Journal Homepage: www.ijo-bs.com

International Journal of Business Society

Contents lists available at: https://www.ijo-bs.com/issue.html

Driving Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's Hospitality Sector Through People and Process Strategies

Tareg A. Elrahouma[1]; Nahg A. Alawi[2]

[1]Iqra Business School, University of Geomatika Malaysia. E-mail: (tarekarhouma99@gmail.com)
[2]Iqra Business School, University of Geomatika Malaysia. E-mail: (dr.nahg@geomatika.edu.my)

Information of Article

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of two marketing mix elements—People and Process—on tourism service quality in Misurata's hospitality sector, a key area in Libya's developing tourism industry. Using Marketing Mix Theory, the research addresses a gap in Libya-specific studies by analyzing how staff training and operational efficiency shape service quality perceptions. A quantitative survey of 357 hospitality providers, selected through purposive sampling, employed validated questionnaires. SPSS multiple regression results show both elements significantly impact service quality, with People (β = 0.492, $p < 0.001$) having a stronger effect than Process (β = 0.287, $p < 0.01$). Reliability and validity were confirmed through Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis. The study offers practical recommendations for improving employee performance and operational systems, contributing to Marketing Mix Theory in a post-conflict context and enhancing visitor satisfaction in Misurata.

1. Introduction

Misurata, which is Libya's strategic seaport city, will be an important player in the country's tourism sector, particularly in the hospitality sector that includes hotels, travel agencies, and allied services for local as well as international tourists (El-Manhaly, 2024). Besides its strategic location and better infrastructure, the hospitality sector is beset by large problems including inefficient delivery of services, poor staff training, and inefficient running of operations, all on top of Libya's post-conflict environment following decades of political instability (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). These call for targeted actions to enhance the quality of tourism services, defined as the extent to which services are fulfilling or exceeding visitor expectations on dimensions such as tangibles (physical settings), reliability (reliable service), responsiveness (promptness of help), assurance (faith in employees' capability), and empathy (personalized care) (Jahmani et al., 2023). The Marketing Mix Concept, adapted for service industries by Booms and Bitner (1981), provides a healthy basis for overcoming these challenges in terms of emphasizing factors like People (e.g., skilled personnel, front-line personnel) and Process (e.g., smooth booking processes, service procedures) as key determinants of service quality (Giao et al., 2021). However, there is a significant shortage of research applying this model to Misurata's hospitality sector, particularly in the case of Libya's unique socio-economic and recovery challenges (Oukacha, 2024). Misurata's tourism industry, which has the potential to support cultural and business tourism, offers a compelling case for consideration of how investments in human capital and operational effectiveness can enhance the quality of service, furthering academic understanding as well as practical knowledge about Libya's tourism industry (Kerdpitak et al., 2022). This study focuses on People and Process because they have central positions in providing consistent and quality service experiences in hospitality settings where human interaction and operational systems take center stage in guest satisfaction (Xia et al., 2024).

The objective of this study is to evaluate the direct effect of People and Process on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata hospitality service providers. The study tests two hypotheses: (H1) People has a significant positive effect on Tourism Service Quality, and (H2) Process has a significant positive effect on Tourism Service Quality. These assumptions underpin that effective operational practices and professional well-trained personnel enhance service quality perception via responsiveness, assurance, and reliability. The study employed quantitative methodology in cross-sectional survey design targeting 357 hospitality service deliverers, i.e., employees of hotels and workers in travel agencies, out of an estimated population of 5,000. Data were collected via a standardized questionnaire adapted from previous research and piloted using multiple regression in SPSS, with rigorous statistical testing to ensure validity (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The demographic profile of the respondents was also analyzed to facilitate insights into the provider profile and inform targeted interventions. The significance of this research is that it has the potential to implement Marketing Mix Theory in

a post-conflict hospitality setting, addressing a gap in Libyan-focused research. In practice, it offers choices for Misurata's hospitality managers to enhance employees' training and process optimization in an effort to enhance visitors' satisfaction and service confidence. The paper structure is as follows: Section 2 is a review of the literature and hypotheses, Section 3 is the methodology, Section 4 the results, Section 5 the findings, and Section 6 concludes with implications and limitations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Marketing Mix Theory and Tourism Service Quality

The Theory of Marketing Mix, which was being extended to service industries by Booms and Bitner (1981), is that there are seven drivers Product, Price, Promotion, Place, People, Process, and Physical Evidence that are responsible for delivering services and customers' perceptions. For the hotel industry, the same factors help enhance service quality, which is based on attributes like reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance, and empathy (Jahmani et al., 2023). Quality of service is particularly important in hospitality, where visitors' experience is determined by direct interactions with staff and the efficiency of functioning mechanisms, such as check-in procedures or reservation systems (Giao et al., 2021). People and Process are the focus of this study due to their central role in Misurata's hospitality sector, where operational efficiency and human resources are essential to delivering consistent and high-quality services (Kerdpitak et al., 2022). People refers to the staff involved in delivering services, for example, their training, professionalism, and customer service skills that directly influence visitor impressions (El-Manhaly, 2024). Process refers to operational systems and procedures, for example, reservation systems and service delivery processes, which deliver smooth and consistent experiences (Xia et al., 2024). Both elements are essential in propelling visitor satisfaction, particularly in Misurata, whose hospitality sector is recovering from post-conflict challenges like resource deficiencies and inadequate professional training (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). Past studies have shown that professional staff and efficient processes significantly contribute to improved service quality through ease of trust, responsiveness, and reliability in hospitality settings (Oukacha, 2024). However, their application in post-conflict environments, bedeviled as they are by infrastructural and human resource deficiencies, remains underexplored, and there is a need for studies to address these issues (Jahmani et al., 2023).

2.2 People and Tourism Service Quality

The People element in hospitality includes the staff who interact with visitors, such as hotel receptionists, concierge personnel, and travel agency managers, whose professionalism and skills directly influence service quality (Giao et al., 2021). In Misurata, professionally trained staff are essential to delivering responsive and empathetic services that meet the expectations of different visitors, such as foreign tourists visiting nearby cultural sites like Leptis Magna (El-Manhaly, 2024). Good staff performance enhances confidence (trust in staff ability) and compassion (personalized care), two of the most significant service quality factors (Jahmani et al., 2023). For instance, Kerdpitak et al. (2022) found that staff trained in hospitality settings significantly improved visitor satisfaction by addressing guest needs promptly and professionally. In Misurata, restricted access to professional training activities and high staff turnover are issues that compromise the quality of services, highlighting the need for strategic human resource development (Oukacha, 2024). Evidence is shown that hospitality providers in post-conflict zones are likely to face difficulties in recruiting and keeping qualified personnel, resulting in variable service delivery and reduced visitor confidence (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). Investment in training employees, particularly in customer service and cultural awareness, would be able to bridge these gaps, resulting in greater visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Based on this evidence, the study suggests:

H1: People has a significant positive effect on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's hospitality sector.

2.3 Process and Tourism Service Quality

The Process element in hospitality entails the operations procedures and systems for facilitating the delivery of service, such as check-in/check-out procedures, reservation systems, and complaint handling systems, which have a direct impact on service quality (Xia et al., 2024). Efficient processes ensure reliability (vowing to provide services) and responsiveness (on-time delivery of services), prerequisites to visitor satisfaction in Misurata's hospitality sector (Giao et al., 2021). For example, effective booking mechanisms and timely responsiveness to guest enquiries can enhance overall service experience in hotels and tourist agencies (Jahmani et al., 2023). Kerdpitak et al. (2022) showed that effective internal processes in the hospitality sector enhanced service quality impressions significantly by minimizing waiting times and providing consistency. In Misurata, inefficiencies in operations due to the lack of automated systems and standardized processes lead to delays and visitor dissatisfaction (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). The application of manual

processes, such as paper bookings, also contributes to these problems, necessitating process optimization (Oukacha, 2024). Implementation of digital technologies, such as online booking systems, and standardization of service protocols would enhance efficiency and reliability and bring it to international hospitality standards. Thus, the study hypothesizes:

H2: Process has a significant positive effect on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's hospitality sector.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the direct effects of People and Process on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's hospitality sector. The approach is well-suited for testing causal relationships in a specific context, particularly in a post-conflict environment where timely data are critical for understanding provider perspectives (Saunders et al., 2023). Data were collected in February 2025 to capture current insights from hospitality service providers, ensuring relevance to Misurata's ongoing tourism recovery efforts.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The study population comprised approximately 5,000 hospitality service providers in Misurata, including hotel staff, travel agency personnel, and other professionals engaged in delivering hospitality services. A sample size of 357 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, ensuring statistical adequacy for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents with direct involvement in hospitality services, such as front-desk operations or guest relations, enhancing the relevance and quality of responses (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). This sampling method ensured that participants had sufficient knowledge of staff performance and operational processes, critical for assessing their impact on service quality.

3.3 Instrument

A standardized survey questionnaire was adapted from proven tools used in previous hospitality studies to guarantee equivalence with proven measures of marketing mix elements and service quality. The instrument had three main constructs: People (7 items, e.g., "Our staff are adequately trained to handle guests' needs," "Our staff demonstrate personalized care"), Process (6 items, e.g., "Our booking procedures are efficient," "Our complaint handling is prompt"), and Tourism Service Quality (7 items, e.g., "Our services are delivered reliably," "Our staff give confidence to guests"). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, consistent with methods adopted by Jahmani et al. (2023) and Giao et al. (2021). The questionnaire also had demographic items for age, gender, educational level, occupational position, and years of experience for obtaining a detailed profile of respondents. The survey tool was pilot-tested with 30 respondents in January 2025, and the Cronbach's alpha values that were obtained were 0.82 (People), 0.79 (Process), and 0.86 (Service Quality), which confirmed reliability and allowed for minor item clarity adjustments.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via drop-off surveys distributed to 450 respondents across Misurata's hospitality providers, resulting in 357 usable responses (79.3% response rate). Surveys were administered in person to ensure high response quality, with respondents briefed on the study's purpose and assured of confidentiality. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and data anonymization, were strictly upheld (Saunders et al., 2023). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and construct scores. Reliability was assessed via Cronbach's alpha, and validity was evaluated through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and inter-construct correlations. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses, examining the effects of People and Process on Tourism Service Quality. Assumptions of normality (verified via skewness and kurtosis), linearity (confirmed through scatterplots), and multicollinearity (assessed via VIF) were checked, with VIF values below 3 ensuring no multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2017). Demographic data were analyzed to provide insights into respondent characteristics and their potential influence on service quality perceptions.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 357 respondents. The sample was diverse, with 55.7% male and 44.3% female respondents, reflecting a balanced gender distribution. Age groups were well-represented, with 31.9% aged 18–30, 44.8% aged 31–45, and 23.3% aged 46 and above, indicating a mix of younger and more experienced providers.

Education levels varied, with 27.5% holding high school diplomas, 48.2% holding bachelor's degrees, and 24.3% holding postgraduate qualifications, suggesting a relatively educated workforce. Job roles included hotel staff (38.4%), travel agency personnel (29.7%), guest relations officers (18.5%), and others (13.4%), capturing diverse perspectives within the hospitality sector. Years of experience ranged from less than 5 years (33.6%), 5–10 years (36.7%), to over 10 years (29.7%), indicating a blend of novice and seasoned professionals. These demographics provide context for interpreting service quality perceptions and inform tailored recommendations for staff training and process optimization.

Table: 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	199	55.7
	Female	158	44.3
Age	18–30 years	114	31.9
	31–45 years	160	44.8
	46+ years	83	23.3
Education Level	High School	98	27.5
	Bachelor's Degree	172	48.2
	Postgraduate	87	24.3
Job Role	Hotel Staff	137	38.4
	Travel Agency Personnel	106	29.7
	Guest Relations Officer	66	18.5
	Other	48	13.4
Years of Experience	<5 years	120	33.6
	5–10 years	131	36.7
	>10 years	106	29.7
Gender	Male	199	55.7

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Descriptive statistics for the constructs are presented in Table 2. Mean scores indicate moderate to high perceptions of People (M = 3.92, SD = 0.68), Process (M = 3.75, SD = 0.66), and Tourism Service Quality (M = 4.02, SD = 0.70). These scores suggest that providers perceive their staff performance and operational processes positively, though there is potential for further improvement to achieve excellence in service quality. Reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 for all constructs: People (0.827), Process (0.794), and Tourism Service Quality (0.851), indicating strong internal consistency.

Table: 2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
People	3.92	0.68	0.827
Process	3.75	0.66	0.794
Tourism Service Quality	4.02	0.70	0.851

4.3 Validity Assessment

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess construct validity, using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. Three factors were extracted, corresponding to People, Process, and Tourism Service Quality, with eigenvalues > 1 and total variance explained of 69.8%. Factor loadings ranged from 0.67 to 0.90, exceeding the threshold of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2017). Inter-construct correlations (Table 3) were moderate (r = 0.53 to 0.67), indicating discriminant validity, as correlations were below 0.80, ensuring that constructs were distinct yet related.

Table: 3 Inter-Construct Correlations

Construct	People	Process	Tourism Service Quality
People	1.000		
Process	0.531	1.000	
Tourism Service Quality	0.674	0.659	1.000

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test H1 and H2, with Tourism Service Quality as the dependent variable and People and Process as independent variables. Table 4 presents the results. The model was significant (F(2, 354) = 86.542, p < 0.001), explaining 49.4% of the variance in Tourism Service Quality (R^2 = 0.494, Adjusted R^2 = 0.490).

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People had a significant positive effect (β = 0.492, t = 7.983, p < 0.001), supporting H1. Process also had a significant positive effect (β = 0.287, t = 4.512, p < 0.01), supporting H2. VIF values (People: 1.392; Process: 1.374) confirmed no multicollinearity. Standardized coefficients indicate that People has a stronger influence than Process, suggesting that staff performance is a primary driver of service quality perceptions.

Table: 4 Multiple Regression Results

Hypothesis	Predictor	β (Standardized)	t-value	p-value	VIF	Result
H1	People	0.492	7.983	<0.001	1.392	Supported
H2	Process	0.287	4.512	<0.01	1.374	Supported

$R^2 = 0.494$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.490$, $F_{(2, 354)} = 86.542$, $p < 0.001$

5. Discussion

The results confirm that People and Process both exert a substantial influence on Tourism Service Quality in Misurata's hospitality sector, confirming H1 and H2. People's greater influence (β = 0.492, p < 0.001) aligns with Giao et al. (2021), who concluded that effective staff enhance assurance and empathy, critical aspects of service quality. In Misurata, an investment in employee training programs in customer service, cultural sensitivity, and language skills may address the limited professional development opportunities mentioned by Hammad and Abd El Maksoud (2024) to improve the experience of the guests in hotels and travel agencies (El-Manhaly, 2024). The significant but weaker effect of Process (β = 0.287, p < 0.01) confirms Kerdpitak et al. (2022), who emphasized that efficient processes, e.g., computerized reservation facilities and timely complaint handling, enhance reliability and responsiveness. Misurata hospitality operators can use digital tools, e.g., online reservation platforms, and develop standardized service procedures to counter operation inefficiencies brought up by Oukacha (2024). The R^2 value of 0.494 indicates that People and Process account for nearly half of the variance in service quality, suggesting their substantial but not exclusive contribution. Other factors, such as physical facilities or price, may also be at play, and this is something to look into further (Jahmani et al., 2023).

Demographic analysis is revealing in terms of the provider profile, offering a diverse workforce of mixed experience and education. The balance of genders (55.7% male, 44.3% female) and age group representation (44.8% of age group 31–45 and 31.9% of age group 18–30) suggests that training schemes could cover both young flexible providers and digital process improvement and older, experienced providers for customer service leadership. The high proportion of bachelor's degree graduates (48.2%) captures a potential for further training in hospitality management, while the mix of work occupations (e.g., 38.4% hotel staff, 29.7% agency staff) captures a need for intervention by role, such as front-desk training for hotel staff and efficiency in booking systems for agency staff. Providers with 10 or more years' experience (29.7%) would be positioned to mentor their less experienced colleagues (<5 years, 33.6%), enabling knowledge transfer to enhance service quality (Xia et al., 2024). These demographic results suggest that tailored training and process optimization can leverage the diversity of the workforce to maximize service quality outcomes.

Theoretically, the findings contribute to Marketing Mix Theory by demonstrating the applicability of People and Process in a post-conflict hospitality environment, plugging a Libya-focused research gap (Oukacha, 2024). The findings emphasize the need for context-specific adaptations of the marketing mix to cope with issues such as high staff turnover, low technology uptake, and resource shortages (Hammad & Abd El Maksoud, 2024). In practice, the study recommends Misurata's hospitality stakeholders to concentrate on enhancing their employees by holding regular training sessions on customer interaction and problem-solving and streamlining processes through the adoption of digital technology like property management systems and online review tools. These interventions would enhance the responsiveness, confidence, and reliability of services, attaining sustainable growth in the hospitality sector. Policymakers can assist in such endeavors by subsidizing training, promoting technology uptake, and establishing service quality standards, as part of broader tourism development goals in Libya (El-Manhaly, 2024). The demographic analysis suggests that training programs should be designed in accordance with providers' education, experience, and occupation so that such measures can be applied effectively.

6. Conclusion

The research explored the effect of People and Process on Tourism Service Quality in the hospitality sector in Misurata, with substantial positive contributions attested for both factors. The findings underline the role played by qualified staff and efficient business processes in constructing service quality impressions in a post-war setting. At an academic level, the research plays a part in Marketing Mix Theory extension using empirical verification obtained from an understudied

context, sealing a gap in Libya-focused hospitality literature. Practically, it offers Misurata's hospitality suppliers actionable suggestions to heighten personnel professionalism via focused training and process streamlining through digital technologies, eventually upgrading visitor experiences and sector competitiveness. The demographic analysis highlights providers' heterogeneity, suggesting tailored interventions to capitalize on their experience and expertise. Limitations include the focus on only two marketing mix variables and the single-city sample, possibly limiting generalizability to other Libyan or regional contexts. Additional research can be conducted on other determinants, say, physical evidence or price, or compare and contrast between Libyan cities such as Tripoli or Benghazi to continue to add knowledge on hospitality service quality dynamics. The research findings are of direct interest to stakeholders who are keen on strengthening the hospitality sector of Misurata under ongoing rebuilding efforts towards assisting Libya's general tourism development agenda.

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