produced using ethnography, with a discussion taking place in the next section.

4.1 Demographics

The demographics are particularly important in this study as the researcher can gain some knowledge from the background of the participants, such as age, gender, and how long they have worked in the tourism industry. Identification of the gender of the participants of this study found that while women are becoming more empowered in the country, men outnumber women 3 to 1 in the tourism industry, which is evident in the results. The age of the participant is particularly interesting, with the five female participants all in the age group 21 - 30. One male was aged between 18 – 20, four fell in the group 21 -30, seven of the participants were in the age group 31 – 40, and three were 41+. It is significant that females are not among the age groups above 30 and shows that women are being given opportunities in the more recent past than traditionally. It is also significant that those ‘younger’ members of the tourism industry hold some type of qualification at BA level or above. These results have been produced in table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

Gender	Responses
<i>Male</i>	15
<i>Female</i>	5
Age	
<i>18 – 21</i>	1
<i>21 – 30</i>	9
<i>31 – 40</i>	7
<i>41+</i>	3
Education	
<i>High School</i>	4
<i>Diploma</i>	1
<i>BA</i>	7
<i>MA</i>	2
<i>PhD</i>	1
Time in Tourism	
<i>1 – 3 years</i>	3
<i>4 – 6 years</i>	8
<i>7 – 10 years</i>	3
<i>11+ years</i>	1

4.2 Results

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of social responsibility and quality of life in Saudi Arabia. Twenty participants were recruited using purposive sampling and analyzed using ethnography. This type of analysis describes social settings, actors, and events to interpret how the culture works (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). It is ordered through themes, patterns, and regularities, and the findings are produced through a narrative that offers a detailed description of a culture (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). As already identified in the previous sections, Saudi is an extremely traditional country with a rich heritage. There were no surprises in the findings except maybe that more females are employed in the country.

4.3.1 Examine the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Saudi

Social responsibility is important in the Saudi context as it drives both business and socioeconomic factors in the country (Emtairah et al., 2009). Islamic and cultural values are critical factors for businesses due to their importance in the country. Producing policies for business in Saudi has helped to develop CSR and to provide the promotion of quality of life. Those organizations that have a positive public image also implement CSR policies (Tilakasiri et al., 2011). This was also evident in the interviews, where many of the participants identified that there was a need for transparency and accountability within the business community in Saudi. One participant stated, “CSR is modeled in other countries and helps to develop the business...we should well be on the same track.” There were some mixed views on how well businesses were implementing CSR policies. One participant believes that “well, its em a waste of time, the policy is drawn up and then put in a drawer somewhere and fished out when its needed. Businesses need to be seen to be using CSR to improve quality of life, not ignore it!”

4.3.2 Establish the relationship between CSR and quality of life

Social responsibility and quality of life are intrinsically linked in the Saudi context. Purposeful engagement from business to the community has developed rapidly, and more emphasis has been placed on private resources as the demands for public resources are diminishing. The Saudi government has recognized the need for business to become more involved in community initiatives. It was clear from the interview responses that the participants believed that this engagement was a positive step towards social responsibility and quality of life. One reaction was, “well, er, we need businesses onboard and for them to be socially responsible so that the quality of life can be improved to a higher standard.” However, one participant pointed out that “the tourism industry has suffered due to COVID-19, and we need to understand the needs of our citizens so that domestic tourists can take the opportunities the Kingdom offers. It is not enough to improve quality of life, we need to be able to be em proud of our culture, traditions, and heritage.”

4.3.3 Understand the challenges associated with CSR in Saudi

Like any country, there are challenges associated with social responsibility, including funding for initiatives, the incentivizing of companies to implement CSR, raising awareness, and the awareness of the role of stakeholders. The opinions of the participants varied. One response stated that “understanding em the terms social responsibility and CSR confuse er people. Awareness is crucial to not think of CSR as a charity.” Another suggested that “the stakeholders haven’t a clue! Many of them sit around and don’t implement policies that would help. This produces negativity around the concept.”

5.0 Discussion

This section will discuss the findings from the previous section to provide insight into social responsibility and quality of life in the Saudi context. An important part of research is the ability to link the findings with the literature review. The objectives set for this study have been answered, and further discussion will take place in this section. The implications of this research can be explored on a wider scale in the context of other industries in Saudi. While the objectives have been identified in the findings, they will complete the discussion of this paper.

5.1 *Examine the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Saudi*

When the literature review and findings are combined to provide a discussion of the research, commonalities are apparent. In the context of Saudi, the concept of social responsibility is quite new in comparison with other countries. As evidenced in the findings, the concept of social responsibility still produces challenges, and the unique position that the country holds in terms of religion and culture are examples of challenges faced. The importance of Islam and cultural values are represented in how the country operates, and while many of the organizations that champion social responsibility are identified as charities, this is being further extended into the private sector. As further identified by Maqbool (2015), CSR is linked to charitable activities thus, it would suggest that social responsibility is not a widespread concept as used in the West. The government of Saudi is making inroads into the use of social responsibility to enhance the quality of life of its citizens, and this has been particularly evident in the tourism industry. The tourism industry is attempting to target its citizens and influence them to visit sites in Saudi which have a rich heritage. In this way, Saudis seem to be able to gain an insight into the usage of social responsibility and how it can work towards a better quality of life. This can be expanded on further by identifying the drivers of both business and socioeconomic factors (Emtairah et al., 2009) and the importance of social responsibility in this dynamic. The participants of this study also identified that there were issues with the implementation of social responsibility in business in Saudi.

5.2 *Establish the relationship between CSR and quality of life*

Increasingly, the Saudi government and businesses are seeing the opportunities that the connection between social responsibility and quality of life can bring. The use of private resources being used in the public domain highlights how far Saudi Arabia has come. Community initiatives have become important to the development of Saudi, and organizations have been involved in this. One factor that is clear is the influence Islam and cultural values have on life in Saudi and this can be seen in its CSR policies (Allui & Pinto, 2022). Social responsibility and quality of life are important attributes when defining a nation. As identified by Al-Ghamdi & Badawi (2019), competitive advantage is defined in Saudi through the ethical and social practices of an organization. This is particularly interesting when applied to the tourism industry, where Fennel (2008) suggests that social responsibility is defined as protecting the environment and distributing equitable assets to the local communities. With the growth in domestic as well as international tourism (Kassem et al., 2021), Saudi Vision 2030 (2016) is pushing for quality of life through strategic goals – the creation of a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. The future under Saudi Vision 2030 (2106) enforces the concepts of social responsibility and quality of life, which will develop a future that has an awareness of accountability, transparency, and responsibility in business and government. The hope for Vision 2030 is that business will not be guided by profits, and there should be a contribution by organizations to society and the economy.

5.3 *Understand the challenges associated with CSR in Saudi*

Issues can arise, but Saudi is no different than other countries. The main opportunity is to solve the issue and develop after it. There are numerous solutions to how the successful implication of social responsibility can be managed, including providing funds for initiatives, giving incentives to organizations that can implement CSR, and raising awareness that CSR is not just an act of charity that can make a significant difference to the quality of life in Saudi. Awareness is key to how an organization understands the strategic significance of CSR to the future of an organization. As identified by several sources (Matten & Moon, 2004; Crişan-Mitra et al., 2020; Prisecaru, 2021), there is significant research into the importance of CSR to organizations and governments through strategic planning in the developing and developed world. Social responsibility focuses on the ethics and responsibilities of an organization, and according to Kassem et al. (2021), there is a bias in the neglect of the tourist perspective. To implement CSR in a tourism organization, Paskova & Zelenka (2019) identify several approaches that can be used - information and analytics, system, compensation, delegation, prevention, education, regulation, and marketing. A challenge pointed out by Karim & Islam (2020) is the overexploitation of the domestic tourism industry, as the purpose of CSR (Hassan et al., 2020) is to protect the environment, support communities, and the provision of fair working conditions for employees.

6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion to this paper, it is significant to identify that further research could be carried out in relation to how

social responsibility can be implemented in other industries in Saudi Arabia, which also leads to a more significant study on comparing and contrasting various other countries, their industries, social responsibility and quality of life. It is evident that society and culture are slowly changing with the addition of women in the workforce. This is a significant breakthrough as culture and Islam dictates family values which have not changed for centuries. The acknowledgment of the changing world and circumstances has allowed the Saudi government the opportunity to work with businesses to ensure a better quality of life for its citizens. This research involved the examination of social responsibility, quality of life, and factors within the country that could become barriers. There are significant developments within Saudi that will improve the quality of life through the implementation of social responsibility, particularly in organizations. Private organizations are getting more involved with public initiatives, and these efforts are going a long way toward securing a high standard of quality of life through redevelopment, enhancement, and humanization of the cities. As identified in the key objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 (2022), there is a lot being established within the goals of social responsibility, including the promotion of sporting activities boosting arts and culture, the development and diversification of entertainment opportunities, improvement of living conditions for expatriates, the development of the tourism sector, preservation of the country's Islamic, Arab, and national heritage, improvement of urban landscapes, upgrading service quality, and enhancing the community immunity against drugs.

This paper has identified the concept of social responsibility and its impact on the quality of life and the tourism industry in Saudi. While there are gaps in the research, such as tools that can be used to implement CSR, Saudi has firmly established social responsibility and quality of life as top priorities for the nation. Acting responsibly and ethical is key to the success of an organization, and it is those organizations who can successfully achieve this will return a sustainable competitive advantage.

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