INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE FACTORS ON CUSTOMERS’ PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY AND LOYALTY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY IN AL-LADHIQIYAH, SYRIA

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By

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ABSTRACT

Service quality in tourism industry has been examined in many different types of business enterprise. Aspects of service quality can be divided into two: tangible and intangible. Tangible aspects of service quality include the exterior and interior design of hotels, the equipment found at hotels and the ambient conditions in the environment of hotels. On the other hand, the intangible aspects of service quality are those factors that are not touched; they include reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The present study investigated the effects of both tangible and intangible aspects of service quality at hotels on both customers’ overall perception of service quality and loyalty. Data were collected from 209 respondents who were guests at some hotels at Al-Ladhiqiyah, a Syrian coastal city. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire based on Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c); Bitner (1992); Wakefield and Blodgett (1996, 1999); and Skogland and Siguaw (2004). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, factor analysis and regression analysis. Cronbach’s alpha reliability test was run on the data collected to determine the reliability of the data. Results of Cronbach’s alpha reliability test showed that all the values were above 0.75 indicating acceptable reliability because the values were above 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). To test the hypotheses, \( p \leq 0.05 \) and \( p \leq 0.01 \) significance levels were used to accept or reject the hypotheses. This study showed that design of the hotels, the equipment at hotels and the ambient conditions at hotels had their effects on customers’ overall
perceptions of service quality at $p \leq 0.01$. The results also showed that only intangible factors of empathy and assurance had their significant influence on customers’ overall perception of service quality at $p \leq 0.01$. In addition, the results indicated that empathy, assurance and reliability had a high significant influence on customers’ loyalty at $p \leq 0.01$. Accordingly, it is recommended that managers and owners of hotels should give great attention to all tangible factors of service quality at their hotels because such factors have their influence on customers’ loyalty and can bring more profits to hotels. In addition, intangible factors of reliability, assurance and empathy should be taken into consideration because they play a great role in customers’ loyalty.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The current introductory chapter presents some background information on the development of tourism worldwide and in the Arab world. It also provides some information on Syria, the importance of tourism in Syria, the government policy for improving tourism in Syria and the most well-known tourists’ attractions in both Syria and Al-Ladhiqiyah. In addition, the current chapter presents the statement of problem and the objectives of the study as well as the research questions. The significance of the study and definitions of the key terms are also provided in this chapter. This chapter concludes with discussing the limitations of the study and the organization of the thesis.

1.2 Development and Benefits of Tourism Industry Worldwide

Tourism is a social phenomenon because it is associated with different activities a tourist does; these activities include business, leisure, pleasure and education (Page & Ateljevic, 2009). Tourism causes people to change their residence for a while to provide a kind of recreation in their life; it does not necessarily involve earning activities. In modern life, tourism has become one of the popular activities. Tourism can be described as a dynamic interdisciplinary field and it is characterized by an ever increasing competition. All over the world, tourism has been growing as one of the major sources of income and employment. Hall and Boyd (2005) state that tourism includes (1) the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, (2) the activities undertaken during their stay in
those destinations and (3) the facilities created to and provided to them suit their needs. Due to the variations in tourists’ needs, providers of tourism services face some difficulties to acquire and keep customers. Over the past several decades, the sector of travel and tourism has risen significantly worldwide, becoming an important driver of both growth and employment (Blanke & Mia, 2005).

The growth of tourism is one of the major worldwide economic forces, offering strong competition to the oil and food industries as well as to the automobile sector (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2008). Worldwide arrivals reached 842 million in 2006, representing a growth of 4.6% per a year. It has been predicted that by 2020, international arrivals will exceed 1.5 billion people (Frangialli, 2004). Developing countries are forerunners in tourism growth because their markets share increased from 34% to 40% between 2000 and 2007. As a result of considering tourism as the key factor for increasing new economic and social benefits, investments in tourism infrastructure are rapidly increasing in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Central and South America (UNWTO, 2008).

According to the reports in 2004 by World Travel and Tourism Council (hereafter referred to as WTTC) in the Caribbean, tourism has become one of the main source for income (Mustafa, 2010). The growing importance of experiential tourism (including nature, culture and soft adventure) has further heightened the popularity of areas endowed with natural beauty and diverse cultures.

Tourism contributes effectively to the socio-economic development of both developed and less developed countries. Furthermore, tourism is increasingly viewed as an attractive development option for many parts of the developing world. Service
industries were given a noticeable attention as an emerging sector of the global economy in late 1970s. The service sector has become one of the most prominent elements of world economy as well as the most important focus of business management strategy (Ghobadian, Speller & Jones, 1994). It has been noticed that tourism has gained its significance for the economics of developing nations all over the world (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). According to World Tourism Organization [WTO] (2010), the past ten years have witnessed a rapid growth in tourism that resulted in the arrival of about 880 million international arrivals to different destinations, accounting for almost US$852 billion of receipts. Moreover, more growth is predicted to take place, not only for those destinations receiving the highest numbers of tourists, but also for other ones with small market shares (Mustafa, 2010).

Although developing countries try to support tourism industry, such countries face some challenges and problems (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). All over the world, there have been some incidents that affect tourism development. The events of September 11 forced hotel industry to reduce expenditures, decrease the number of employees and reduce services and amenities. Along with this event, the Iraq war and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) epidemic also led to a decrease of the number of hotel guests. The hotel industry has currently recovered from the sequences of these events and has raised a score of customer satisfaction to 83 in the third quarter of 2003 from July through September (Barsky & Nash, 2003). However, the hotel industry needs to consistently maintain and improve service quality and attractiveness to increase accomplishing customer loyalty and profitability (ibid).
Global hotel industry has received a remarkable attention in the recent few decades. In leisure firms such as those in tourism industry, service quality is one of the indicators of customers’ satisfaction, customers’ loyalty and hotels’ profitability (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 1996). In the few past decades, there has been a remarkable increase in the development in the global hotel industry resulting in over-construction and high competition among hotels and tourism companies (Min & Min, 1997). In addition, all industries, including the hotel industry, face a highly competitive environment. The remarkable quick growth in the hotel industry has forced hotels to begin to seriously recognize the importance of service improvement (ibid). One of the target aspects of service improvement is service quality that is necessary to any hotel in order to distinguish itself from competitors and accomplish customer satisfaction (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Accordingly, service quality improvement has become a major focus in hotel industry because improving service quality is one of recommended strategies for achieving a competitive advantage and retaining customers (Kandampully, Mok & Sparks, 2001).

This section has provided a brief description of the development of hotel industry in the world. It also has highlighted the major benefits of tourism as one of the sources for economic development. The following section deals with the development of tourism industry in the Arab world.

1.3 Tourism in the Arab World

Tourism in Arab countries is progressing and developing because Arab countries realize the importance of tourism for their economy development and also
for decreasing the rate of unemployment. Due to the recent development and progress of tourism industries in the globalization era, Arab countries have been good destinations for western pilgrims, travelers and adventurers (Hazbun, 1997). Furthermore, developing national plans for tourism in Arab counties is one of the important aspects in most of Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman and other Arab countries (Aziz, 2001). Thus, the sector of travel and tourism in Arab countries has been a significant source for creating new jobs; contributing to the economic income of these countries (Blanke & Mia, 2005) and becoming an important concern for policymakers. In addition, over the last decade, Arab countries have witnessed an impressive growth in the arrivals of international tourists especially to Syria, Oman and Yemen, providing several job opportunities.

Tourism industry is important for all Arab countries because of some reasons. First, as Hazbun (2001) admitted that Arab governments are working hard to promote tourism as a means of building their own economic and to compete the global marketplace. The second reason is related to the remarkable achievements of tourism in Arab countries. This is because WTTC reported that economic activities are indicating a more promising contribution of tourism and travel industry to Arab countries economies (Mustafa, 2010). In 2009, travel and tourism is expected to post US$241.9 billions of economic activity (as a total demand), growing to US$529.8 billion by 2019 in the Middle East region. For most Arab countries which try to do some more progress in tourism because tourism is considered as a major source of foreign exchange (Ibid). Other factors that have their influence on the tourism development in Arab countries include “the development of transportation and its infrastructure; the increase in investment incentives; improvement and diversification
of tourism products; the enhancement of marketing activities; the improvement of electronic technology; and the emergence of new meanings in the experience of tourism” (ibid, p. 43), just to cite few.

Although there is a growing competition among Arab countries in the sector of tourism and travel, some problems and difficulties stand as great challenges for those countries in the region. One of these problems is related to the comparison of the progress of tourism in Arab countries to that of international tourism. It has been argued that tourism and travel sector in Arab countries accounts for only about 6% of international tourist arrivals showing the growth opportunities that remain for the sector (Blanke & Mia, 2005). However, tourism in Arab countries is in a good progress (Al-Hamarneh, 2005). The second problem is related to the tension created the terrorists’ attacks in some countries, such as Egypt. As a result of this, most tourists from USA and other European countries visiting Arab countries are warned to take caution before coming to any Arab country (Bianchi, 2006).

Recently, there have been some new trends in the tourism industry in Arab world. Al-Hamarneh (2005) mentioned that these new trends include (1) intraregional tourism in which both Syria and Lebanon are two of the major destinations; (2) innovation of new types of tourism such as medical, spa, ecological and sport tourism. Al-Hamarneh added that the third trend in the tourism industry is “the new interpretation of pilgrimage and other religious spots” which are practiced in a context similar to the context of tourism (p. 52).
1.4 Tourism in Syria

As shown in Figure 1.1, Syria is a country in the Middle East and it lies at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea with a coast of about 193 kilometres. It is bordered by Turkey is on the north, Iraq on the east and southeast, Jordan on the south, Palestine on the southeast and Lebanon on the west (Ministry of Tourism [MOT], 2010b). Syria became a country in 1946 because before this date, it had been a part of the Ottoman Empire. During the World War 1 (1914-1918), the Ottomans
fought with the Germans against the Allied Powers who won the war and divided up the empire of Ottomans. After that, France took Syria in 1920. However, after 20 years of fighting and struggling, Syria won its independence in 1946 (Englar, 2006, p. 7).

Due to the rich wealth of its ancient civilizations, Syria is considered to be the largest small country in the world. For travellers, according to Phillips (2010), Syria is a country that is “blessed with amazing history that can be matched by few other countries” (p. 8). The location of the country is unique and strategic because it forms the intersection of Asia, Europe and Africa. In addition, the country is described as a region of both major historical consequence and a modern state (Antoun & Quataert, 1991). The strategic location of Syria at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa, it has thousands of years of history and an amazing culture; its capital city, Damascus, is the world’s oldest continuously inhabited urban centre (Phillips, 2010).

Syria is seriously starting to provide an appropriate environment for better tourism investment. It has been confirmed that Syria has already invited tenders for more than 100 tourism sites during the Tourism Investment Market that was held in Damascus in April, 2005 (Daher, 2007). These investments were for improving tourism industry in the country. According to a recent study by WTTC, tourism is set to become one of Syria’s main income earners over the next decade. In its 2008 report on Syria, the WTTC declares that travel and tourism would contribute $4.9 billion to gross domestic product that year, doubling to $9.6 billion by 2018 (Oxford Business Group [OBG], 2008). By the summer of 2002, many Arab tourists from countries in the Arabian Gulf shifted their plans of travelling to Europe or the United
States to nearer destinations in other Arab countries, such as Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan (Hazbun, 2008, p. 196). These destinations are affordable destinations because they are accessible by land. Accordingly, many families prefer to spend their summer annual vacation in such accessible counties. Subsequently, tourism firms and companies in Syria and Lebanon welcomed Arab tourists (ibid).

The previous sections focused on the development of tourism industry worldwide, in the Arab world and in Syria. The previous sections also showed how countries in the Middle East have given tourism a great attention as source of business and investment. The following section deals with the major tourists’ attraction in Syria.

1.4.1 Major Tourists’ Attractions in Syria

There are different tourists’ attractions in Syria because it is known for its seashores, mountains, forests and highlands and deserts. Syria has a coastline of about 193 kilometres (Englar, 2006). As one of the major tourists’ destinations among countries in the Middle East, Syria enjoys the growth and expansion of its tourism industry. In Syria, tourism remains one of the major sectors contributing to the prosperity of the economy of the country. This is because Syria is characterized with the diversity of landscapes, sites and locations, which also attract international tourists and have done for many years. Such diversity of landscapes makes the country one of the good choices for tourists.

The tourists’ attractions also include places and sites in Damascus, Seydnaya, Suweida, Zabadani, Maloula, Al-Ladhiqiyah and Ras Shamra. Each one of them is
unique in its features as a good destination for tourists. One of the tourists’ attractions in Syria is Seydnaya, which is an interesting cool spot in the worth of the country. The monastery of Seydnaya and the Virgin Mary icon are the major places tourists visit. A visitor to Seydnaya will visit the surrounding grottos, which were once used as tombs. This is another one of the three towns where residents still speak Aramaic (MOT, 2010b).

Suweida is worth a visit because at which a tourist can see its Roman ruins, the Shahba Castle, the Suweida museum (Roman mosaics), the basilica and the Temple to the God Dosares. North to this town are Kanawat and Shahba at which there is 2nd century Roman ruins: an amphitheatre, gates, paved roads, a temple and baths and a museum of mosaics (MOT, 2010a). According to (Beattie & Pepper, 2001), the main tourists’ attraction in Suweida is undoubtedly its museum, as most of the evidence of the town’s long history was lost during the first decade of the 20th century.

In the fertile Barada River Valley, Zabadani is located. It overlooks orchards and fruit trees and is connected to Damascus in the summer by a narrow-gauge train that winds its way along the river valley. Zabadani, 45 kilometres in the northwest of Damascus, is a good summer resorts for Syrians and foreigners to cool off (Beattie & Pepper, 2001)

Another tourists’ attraction in Syria is Maloula, a Greek Catholic village which is nestled in the foothills of the Anti-Lebanon Range. It is famous for the multicoloured Cliffside homes (Darke, 2010). At Maloula, there is the 4th century
Mar Taqla Monastery (Convent of St. Tekla), which has a chapel built into a cavern in the rocks. In this place, the water dripping from the ceiling is reputed to have healing properties. Climb along the cliff edge for some spectacular views over the town and valley. Other attractions include Roman ruins and the nearby Convent of St. Sarkis.

The discussion here focused on the major tourists’ attractions in Syria. The following section deals with the major tourists’ attractions in Al-Ladhiqiyah.

1.4.2 Al-Ladhiqiyah

Al-Ladhiqiyah, sometimes written as Lattakia, is one of the major tourists’ attractions in Syria. It is a small town in the northwest of Damascus (see Figure 1.1). It is one of the five cities that were built by Seleucus Nekator in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century B.C. Seleucus Nekator named it after his mother. Al-Ladhiqiyah is still a call for Mediterranean cruise ships, stopping for excursions to nearby Qalaat Saladin (Daher, 2007). Al-Ladhiqiyah is the main port city in Syria and the largest Mediterranean town with an active cultural, tourist and sporting life (Darke, 2010). Another advantage of its location is that it is a manufacturing centre for surrounding agricultural towns and villages. The availability of accessible natural resources, such as beaches, natural areas and sunny weather in this city is one of the advantages that make Al-Ladhiqiyah one of the preferred destinations for tourists who come to Syria.

Moreover, Al-Ladhiqiyah is considered an important stop for those travelling along Syria’s Mediterranean coast, for those travelling by ferry to Cyprus or by bus to Turkey. Though there's a small museum housing Ugarit pottery, most visitors
spend their time just a short drive north on the beach. Nearby Sahyun, a huge Crusader-era castle, is spectacular and contains the ruined remains of Byzantine and Arab buildings.

Due to the witnessed rising importance of tourism for Al-Ladhiqiyah, many resorts and hotels have been opened on the coastal area of the city and in other areas. These resorts have become a very good source for visitors and tourists seeking the warm, sandy Mediterranean beaches (Phillips, 2010). According to MOT (2010a), there are about 62 hotels In Al-Ladhiqiyah; of this number of hotels, there are only four hotels are ranked five-star hotels. The following section discusses the development of hotel industry in Syria.

1.4.3 Development of Hotel Industry in Syria

This section deals with the development of hotel industry in Syria, number of hotels in Syria and Al-Ladhiqiayh and their locations. Hotel industry has a very fast development in Syria. Al-Kalaa (2010) pointed out that there are some plans for some more big number of different tourism establishments. As a result of this, the government of Syria gives a remarkable attention to the development of tourism because it considers the importance of tourism as a good source for advancing the development process.

It is obvious that Syria is pushing hard to sell itself as a tourism destination for the purposes of increasing state funding for promotional activities, while opening up investment opportunities in the sector as it seeks to cash in on the prosperity in the trade of tourism in the Middle East. Hotel industry plays a very significant role in
supporting the development of tourism industry. In Syria, according MOT, 2010b, there are about five hundred and fifty-one hotels. In Al-Ladhiqiyah, there are about 62 hotels (MOT, 2010). All these hotels provide their services to guests who visit these important places of attraction in Syria.

Hotels in Syria and Al-Ladhiqiyah are of different ranks and with affordable prices. The selection of hotels in Syria is reasonable and can vary according to the budget and the location. Moreover, there are few international chains of hotel complementing the national luxury *Cham Palace* hotel chain (Mannheim, 2001). In Damascus, the five-stars hotels, such as *Le Meridian, Sheraton Hotel, Carlton Hotel* and *Plaza Hotel*. In Al-Ladhiqiyah, the five-star hotels include *Côte D'azur De Cham Resort, Palace Hotel and Riviera Hotel* (Atlastour, 2008).

The government of Syria has taken some plans for improving tourism in the country. As a result of these plans, there is an increase in the number of hotels in Syria as one of the procedures for improving tourism in the country. Recently, tourism investment in Syria witnessed a qualitative development between 2005 and 2007 (Al-Kalaa, 2008). The Ministry of Tourism in Syria is putting forth different plans to develop the tourism in the country. These governmental plans include signing agreements for investments in tourism and hotel industries and launching major tourism projects. According to Al-Kalaa (2010), new hotels of international level have started to provide their services during the last two years. These new hotels include Damascus Four Seasons, Aleppo Sheraton, Seidnaya Sheraton, Palmyra Semiramis and the historical Bloudan Hotel. In Syria, hotels can be found in most of the tourists’ attractions and cities. Furthermore, there are a number of a good
number of hotels that reaches 551 hotels (MOT, 2010). According to Darke (2010), there are some surprising five-star luxury-class hotels in Syria, especially in Damascus, such as the Meridian, the Sheraton, the Semiramis and the newest addition, the Four Season. These hotels provide their services including all the usual five-star facilities like swimming pool, tennis courts, health club and several restaurants to choose from (ibid).

1.5 Hotel Industry and Service Quality

This section is devoted for giving a basic background to the study through discussing briefly the major concepts that are the focus of this study. This section focuses on service quality and customer loyalty in hotel industry.

According to Johns (1999), the word service carries implications of interpersonal attentions which represent a performance rendered by service provider. The inconsistency of service depends on who delivers the service and how it is being perceived. Therefore, service can be considered as a kind of experience that a customer personally comes into contact with any aspect of the service provider (Haksever, Render, Russell & Murdick, 2000). Service productivity and quality depend on the two components of a service: delivery and performance.

Service quality focuses on satisfying the customers’ quality need. Garvin (1988) focused on examining the quality concepts to cover both goods and service. Service quality is the customer’s judgment about an entity’s overall excellence and superiority (Zeithaml, 1988; Clow, Kurtz, Ozment & Ong, 1997). In other words, it is a form of attitude related, but not equivalent to, satisfaction and results from a
comparison of expectations with perception of performance. Perceived service quality is defined as the customer’s assessment of the overall excellence and superiority at the product or service (Zeithaml, 1988).

Research proved that service quality has become an increasingly important factor for success and survival in hotel industry. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), service quality consists of attributes, dimensions, measurements methods and models; it is an important factor of successful business. In addition, service quality is a way to manage business processes in order to ensure total satisfaction to the customer on all levels.

There are two aspects of service quality: tangible and intangible. Tangible aspects include building design, décor, layout, ambience, furniture, fixture and equipment. All of them are considered to have a direct influence on the customer’s perception of service quality. Bateson (1985) described tangibles as important factors in managing the service encounter and reducing a perceived risk. Intangible aspects of service quality include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c).

The tangible factors including physical environment have some effects on consumers in service organizations as well as employees. Bitner (1992) suggested three different environmental dimensions: surrounding condition, spatial layout and functionality and signs. While surrounding conditions can include temperature and music, spatial layout and functionality may include furniture and the layout features. Signs may include symbols, artefacts, signage and style of decor. All of these
dimensions are supposed to create an overall perceived servicescape that activates internal cognitive, emotional and physiological responses with customers and employees (Bitner, 1992). These are moderated by personality traits and situational factors. The internal responses of the customers of the hotels subsequently affect their behaviour in terms of staying longer, returning to the same site, or avoidance.

According to Wakefield and Blodgett (1999, p. 52), “the tangible physical surroundings may more directly influence consumers’ affective responses”. So, the environment with all its components mentioned above is a key factor which has a great influence on people’s feelings, which is one of the reactions that encourage and force people to remain in the place where they are in or to leave (Russell & Ward, 1982). Moreover, the cognition, emotions and behaviour of people can be greatly and powerfully influenced by the physical environment (Russell & Ward, 1982; Spangenberg, Crowley & Henderson, 1996). Berry and Parasuraman (1991) suggested that consumers develop their understanding of the relationship between the environment of a given service and the ‘quality’ of the service they may expect to receive. In addition, it has been confirmed that consumers depend on the physical and tangible evidence to which they have access to give evaluation of the quality of the intangible service components (Namasivayam, 2004, p. 37). This can be applied to establishments, such as hotels, in which customers may use their interaction with the service provider to rate the service.

Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) tested a model that included the intangible and tangible elements of the service quality scale (hereafter referred to as SERVQUAL) that was established by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988).
Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) also included an affective or emotional measurement of the customer’s level of excitement. They have reported in their study that the tangible elements of the service environment had a positive effect on the excitement level experienced by customers, which led to a positive effect on repeat-patronage intentions and a greater willingness to recommend the leisure service to other people such as friends or relatives.

Together tangible and tangible factors have their role to play in the customers’ perceptions of service quality and loyalty. It has been confirmed that the architecture and design of hotels (i.e. components of tangible factors) are significant drivers for guests. In addition, customers’ perception of service quality and loyalty are greatly affected by the room design and amenities through the evaluation of perceived quality. Moreover, the attributes of the hotels may contribute to the customers’ determination of purchase decision (Dube & Renaghan, 2000). The physical environment is another factor; it is related to the image of the facility and it includes extrinsic cues which influence the customer’s perception and satisfaction of the service (Harrell, Hutt & Anderson, 1980). In addition, for ranking the hotels, some customers firstly consider the physical appearance of the hotel exterior, the public space and the guest room and secondly hotel’s location and brand name. They ranked amenities and design above the service dimensions. Thus, customers’ satisfaction and loyalty increase significantly when the customers positively evaluate their perceived quality about their stay at hotels.

Another important aspect of the customers’ behaviour is loyalty which occurs in consumption situations. It is a complex construct which includes both behavioural
and attitudinal aspects. The concept of customer loyalty has been recently discussed as an ultimate goal of firms to attain. Customer loyalty is particularly vital to the hotel industry because of the intense competition among mature sectors of the industry (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998). Customer loyalty has been described as the concept of repeat purchase behaviour, which can be regarded as some degree of repetitive purchase of the same brand by the same buyer. Customer loyalty has been viewed as one the various behavioural consequences of service quality (Zeithaml, 2000). As a behaviour intention after the performance of service, customer loyalty is considered to be related to perceptions of quality (Rust & Zahorik, 1993).

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Although many studies discuss the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Skogland & Siguaw, 2004) and customers’ perceptions of service quality (Juwaheer & Ross, 2003), no study has established the relationship between service quality dimensions as the key indicator of customer loyalty. Moreover, issues related to both service quality and customers’ loyalty in hotel industry in Arab countries have not been addressed adequately. According to Skogland and Siguaw (2004), the concept of customer loyalty focuses on repeated purchasing behaviour of customers, which describes the relationship with customer satisfaction. However, studies on the relationship between perceived service quality of customers and dimensions of customers’ loyalty are few.

The tangible factors including the physical environment of hotels has some effects on the behaviour and attitudes of customers. However, little research has been examined how the various component of physical environment and intangible factors
affect attitudes and behaviours of customers and little empirical research has been
done on the relationship between physical environment and key antecedents of
perceived quality (Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal & Voss 2002; Baker, Levy & Grewal,
1992; Bitner, 1992). In the case of tourism in Syria and according to the best
knowledge of the researcher, there are no published studies on the impact of physical
environment of hotels and other intangible factors on the customers’ perceptions of
service quality.

The importance of the physical environment of a hotel has been emphasized
by different researchers. Although the physical appearance of hotels’ exterior, the
appearance of public spaces, brand name and location of a hotel are the four
important attributes customers use to choose a hotel; the exterior design and the
appearances of public spaces are the most important ones. According to (Dube &
Renaghan, 2000), the physical appearances of the hotels’ exterior and public spaces
are considered two of the most attributes that are related to having a decision for
selecting a hotel to stay. Location and brand name are considered the other two
attributes cited more often in regards to the purchase decision. In fact, there is still
some debate over the fact that the physical environment was found to be more
important than service. Hotels have already started to recognize the importance of
hotel design both from an architectural and interior design perspective (Wagner,
1998; Worcester, 2000; Ransley & Ingram, 2001). To sum up, the exterior design
and public spaces of hotels continue to be important factors in the purchase decision
and in creating value during the stay.
However, the tangible elements were found not to have a significant effect on perceived quality. While this appears to be contrary to their earlier study where there was a relationship between the physical environment and perceived quality, the measurements or scales used for the tangibles were very simplistic and basic in comparison to the intangible measurements and scales. According to Daher (2007), in the budgets of different Middle Eastern countries, tourism plays a significant role. Due to the fact that some countries in the developing world suffer increasing economic problems and mass unemployment, tourism has gradually become a very essential sector for investment in such courtiers. This is supported by AlSayyad (2001, p. 3) who stated that in the Third World and due to economic problems and pressures coupled with mass unemployment, “tourism is an attractive sector to invest in as it does not demand huge investments nor high technology”. However, studies on tourism and hotel industry in Arab countries are still few. Moreover, Mittal and Baker (1998) pointed out that the service encounter is the interface between the customer, the service delivery system and where the service actually happens. Thus, the service encounter is useful for both the customers and the service marketing system. Bitner (1992) proposed a conceptual framework for understanding environment and user relationships in service organizations. This section gave a brief background to the present study.

Although Wakefield and Blodgett (1996, 1999) tested their models in some leisure settings that included stadiums, casinos, family recreation centres and movie theatres, they did not test them in the environment of hotels. In addition, scales for both of the models developed by Wakefield and Blodgett (1996, 1999) were not developed from the perspective of a hotel and more specifically, they were not
developed to evaluate the physical environment of hotels. Therefore, the effects of tangible and tangible elements in hotel industry have not been studied and have not been the focus of studies on service quality in hotel industry in Arab countries. Another important factor in service quality is loyalty.

Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) indicated that “service quality is apt to be perceived by customers primarily on the basis of intangible factors such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy” (p. 52). However, issues related to the exact intangible factors that can predict customers’ loyalty have not been investigated in hotel industry in Arab countries.

For the improvement of tourism in Syria, hotel managers and owners need to know how customers use and enjoy together the property and the manner in which specific architecture and design components contribute to creating distinctive value. Therefore, factors related to tangible aspects should be crucial for most hotel operators (Dube & Renaghan, 2000; Hinkin & Tracey, 2003) because the physical environment of hotels; such as hotel exterior, layout, cleanliness, electric equipment quality; are key factors to get positive perceived service quality evaluation from customers. In other words, hotel properties’ elaborate physical surroundings require a large capital investment to create an impressive physical presence. Operators should consider whether those financial investments are truly worth the money.

Developing service quality programmes related to the design of hotels and other intangible factors should be taken in account by managers and owners of hotels. This is because customer’s evaluation and judgment of any service rely on
extrinsic cues. Generally, the service is produced and consumed simultaneously. A customer uses total services within the firm’s physical facility and the customer is naturally exposed to the place where the service is produced. Such extrinsic factors have their influence on customer’s perceptions and evaluations of the service experience they encounter (Shostack, 1977; Zeithaml 1988; Bitner, 1992).

Therefore, the present study attempted to investigate the influence of tangible and intangible factors in hotels in Al-Ladhiqiya on both the customers’ overall perceived service quality (hereafter OPSQ) and their loyalty. The present study focused on service quality in Syria. The main purposes of the presents study were (1) to investigate the effects of customers’ perceptions of the tangible factors and intangible factors on perceived of service quality and (2) the effects of customers’ perceptions of tangible and intangible factors of service quality on their loyalty.

1.7 Research Objectives

Based on the discussion provided above, the objectives of the present study were:

1. To examine the effect of tangible service variables on overall perceived service quality of tangible factors.

2. To examine the effect of intangible service variables on overall perceived service quality of intangible factors.

3. To examine the effect of tangible and intangible factors on customers’ loyalty.
1.8 Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do tangible variables of service affect customers’ overall perceived quality of tangible factors?
2. How do intangible variables of service affect customers’ overall perceived quality of intangible factors?
3. How do customers’ perceptions of tangible and intangible factors affect their loyalty?

1.9 Significance of the Study

The present study has its own significance because of some reasons. First, the present investigation contributes to research on service quality because it analyzes the relationships among customer loyalty, perceived service quality and tangibles and intangibles dimensions of service quality. This is because September 11, 2001, significantly affected the business environment globally, including tourism industry in the Arab World (Cunningham, Young & Lee, 2004; Mustafa, 2010). Furthermore, the analysis provides statistically supportable evidence regarding these interrelationships relative to the improvement of effective provision of service quality.

Second, the current study is significant as it contributes to the literature of studies and research on perceived service quality in tourism industry. This is because studies on service quality in Arab countries have not addressed service quality and loyalty in the hotel industry. Rather studies on service quality in Arab countries
examined the service quality in banks (e.g., Al-Tamimi & Al-Amiri, 2003; Jabnoun & Al-Tamimi, 2003; Chaker & Jabnoun, 2010).

Third, the present study is significant because it tries to highlight the role that the physical environment plays in the hotels’ customers’ perceptions of service quality and loyalty. This is because understanding the loyalty of hotel customers can have its contribution to the growth of the benefits of the hotels.

Fourth, this study is significance because the results of data analysis can be useful to hotel owners and manager in tourism industry in the Arab World to have the evaluation of service from their customers’ perspectives which turn help owners and managers of hotels in Al-Ladhiqiyyah to improve the service they offer.

Fifth, from a practical standpoint, the findings of this study are useful to plan strategic marketing programmes in hotel industry in Syria because this study focused on the physical environment of hotels and other intangible factors related to employee or the hotels. Therefore, hotel owners, managers and operators would be able to use the findings of this research to set their marketing plans for effective physical environment that may exceed the needs of the hotels’ guests. An example of effective physical environment planning might involve a hotel renovation.

Finally, the present study is one of the few studies that focus on hotel industry in Arab countries that are considered to be a preferred destination to many tourists from all over the world. In other words, studies in on tourism and hotel industries in Arab countries in the Middle East are still few because “the promotion of tourism
development has represented the most feasible means” for improving services provided to customers (Hazbun, 2004, p. 313).

1.10 Definitions of Key Terms

In the present section, the definitions of the most key terms are given below.

**Intangible**

Intangible factors in service refer to the services that cannot be seen or touched. According to Kotler and Bloom (1984), intangibility is defined as “what cannot be seen, tasted, felt, heard, or smelled”. In this sense, intangibility refers to the total lack of the good or the attribute accessibility of service through the senses.

**Tangible**

According to Rowley (2006), tangibility “refers to the product’s physical properties and the extent to which it can be seen, felt, heard, tasted or smelt” (p. 66).

**Servicecapes**

Servicecapes are “the built environment (i.e., the manmade, physical surroundings as opposed to the natural or social environment)” (Bitner, 1992, p. 58). These perceptions customers create are created through the environment (music, colour, scent and crowding), atmosphere and physical attractiveness of the store (Baker et al., 2002).
**Service Quality**

Service quality is defined as “the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services” (Bitner & Hubber, 1994, p. 77).

**Perceived Service Quality (PSQ)**

Perceived service quality is defined as “a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority to the service” (Parasuraman et al., 1988, p. 15).

**Customer Loyalty**

Customer loyalty is defined as “a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour” (Oliver, 1997, p. 392).

### 1.11 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of the present study. First, the investigation of hotel intangible and tangible services focused on major convenient facilities that can be found in most of the hotels in the context of the study. Other studies included some other tangible factors.

Second, the present study did not attempt to investigate the service quality of hotels at AL-Ladhiqiyah. Rather, it investigated the effects of tangible and intangible factors on customers’ perceptions of service quality and loyalty.
Third, the geographic area and setting is limited to only some random hotels in Al-Ladhiqiyah. Thus, hotels in other cities in the country were not included because of the constraints of time.

Fourth, this study focused only on the service quality at hotel industry. However, service quality can be found in other leisure settings, such as health spas, education, sport centres and health care centres. The current study did not attempt to measure the service quality at hotels in Al-Ladhiqiyah. Rather, this study attempted to investigate the relationship between customers’ perceptions of tangible and intangible aspects of service quality on both customers’ overall perceptions of service quality and customers’ loyalty. The following two sub-sections focus on the tangible and intangible aspects of service quality.

1.12 Organization of the Thesis

The present thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter focuses on a background to the study. It focuses on providing a brief description of the major tourists’ attractions in Syria and Al-Ladhiqiyah. The first chapter also discusses the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the research questions and the significance of the study. Limitations of the study and the definitions of important terms are also provided in chapter One.

The second chapter is devoted for the literature review. The second chapter discusses the most important key constructs, such as service quality, tangible and intangible aspects of service quality and loyalty. Chapter Two provides the conceptual framework of the study.
The third chapter deals with the methodology of the present study. It starts with describing the research design. Next, methods of data collection are described. After that, techniques and procedures for the analysis of data are explained. Finally, the ethical considerations that were taken into account are detailed and explained.

The fourth chapter reports the results of data analysis. In Chapter Four, answers to the three research questions are presented.

The last chapter is devoted for the discussion and conclusion. It starts with providing a summary of the major findings of the study. Then, it discusses how the results of the study are related to the results of earlier studies. Next, it provides some practical implications for improving tourism and service quality in the hotel industries in Syria. The findings of the current results are discussed in the light of the findings of previous research studies. Recommendations for future studies are also presented in chapter 5.

1.13 Chapter Summary

The current chapter served as an introductory chapter. It gave a brief background on Syria and the major tourists’ attractions in Syria including Al-Ladhiqiayh. The current chapter also included the statement of the problem, the objectives of the research and the significance of the study. Definitions of the key terms that are used in the presents study and the limitations of the presents study were also given in this chapter. The following chapter is devoted for literature review.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the literature review. It is very important to mention that the theoretical literature in this study focuses on two major theories: service quality and customer loyalty. The current chapter starts with the discussion of the service quality in terms of conceptualization, dimension and measurement. Next, it reviews studies that focused on tangible and intangible factors in hotel industry. After that, it discusses the significance of customer loyalty in hotel industry and the measurement of service quality. After that, it reviews studies that focused on service quality and customer loyalty in hotel industry. Finally, it presents and explains the conceptual framework of the study.

2.2 Service Quality

The purposes of this section are to provide brief descriptions on the concept of service, to give some definitions of service quality, to discuss the dimensions of service quality and to describe how service quality is measured.

Quality is one of those elusive concepts that are easy to visualize but difficult to define. Prior to World War II, the notion of quality was based on the physical characteristics of a product. The quality mandate was to measure the variation in the product or service characteristics from standard specifications, then confront the manufacturing or service-delivery process that contributed to any variations.
identified (Tenner & Deloro, 1992). Quality has many definitions, ranging from specific to general and the variation of its definitions depends on the functional area.

The evolution of the service concept can be traced to early literature suggesting that organizations should incorporate the desired service outcome into early strategic planning decision-making (Heskett, 1987). According to Sasser, Olson and Wyckoff (1978) and Collier and Meyer (1998), the concept of service has been defined as the elements of the service package or “customer benefit package” that provide the intended benefit or value to the customer. Giving a comprehensive definition of service, Gronroos (1990) pointed out:

A service is an activity or series of activities of more or less intangible nature that normally, but not necessarily, take place in interactions between the customer and service employees and/or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems. (p. 21)

In service design, as suggested by Lovelock and Wright (1999), firms such as those in tourism industry should consider the combination of service product, process, place, physical evidence, people, productivity and quality, price and promotion. However, it has been suggested that the service concept is a detailed description of (a) those customer needs that will be satisfied and (b) what is to be done to satisfy those needs (Clark & Fujimoto, 1991).

2.2.1 Definition of Service Quality

Service is the activities and benefits a particular organization provides to another and it can be described as a sub-product of a product (Kotler, 1996). It can also refer to the activities individuals or groups provide for their benefit organization to another organization. Customers’ perception to service heavily depends on service
quality (Kotler, 1996). Ramaswamy (1996) considered service as “the business transactions that take place between a donor (service provider) and receiver (customer) in order to produce an outcome that satisfies the customer” (p. 3). Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) defined service as “deeds, processes and performances” (p. 5).

2.2.2 Conceptualization of Service Quality

There are different conceptualizations of service quality. For example, Gronroos (1984) proposed a model consisting of “output” and “process” quality seeing quality as being two-dimensional. In this model, “output” quality refers to what is delivered to the customer. The model recognizes that customers also have some type of image of the firm that has a quality impact in itself and functions as a filter. Furthermore, Gronroos divided service quality into two classifications including technical quality and functional quality. While the primary emphasis of technical quality is on what customers usually received from the service, functional quality focuses on the procedures of service delivery. It is the integrated evaluation customers give to services they receive. From a customers’ standpoint, service quality has process quality and output quality. After receiving the service, customers assess it subjectively. Output quality is customers’ assessment on the results of services (Oliver, 1981, 1993; Bitner, Booms & Mohr, 1994).

Parasuraman, Zeithamal and Berry (1985) defined service quality as “the difference of customers’ pre-service expectation and post service perception”. If service quality equals customer pre-service expectation, the service has pre-perceived quality. Therefore, service quality is the consistent degree of customers’ satisfaction
or their overall assessment given to a service they receive. Service quality can meet and exceed customers’ expectations on products and services. It is very important for owners and managers of hotels to attract customers and maintain long-term customer relations in order to improve efficiency and increase the profits of such hotels. Service Quality is the subjective perception customers produce by comparing their pre-service expectation and real experience (Parasuraman, et al., 1985).

Berry and Parasuraman (1991) pointed out that service quality is the basis for marketing services because the core product being marketed is a performance. Customers buy the performance which is generally regarded as the core product of a service-based organization. Kotler (1991) conceptualized a service as “any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product” (p. 455). Examining the relationships among service quality and customer satisfaction in the fitness industry, Choi (2001) revealed that “service quality occurs during service delivery in an interaction between the client and the contact person from the service firm” (p. 9). Therefore, the attitude and performance of a service encounter has a prominent effect on the levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. In another study, Szmigin (1993) pointed out that service quality can be divided into actual service, perceptual service and result service. Actual service is the service customers get from the business. Perceptual service is the way service providers deliver service. Result quality is assessing whether or not the results of services meet customers’ expectation.
Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry (1994) operationalized the service quality construct in use of qualitative and quantitative research following generally accepted psychometric procedures. They suggested that service quality is an abstract and elusive construct because of three unique to services: intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability of production and consumption. Initially, ten determinants of service quality were identified; these ten dimensions were accessibility, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding/knowing the customer and tangibles. It is the development of the original 22-item SERVQUAL instrument that is one of the most popularly used instrument in studies on service quality. Using SERVQUAL instrument, they condensed the ten determinants into five dimensions (three original and two combined dimensions) and suggested the following labels and concise definitions for the dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

To sum up, the current section has shown that the conceptualization of service quality differs from one business to another depending on the type of business and the variation in portions of service. However, the conceptualization of service quality as suggested by Parasuraman et al. (1994) in their model has been widely adopted. The following section discusses the two major aspects of service quality: tangible and intangible aspects. The following section presents the aspects of service quality.

2.2.3 Aspects of Service Quality

This section is devoted for explaining the main aspects of service quality in hotel industry. These aspects are the major components of service quality. Service
quality is the outcome of a complex interaction between several dimensions. Although researchers have tried to identify the most important components of service quality, Parasuraman, et al. (1988) developed their SERVQUAL model. Thus, the discussion in the following two sections focus on the main dimensions of service quality under two main aspects/dimensions: intangible and tangible.

2.2.3.1 Tangible Aspects of Service Quality

There are indications of the importance of tangible aspects or factors in hotel industry and other leisure settings. Bitner (1992) used the term servicescape to refer to the interior layout and design of a service and have been labelled as a method for services to create a particular customer environment. These dimensions are particularly relevant in service industries because, unlike in manufacturing, the customer resides in the service (Chase, 1988).

One of the tangible aspects of service quality is the design of the hotel. There is growing evidence that hotel design has both marketing and strategic implications. Average daily room rate, occupancy and revenue per available room are all positively related to good hotel design. Ransley and Ingram (2001) argued that good design can lead to greater profitability and they proposed a mathematical equation called the design efficiency factor to demonstrate this concept. Therefore, many of the messages hotels wish to convey to their guests can be effectively communicated through the design of the hotel. Focusing on perceptions of customers of department stores, Dabholka, Thorpe and Rentz (1996) found that the influence of tangible aspects of department stores on customers’ service quality perceptions is higher than that of intangible factors.
Another aspect of the tangible factors in hotel industry is the ambient conditions that can include colour, music, lighting, seating comfort and overall cleanliness of the places inside the hotels. It has been confirmed that all of these items have their affect on customers’ perceptions and responses to the environment (Baker & Collier, 2005; Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Wakefield and Blodgett (1994) studied the servicescapes of two stadiums, one of high quality and one of low quality. It was determined that greater satisfaction was associated with the servicescape of higher quality and therefore, people were more inclined to go to games in that stadium. In another study, Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) incorporated facility aesthetics, such as wall colour, wall covering, seats and overall facility attractiveness in examining the effect of ambient conditions. The customer’s perception of seating comfort is an important component of ambient conditions. It is especially relevant in services where customers sit for long periods of time. For example, the padding and available seat space for a particular chair may affect a customer’s impression of the service. Also, a customer may be psychologically uncomfortable if seated too close to other patrons. In this research, ambient conditions are defined as capturing the overall appearance of the facility’s design (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Therefore, the interior and exterior conditions of the service at hotels include architectural design, decor and special design, overall attractiveness, temperature, lighting, noise and background music.

Facility layout and functionality are generally referred to as the way in which equipment and furnishings are arranged and the ability of those items to facilitate customers’ enjoyment. They are often perceived through (signs and symbols) décor.
intended to communicate and enhance a certain image or mood or to direct customers to desired destinations (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Facilities are explicit communicators used as labels and directions to communicate behavioural guidelines. Implicit communicators, such as quality of the raw materials and equipment, office and desk size, tidiness, the presence of certificates and photographs and personal objects are all symbolic representations of status and professional image (Pfeffer, 1981; Wener, 1985). In a study of leisure activities, electronic equipment displays were shown to have a significant positive impact on perception of quality in football and casino activities (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Lucas (2003) extended the work of Bitner (1992) and Wakefield and Blodgett (1996), narrow down the scope of the slot floor of a hotel casino.

Thorough the earlier discussion, it is obvious that empirical studies have been conducted to confirm the effect of ambient conditions, facility aesthetics and cleanliness on customer perceptions of service quality. Specifically, studies of hotels found that music tempo and familiarity of décor affects how long one shops, which ultimately reflects customer satisfaction (Locke, 2001). Other studies have shown lighting, temperature, noise, colour and smell can all influence employee behaviour and performance (Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke & Sirota, 1976). In a study of leisure activities of customers at professional baseball games, football games and in casinos, facility aesthetics and cleanliness have been shown to have a positive impact on customers’ perceptions of quality (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996, 1999).

Spatial layout and functionality of the physical surrounding are particularly important to services. Spatial layout in services generally refers to the way in which
machinery, equipment and furnishings are arranged and the size and shape of those items. Functionality refers to the product accessibility, flow of pathways and appeal of service displays. An effective layout can be a good source for providing ease of entry/exit and accessibility to other secondary services. Bitner (1992) found that spatial layout and functionality are particularly salient in complex self-serve settings.

Layout in discount stores has been found to facilitate the fulfilment of functional needs, while interesting and mood-altering layouts may provide hedonic value (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Empirical research regarding spatial layout and functionality has consistently shown these to be positively associated with customer satisfaction. For example, layout accessibility and seating comfort were both found to have positive effects on perceived quality across leisure settings (ibid). Similarly, spatial layout and functionality have been linked to ease and satisfaction expected (Bitner, 1992). Some research studies (e.g., Bitner, 1992; Wener (1985) suggested that if the customer is required to complete complex tasks with time pressures, he or she is less likely to enjoy the service and is therefore less likely to further patronize that firm. This suggests some level of comfort perceived by customer may shape further service purchases. However, some authors found that customers who are very much concerned about value give their preferences for functionality over comfort in facility layouts (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996).

Some studies were conducted on the development of a scale for the perceived environment in the fields of hospitality and tourism (e.g., Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996, 1999). While the physical environment is usually perceived as holistic, there is research to indicate that consumers are aware of the individual dimensions or
separate elements that exist in a physical environment and can discriminate between parts of the physical environment they like and dislike. After reviewing the literature on hotel industry, it was decided that the present study had to include the exterior design, the equipment and the ambient conditions. These studies did not focus on the service quality in hotel industry.

The discussion in this section dealt with studies on the effects and the important roles of tangible factors. The following section focuses on the intangible aspects of service quality.

2.2.3.2 Intangible Aspects of Service Quality

The intangible aspects of service quality are those aspects that are not touched. They include reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance. They constitute an important role of service. These intangible factors are four of five dimensions in SERVQUAL model of Parasurman et al. (1988). Intangibility is the essence of service (Zeithaml et al., 1990) because it is perceived by customers in subjective and highly abstract ways (Gronroos, 2000).

The dimensions of intangibles in service quality are reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The dimension of reliability is defined as “delivering the promised performance dependably and accurately” (Schneider & White, 2004, p. 32). While the dimension of responsiveness is defined as “willingness of the organization to provide prompt service and help customers”, the dimension of assurance is defined as “ability of the organization’s employees to inspire trust and confidence in the organization through their knowledge and courtesy” and the dimension of empathy is defined as “personalized attention given to a customer” (ibid).
Parasuraman et al. (1988) argued that reliability reflects the service provider’s “ability to perform service dependability and accurately” (p. 23). Furthermore, reliability includes doing it right the first time and it is one of the most important service components of customers (Parasuraman et al., 1991a). Kandampully, Mok and Sparks (2001) mentioned that reliability extends to providing services as and when promised. Responsiveness represents the “willingness to help customers and provide prompt service” (Parasuraman et al., 1988, p. 23). As result of this, the ability of service providers “to provide services in a timely manner is a critical component of service quality for many guests” (Kandampully, Mok & Sparks, 2001, p. 54). The third dimension is assurance that reflects the “knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence” (Parasuraman, et al., 1988, p. 23). Focusing on assurance, Kandampully, Mok and Sparks (2001, p. 54) asserted that guests expect to feel safe in their transactions with employee. Empathy involves the “caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers” (Parasuraman et al., 1988, p. 23). The importance of empathy may be the root of considering the customer as an individual. The following section focuses on the development of service quality.

2.2.4 Measurement of Service Quality

The measurement of service quality has been conducted from the perspectives of the customers. However, some models have been developed to measure service quality. There are different factors that are used to assess customers’ perceptions of a product or service. However, it has been acknowledged that the most commonly used measure of determining guests’ attitudes is satisfaction with the features of the hotel (Callan & Bowman, 2000; Choi & Chu, 2000). Through focus group interviews, Parasuraman et al. (1985) developed a conceptual model that
defined service quality from the perspective of customers’ viewpoints. The authors identified ten factors: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, accessibility, communication and understanding the customer. Parasuraman et al. (1988) modified the ten dimensions of service quality into five dimensions, including 22 items that measure customer perceptions of service quality through empirical testing. These five dimensions are tangibles (the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials), reliability (the ability to perform the promised service accurately and dependably), responsiveness (the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service), assurance (the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence) and empathy (the caring, individualized attention provided to the customer). Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1985) linked the concept of perceived service quality to the concepts of perception and expectations.

In services marketing literature, perception is considered as consumers’ beliefs concerning the service received (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Expectations are defined as “desires or wants of consumers i.e., what they feel a service provider should offer rather than would offer” (ibid, p. 47). It is significant to mention that Parasurman et al. (1985) argued that expectations and satisfaction should not be used to refer to the same meanings. This is because service expectations do not represent predictions about what service providers would offer, but rather what they should offer. In this model, service quality is conceptualized as a gap between consumer's expectations (E) and the perception of the employees' performance (P). In order to measure service quality, Parasuraman et al. (1988) suggested that customer's expectation scores should be deducted from their perception scores (Q = P - E). The
better the positive score indicates superior service quality or vice versa. The gap that is likely to occur between the people's expectation and perception of service is not only a measure of service quality but also indicator of customer satisfaction and discontent. Service quality from the customer's perceptions is dependent upon the direction and degree of discrepancy between service expectation and service perception. Therefore, the comparison of customer expectation and perceived service quality in one particular organization can determine whether a service standard is suitable.

In order to improve the SERVQUAL scale and to verify its applicability, Parasuraman et al. (1991a) argued that understanding and responding to customer expectations are more important than providing superior service. They conducted sixteen focus group interviews with customers in six service sectors: automobile insurance, commercial property and casualty insurance, business equipment repair, truck and tractor rental and leasing, automobile repair and hotels. They employed qualitative methods of data collection to explore questions as well as quantitative research to test the relationships that existed within the model. In measuring perceived service quality, the level of comparison is what a customer should expect; whereas in measures of satisfaction, the appropriate comparison is what a consumer would expect (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). As a result of their investigation, Parasuraman et al. (1991a) eliminated the negatively expressed items, replaced two confusing items with non-redundant alternatives and added importance weights to the measurement process.
The SERVQUAL instrument has been extensively used in many studies (e.g., Saleh & Ryan, 1991; Gupta & Chen, 1995) focusing on measuring service quality in the hospitality industry. Such studies applied and modified the SERVQUAL model that was originally developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988, 1991a) for measuring service quality in the hospitality industry. The modifications of the constructs of this model have been done to fit particular hospitality situations (Juwaeheer & Ross, 2003). However, this model cannot measure the actual performance and be assessed from within the organization. This model has some weaknesses as it does; the instrument has high external reliability that can be appropriately used in the hotel setting.

Numerous researchers have adapted the SERVQUAL battery to specific industries, products and target markets. Saleh and Ryan (1991) were among the first to analyze service quality in the hospitality industry. Baker and Fesenmaier (1997) used SERVQUAL in an effective way focusing on the expectation differences among three groups (visitors, employees and managers) involved in a tourism service encounter. Gupta and Chen (1995) conducted a study which identified the relationship between five of the dimensions of SERVQUAL (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) and customer perceived service quality using a linear regression model. Gupta and Chen found that the dimension of tangibles was perceived as most relevant in the surveyed industries. According to Choi and Chu (2000), customers generally focus on these factors when they perceive hotel quality: cleanliness, location, room rate, security, service quality and the reputation of the hotel or chain.
There are some alternative models for measuring service quality. Based on the disconfirmation paradigm, Bolton and Drew (1991) developed a multistage model of customers’ assessments of service quality and value. Applying the model they developed, they found that the customers’ perceptions of service quality were directly affected by disconfirmation and indirectly affected by expectation and actual performance. Gronroos (1994) developed the initial model of perceived quality based on the disconfirmation paradigm. McDougall and Levesque (1994) proposed a conceptual model by adding the physical environment as one of the factors. Thus, the three-factor model of service quality includes three factors: (1) service outcomes (Gronroos, 1994), (2) service process (ibid) and (3) physical environment (Bitner, 1992). McDougall and Levesque used confirmatory factor analysis to test the model by using the dimensions of SERVQUAL. The three-factor model of service quality was supported by the result of McDougall and Levesque (1994) who concluded that the three factors could be important determinants of the customers’ assessment of service quality.

Cronin and Taylor (1992) examined Parasuraman et al.’s model of (1991a) measuring service quality and argued that the disconfirmation paradigm was intended to measure satisfaction not service quality and tested the performance only scale (SERVPERF). They concluded that the performance-only SERVPERF measure of service quality outperformed the disconfirmation-based SERVQUAL measure. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1994) argued that customer service quality perceptions consist of the perceived service performance (SERVPERF) and the perception of solving problems which may occur during the service encounter. They suggested that the gap between performance and expectations moderates the
relationship between performance and behavioural outcomes. As the results, a positive relationship existed between the perceptions of service quality and behavioural outcomes as customer loyalty, reluctance to switch, willingness to pay, willingness to pay a premium and increased probability of purchase.

2.3 Studies on Service Quality in Hotel Industry

One of the early studies on service quality in hotel industry is Saleh and Ryan (1991) that was partially based on the SERVQUAL model created by Parasuraman et al. (1988). Saleh and Ryan (1991) modified the instruments and came up with a 30-item, five-point Likert Scale instrument. The survey was categorized into three sections. The first section was associated to the service quality expectation. The second section contained the quality gained or offered and the last section was intended to obtain demographic data from the participants. The data were collected from 200 customers who were staying in 300-bedroom hotel in Canada. On the other hand, the hotel management and service providers were also asked to respond to the questionnaire and an interview (Saleh & Ryan, 1991). This study explored the existing gaps between customers’ and management’s perceptions of hotel qualities and between customer anticipation and perception of service delivery (ibid).

By employing the analytical hierarchy process and competitive gap analysis, Min and Min (1997) found that both the cleanliness of a guest room and courtesy of hotel staff were among the attributes that were considered most important, particularly in forming impressions of service quality. In their study, Min and Min reported that two major service criteria (i.e., overall room values and front-office services) and 14 attributes were relevant to Korean luxury hotels. In another one of
the early studies that was conducted in Australia’s three to five-stars hotels, Wong, Dean and White (1999) extended version of SERVQUAL scale and found that service quality in the hospitality industry was represented by three dimensions: employees’ dimensions (behaviour and appearance), tangibles and reliability. According to Wong, Dean and White, the best predictor of overall service quality was the employees’ dimension and the most important attributes in this dimension was individual attention given by the employees to the customers.

Recently, there have been some studies on service quality in hotel industry. Using modified SERVQUAL model, Juwaheer and Ross (2003) found that an overall evaluation of service quality in Mauritian hotels was determined largely by two dimensions of SERVQUAL: assurance and reliability. While assurance factors in this study included security and safety of guests and effective handling of complaints and problems by hotel staff; reliability factors included hotels perform tasks that have been promised to guests and resolving problems encountered by guests. They emphasized that a focus on improving these factors in hotels can help in achieving high levels of service quality and satisfaction.

For analyzing the image of Singapore from the perspective of tourists from Indonesia, Pawitra and Tan (2003) used SERVQUAL. They found that the use of SERVQUAL in measuring a destination image required some modifications in order to ensure that the data reflect the unique attributes provided by the destination. They also indicated that the destination image can be determined by analyzing tourist perceptions. Emphasising the role of culture, Atilgan, Akinci and Aksoy (2003) suggested that cultural characteristics have an effect on perceptions of service quality
in tourism. They also found that different cultural groups can have different levels of expectations and perceptions in terms of service-quality dimensions. Therefore, many of the items in the SERVQUAL instrument can be salient to different customers for different reasons.

In a very recent study, Shahin and Dabestani (2010) conducted a study in which they assessed the service quality gaps based on expectations and perceptions of customers in a four-star hotel in Isfahan as the major tourism focal point in Iran. The questionnaire they used includes four questions related to reliability, three questions to responsiveness, three questions to security and confidentiality, two questions to access and approachability, two questions to communication, two questions to understanding the customer, three questions to credibility, three questions to tangibles, two questions to courtesy, two questions to price, two questions to competence and two questions to flexibility. They found that the delivered service performance is lower than customers’ expectations and the “price” gap has the highest positive value amongst the service quality dimensions. The lowest positive value is also related to creditability. It is important to mention that their study used only correlational analysis without conducting a factor analysis.

To sum up, most of the studies on service quality in hotel industry have been conducted in five-star hotels in non-Arab countries. In other words, studies on service quality in hotel industry in Arab countries are very few. For example, Almossawi (2008) employed the SERVQUAL model to assess the quality of services provided at one of the popular five-star hotels in Bahrain, named the Gulf Hotel. He found that customers are dissatisfied
With the service quality (i.e. their expectations exceed their perceptions) provided at the hotel in 55% of the SERVQUAL service attributes belonging to three dimensions: tangibles, reliability and assurance.

2.4 Customer Loyalty

This main section deals with the definition of customer loyalty, conceptualization of customer loyalty and the measurement of customer loyalty.

2.4.1 Definition of Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is defined as a hybrid between behavioural and attitudinal loyalty with a higher emphasis on the behavioural aspect of customer loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994). One of the benefits of maintaining customers’ loyalty is that it increases income and decreases costs when a company invests in improving customer loyalty because loyal customer recommends the business to other people. Word of mouth that is free advertisement helps businesses establish a good reputation and generate income. Pullman and Gross (2004) acknowledge that loyal customers are the key to success for many services, particularly those in the hospitality setting. Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) also maintained that a small increase in loyal customers can result in a substantial increase in profitability. Further, Kandampully and Suhartano (2000) claimed that the significance of customer loyalty is likely to become a necessary prerequisite for the future survival of hotel organizations. Thus, in the current marketing environment, the keys to success are attracting new customers and maintaining good relations with those customers. The focus of this section and the following section is to show the evolution of the loyalty construct over time, mapping out the construct's domain and
its specific components to provide a clear definition of the service quality construct used in this study.

2.4.2 Conceptualization of Customer Loyalty

The concept of loyalty is rich with many possible definitions. A common approach is to distinguish between a consumer’s attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (Zeithaml, 2000). Behavioural loyalty is repeated transactions (or percentage of total transactions in the category, or total expenditures in the category) and can sometimes be measured quite simply with observational techniques. Attitudinal loyalty is often defined as both positive affect toward the relationship’s continuance and the desire to continue to remain in the relationship and is sometimes defined equivalently with relationship commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Attitudinal loyalty is measured by questionnaire methods. In order to examine customers’ word-of-mouth intentions, re-patronage intentions and their relationship to customers’ loyalty, it is recommended to use of more than one approach (Soderlund, 2006). It is significant to mention that these common aspects of loyalty are most common determinant of loyalty in existing research (ibid).

The conceptualization of loyalty evolved over years. In the early days the focus of loyalty was on brand loyalty with respect to tangible goods (Day, 1969; Tucker, 1964; Kostecki, 1994). Cunningham (1956) defined brand loyalty simply as the proportion of purchases that is given to a particular brand a customer purchases most often. This definition broadened the spectrum of analysis by focusing on store as opposed to brand loyalty using the same measures he had used earlier for brands. However, few studies have looked at customer loyalty of services (Oliver, 1999).
Loyalty can be of substantial value to both customers and the firm. Customers are willing to invest their loyalty in business that can deliver superior value relative to the offerings of competitors (Reichheld et al., 2000). When customers are loyal to a hotel or a firm, they may minimize time spent in searching and locating and evaluating purchase alternatives. Also, customers can avoid the learning process that may consume the time and effort needed to become accustomed to a new vendor.

Selnes (1993) stated that customer loyalty includes the possibility of repurchase, possibility of switching and willingness of recommending services to others. Higher customer loyalty leads to higher switching barriers. Customer loyalty is the relationship between customer’s personal attitude (cause) and customers’ repurchase (result) (Dick & Basu, 1994). Jones and Sasser (1993) mentioned two kinds of customer loyalty: long-term loyalty and short-term loyalty. Customers with short term loyalty switch easily when they have better choices. Prus and Brandt (1995) mentioned that customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty.

Customer loyalty is the long-term relationship and customers have with a certain brand or company. A loyal customer will keep purchasing the same product or service even when there are other alternatives (Oliver, 1997; Bowen & Shoemaker; 1998). Hepworth and Mateus (1994) declared that customer loyalty is the customers’ intention of repurchasing the same products/service or other products/services from the same company. Neal (1999) stated that “customer loyalty is the frequency customers buy the same product and service when they need this kind of products or services. Customer loyalty is behaviour and customer satisfaction is an attitude”.

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There are different characteristics for loyal customers. According to Parasuraman et al. (1996), post-purchase behaviour is loyalty, brand switching, payment, external response and internal response. Loyalty includes word of mouth and intention of repurchase. According to Jones and Sasser (1995), there are three characteristics of customer loyalty: (1) intention to repurchase (2) primary behaviour-frequency of purchase, consistency of purchasing and length of being a customer; (3) secondary behaviour-providing information and recommending to others. Prus and Brandt (1995) pointed out that customer loyalty includes intention of repurchasing, purchasing other products and services of the same company and the intention of recommending to others. Moreover, Griffin (2002) mentioned that loyal customer has the following characteristics: repeat purchase, intention to purchase other products and services of the company, intention of recommending to others and the ability of not being influenced by competitive brands.

In general, customer loyalty is thought to reflect how much customers wish to maintain their relation with a specific supplier and it usually comes as a result of the extent to which customers believe that what they get from this supplier is worth more than what they get from others. An exact definition of customer loyalty, however, may include a variety of attitudes and behaviours and may well be situation specific (Kroenert et al., 2005). Customer loyalty has been connected to profits through increased customer retention (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). In this respect, it has been found that the average annual profit per customer grows constantly over the years that the customer remains with a company (Gronroos, 2000). Thus, the effect of loyalty on profits is attributed to five distinct
factors: acquisition costs, revenue growth, cost savings, price premiums and referrals (Reichheld, 1996).

In hospitality industry, loyalty programmes are common because it is confirmed that loyal customers make more purchase. Furthermore, loyal customers are less likely to switch to another hotel just because of price and other special promotions (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). The most essential theory of loyalty marketing is that a small increase in loyal customers can bring a significant increase in profitability to a business. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) found that a 5% increase in customer retention resulted up to a 125% increase in profits in nine service industry groups they studied. Therefore, hotels or companies can double their profits by retaining just 5% of their customers.

Thus, customer loyalty to services at a hotel is affected by the behaviour of customers towards such service because loyalty reflects the extent to which customers have the interest to maintain their relation with a particular hotel. In other words, loyalty comes as a result of how much customers believe that what they get from a specific hotel is worth more than what they get from others. Loyalty includes a variety of attitudes or behaviours or may well be situation specific (Kroenert et al., 2005). It is affected by a number of variables that are significant to be studied for finding out the correlation between customers’ loyalty and tangible and intangible aspects of services at hotels. The discussion in the current section focused on the conceptualization of customer loyalty. The following section deals with major studies that were conducted on measuring customer loyalty.
2.4.3 Measurement of Customer Loyalty

Customers’ loyalty can be measured through their intent to repurchase, satisfaction and tolerance to price fluctuation. Customer loyalty includes customers’ repurchasing behaviour and their preference toward a certain product or service (Fornell, 1992; Griffin, 2002). Backman and Crompton (1991) pointed out that customer loyalty includes behaviour loyalty and attitude loyalty. While behaviour loyalty is the frequency that customers purchase, attitude loyalty is customer preference. However, Skogland and Siguaw (2004) argued that customer loyalty means that customers have the interest to repurchase and recommend the business to other people, such as friends and relatives. It includes praising the company to others, recommending the company to inquirers, encouraging others to purchase, keeping the company as their first purchase choice and repurchasing. Customer loyalty can be measured by environmental attribute, managerial attribute and social attributes (ibid).

With reference to measuring customer loyalty, studies can be divided according to the dimension of loyalty. Earlier studies considered loyalty as one dimension and emphasised that customer loyalty should be treated as one dimension while focusing on measuring it. After that, studies measured loyalty as two-dimensional item. Recent studies focused on loyalty as multiple attitudinal or psychological facets of consumer loyalty. These recent studies led to a more profound and integrated understanding of loyalty.

Studies that considered loyalty as one dimension are either studies that focused on attitude loyalty or behaviour loyalty. Attitude loyalty is established when
customers like a certain product or service. Behaviour loyalty is customers’ habit of re-purchase. Businesses should focus on customers’ needs and wants in order to produce good products and services. Service quality directly influences customers’ loyalty. Thus, hotels and other leisure settings should follow customers’ changing tastes to improve their products and services. Most of earlier studies that focused on brand loyalty looked only at the behavioural dimension. According to these studies, loyalty to a product or service was simply considered as “the consistent purchase of one brand over time” (Backman & Crompton, 1991).

Due to the fact that behavioural approaches looked at observable variables such as over behaviours of consumers, they were easy to operationalize. However, they have many fatal weaknesses as the theoretical framework for studying consumer loyalty. Howard, Edginton and Selen (1988), criticizing measuring behavioural loyalty using one-dimensional approaches, used a two-dimensional model to measure both repeat patronage and the degree of commitment expressed by consumers. They suggested that the model they employed can be useful in measuring the degree to which individuals are loyal to a park and recreation department.

Studies focusing on attitudinal loyalty only, just like behaviour-only approaches, had their limitations. According to Prichard, Howard and Ravitz (1992), many loyalty theorists found that the early studies of attitudinal components of consumer loyalty lacked theoretical conceptualization because the multitude of measures confused different researchers. As a result of this, it has been noted that examination of the theoretical and empirical rigor underlying the development of
various attitudinal measures led to some questions on the construct validity of such measures (Prichard, Howard & Ravitz, 1992).

The two-dimensional approach combines both the behavioural and psychological facets of consumer loyalty. Thus it contributed to the understanding of loyalty by overcoming the weaknesses of one-dimensional approaches. For example, the two-dimensional approach can identify spurious loyalty of consumers while behavioural loyalty could not. However, most two-dimensional studies of consumer loyalty were deficient in that the measurement of psychological attachment of consumers was very difficult.

Experience indicates that defining and measuring brand loyalty is extremely difficult. The further exploration of the attitudinal dimension in recent years has led to the conceptualization of loyalty as a dynamic process. The developments of customers’ loyalty, especially research concerning attitudinal loyalty, lead to some more complicated and comprehensive models of the construct, such as multi-dimensional models. In recent years, many researchers focused on consumer loyalty’s multi-facetedness because of the concepts complexity, especially the attitudinal dimension. For example, Prichard, Howard and Ravitz (1992) noted that the addition of commitment as a component of attitudinal loyalty attracted great attention from researchers of loyalty in the past decades.

Recently, Skogland and Siguaw (2004) stated that “research on customer loyalty has primarily focused on customer satisfaction and involvement” (p. 221). However, the researchers said that results on the relationship between repeat-
purchase behaviour and satisfaction were unclear. Numerous studies have indicated significant relationships, whereas others have argued that satisfaction explains little in regards to repeat purchases. Skogland and Siguaw (2004) suggested antecedent of involvement on loyalty received inadequate consideration. Their research examined the degree to which satisfaction impacts loyalty and they explored how satisfaction may affect involvement to better understand how involvement may directly influence loyalty. Taken this into consideration, the present study focused on the effects of dimensions of service quality on customers’ loyalty. Findings indicated that neither overall satisfaction nor satisfaction with the people factor were key indicators of “repeat-purchase” behaviour, attitudinal loyalty, or “word-of-mouth” loyalty. Results showed that less than half of even the most contented customers regularly selected to stay again at the hotel they had just patronized. Skogland and Siguaw (2004) stated that “although marketers have long advanced the presence of guest satisfaction as instrumental in ensuring repeat business, guest satisfaction does not appear to have the substantive and sweeping effect on guest loyalty that has previously been assumed” (p. 227).

To sum up, in the last few decades’ exploration of consumer loyalty could be divided into three stages. The early approaches focused on only one dimension of consumer loyalty, either behavioural or attitudinal. The second stage was a composite loyalty approach: it combined both behavioural and attitudinal approaches. Although it was a synthesis of the approaches of the first stage, its investigation of different aspects of the attitudinal loyalty were still superficial. The third approach was the multidimensional model of loyalty studies including the relational analyses of dimensions and the “path analytic model” (Iwasaki & Havitz,
1998). Compared with approaches in the first two stages the last approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of consumer loyalty. The dynamic psychological process model especially represents the direction of future research of consumer loyalty because it reveals the complexity of this concept (ibid). In the present study, loyalty is considered as a complex issue that is multi-dimensional.

2.4.4 Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

In the recent changing global environment, all business firms, such as hotels, are looking for innovative ways and strategies to increase customer loyalty because customer loyalty has a very powerful impact on firms’ performance and it is considered as a major source of competitive advantages (Lam, Shanker, Erramilli & Murthy, 2004; Zeithmal, 2000). Enhanced customer loyalty of firms, such as hotels, increases revenue, reduces customer acquisition costs, lower costs of serving repeat purchasers and ultimately leads to greater profitability (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Lam et al., 2004).

In some studies, it has been argued that satisfaction is an important factor in measuring the service quality. However, customer loyalty is more important than satisfaction. Even though customer satisfaction is vital to the hotel industry, customer loyalty is more precious than customer satisfaction because loyal customers will return and recommend the hotel to their friends and relatives and this, in turn, helps increase hotel profitability (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1992). Pullman and Gross (2004) argued that customer loyalty is an indicator to the success for the service industry, especially the hospitality. Therefore, customer satisfaction is not necessarily an indicator of customer loyalty (ibid). Accordingly, loyal customers do not switch to
other service providers with small differences, such as price or service. The proposed definition of customer loyalty describes guests who hold favourable attitudes toward the hotel, commit to repurchase the product/service and recommend the hotel to others (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000).

Satisfied customers are not necessarily loyal customers because customer satisfaction and loyalty are directly related but are not always positive. Bowen and Chen (2001) pointed out that customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are two parts of a concept. They are not directly related. Though good quality can result in high satisfaction, high satisfaction does not directly create loyalty (Fay, 1994). Numerous efforts of raising customer loyalty by improving customer satisfaction have failed in the past because customer satisfaction does not have a significant influence on customer loyalty (Neal, 1999). Moreover, meeting customers’ expectations only helps business to improve service quality. However, it does not directly result in customer loyalty. It has been suggested that business should focus on both customer satisfaction and loyalty (Stum & Thiry, 1991) because agreed that customer satisfaction does not increase income but customer loyalty does (Fredericks & Salter, 1995).

### 2.4.5 Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

The relationship between service quality and customer loyalty has been the focus of a good number of studies. In this section, earlier and recent studies on service quality and customers’ loyalty are reviewed.
Customer loyalty can be of great value to an organization because loyal customers are believed to be much cheaper to serve and their support easier to maintain. The last few decades’ exploration of consumer loyalty can be divided into three stages. Insufficient, the early approaches focused on only one dimension of consumer loyalty (either behavioural or attitudinal dimension) insufficient. The second stage was the composite loyalty approach: it combined both behavioural and attitudinal approaches. This approach was also deemed insufficient and superficial. The third approach was the multidimensional model of loyalty studies including the relational analyses of dimensions and the analytic model”. Compared with the first two approaches, the last approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of consumer loyalty. The dynamic psychological process model is believed to especially represent the direction of future research of consumer loyalty because it reveals the complexity of this concept.

Dick and Basu (1994) argued that market communications that enhance consumers' beliefs regarding the service quality of a given company are likely to strengthen repeat patronage. “Confidence with a service supplier is often a key to loyalty and reminding consumers of past purchases ... may be critical in building or maintaining loyalty”. Offering personalized services and enacting company policies to build consumer confidence are ways that companies can try to induce attitudinal loyalty in customers. Another aspect of service quality that is often used by companies to enhance loyalty of customers is the attempt to obtain sites that provide advantages to consumers in terms of time and effort (Dick & Basu, 1994). In another study, Pritchard, Howard and Havitz (1992) indicated that recreation participants’
perceptions and evaluations of service quality may be related to their loyalty to a recreation service.

Backman and Veldkamp (1995) indicated that consumer loyalty is important and it must be nurtured since it may decrease with changing expectations or service conditions. When the level of a particular service does not meet the customers’ expectations, they are likely to switch to another supplier of that service (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995, p. 33). Furthermore, they indicated that there is a relationship between consumers’ perceptions of service quality gaps and their degree of loyalty. When the service quality of a company is below customers’ expectations, it can be frustrating for consumers, which is likely to contribute to the loss of consumer loyalty. Accordingly, it is suggested that in order to be more effective in developing loyalty, agencies of hotels or any other leisure setting should be dedicated to delivering excellent service quality and thus, managers should be very concerned with the perceived quality of recreation services.

Pritchard and Howard (1997) suggested that loyal customers are “involved decision makers who perceive significant service quality differences” (p. 5) and are satisfied with their service experience. Mel, Dean and White (1999) indicated that their review of literature revealed that customers' perceptions of service quality impacted on customer loyalty. Focusing on hotel client, they found that the component tangibles, particularly in relation to visual appeals of a facility, had a greater impact on loyalty than any of the other performance components. They found that consumer satisfaction acted as a mediator between service quality and customer loyalty. In other words, service quality has an indirect impact on customer loyalty.
through consumer satisfaction. Similarly, Backman and Veldkamp (1995) found that in internet commerce and perceived service value had a considerable impact on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

McCarville (2000) stated that expectations brought to a service encounter create a reference point around which judgments are made. Even if a service option was satisfying at one point, if it no longer meets expectations, it may become unacceptable to some, leading to a decrease in customer loyalty. In order to combat this, service providers strive to improve service offerings by developing relationships with clients and by taking an active part in establishing expectation levels by providing information those “under promises” services. Hallowell (1996) stated that “loyalty behaviours including relationship continuance, increased scale or scope of relationship and recommendation (word of mouth advertising) result from customers’ beliefs that the quantity of value received from one supplier is greater than that available from other suppliers” (p. 28). In summary, several studies have shown a positive relationship between consumer loyalty and consumers’ perceptions of service quality. These authors have offered suggestions for companies to increase their quality of service in order to promote increased participant loyalty.

Therefore, the importance of the relationship between service quality and loyalty cannot be denied and this relationship has been emphasized in previous studies. However, the present study considered another issue which was investigating the effect of the customers’ perceptions of tangible and intangible factors on both customers’ overall perception of service quality and loyalty.
2.5 **Studies on Service Quality in Arab Countries**

In Arab countries, there have been studies on service quality, satisfaction and loyalty. However, none of these studies have been conducted on the service quality at hotels in Arab countries. Rather, these studies focused on service quality at banks and higher education. Some of such recent studies on service quality in Arab countries are Chaker and Jabnoun (2010), Kassim and Ismail (2009), Hossain and Leo (2009), and Abdullah and Kassim (2009).

Chaker and Jabnoun (2010) developed a questionnaire based on the constructs influencing service quality gaps found by Parasuraman to examine some of major barriers to service quality in Islamic banks in Qatar and the impact of demographic variables on the perceptions of these barriers. The questionnaire was distributed to employees of Islamic banks in Qatar. Chaker and Jabnoun found that lack of empowerment, centralization and lack of transformational leadership, were found to be significant barriers to service quality in Islamic banks in Qatar. On the other hand, culture was not found to be significant.

In a survey that was conducted in Qatar, Kassim and Ismail (2009) investigated how perceived service quality, satisfaction and trust determined loyalty in e-commerce settings at the level of construct dimensions. They found that only assurance does appear to play an imperative role in building trust as suggested by many authors. Of particular interest is the finding that word-of-mouth is an antecedent of trust and intention. It becomes clear that word-of-mouth is a relatively important driver of trust and intention in e-commerce settings. In another study, Hossain and Leo (2009) focused on evaluating the service quality in retail banking in
the Middle East in general and Qatar in particular. They administered the questionnaire to a sample size of 120 who were chosen on a convenient basis from four banks. They found the highest customers’ perceptions are demonstrated in the tangibles area such as infrastructure facilities of the bank, followed by the empathy area such as timing of the bank and returns on deposit. On the other hand, they found that the lowest perceptions are in the competence area, such as the method of imposing service charges followed by reliability, such as customers’ guidance.

2.6 The Conceptual Framework

Based on the discussion above on theories and studies related to service quality, dimensions of service quality and customers’ loyalty, the conceptual framework of the present study is presented in Figure 2.1. The majority of service quality studies adapted the SERVQUAL scale to measure service. It has been reported in such studies that SERVQUAL is useful and effective in measuring service quality.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The current chapter discussed the studies related to the objectives of the presented study. It discussed service quality and its measurement. It also highlighted the importance of tangible and intangible factors in hotel industry. In addition, the current chapter described the significance of customers’ loyalty and how it is theorized that it is related to OPSQ of tangible and intangible factors. The following chapter focuses on the research design of the current study.
Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of Investigating the Effects of Tangible and Intangible Factors on Customers’ Perceived Service Quality and Loyalty in Hotel Industry
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and the hypotheses of the study. It presents the instrument that was used for data collection and the procedures for data collection. This chapter presents also the research procedures concerning: (a) the selection of subjects; (b) the survey instrument adoption and formation; (c) the research procedures; and (d) plans for data analysis. In addition, the current chapter also discusses how data were analyzed using SPSS.

3.2 The Design of the Study

The design of the present study is a survey study employing quantitative approach. Most of the previous studies on service quality and loyalty in hotel industry adopted quantitative approach with a survey design. These studies include Saleh and Ryan (1991), Wakefield and Blodgett (1999), Kassim and Abdullah (2010) and Shahin and Dabestani (2010), just to quote few. Miller (2004) stated that the major advantages of survey research are (a) the ability to collect a wide scope of information from a large population (b) dealing with a real situation in the sense that a researcher collects data in the actual situation and (c) providing a first step in developing hypotheses or in identifying more specific problems for research. Previous studies of the components and characteristics of intangible service (Parasuraman et al., 1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c) and tangible service (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996; Bitner, 1992) form the theoretical basis for this study. Thus, the
questionnaire that was sued as an instrument for data collection was based on these theories.

3.3 Hypotheses of the Study

The present research attempted to answer three research questions. The three research questions and the hypotheses of this study are listed below:

Hypothesis 1: The tangible variables have effect on overall perceived service intangible quality

1.1 The design of the hotel has effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality.

1.2 The equipment of the hotel has effects on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality.

1.3 The ambient conditions in the hotel have effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality.

Hypothesis 2: The intangible variables have effect on overall perceived service intangible quality.

2.1 Reliability has an effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality.

2.2 Responsiveness has an effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality.

2.3 Assurance has an effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality.

2.4 Empathy has an effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality.
Hypothesis 3: Tangible and intangible variables of the hotel have effect on customers’ loyalty.

3.1 The design of the hotel has effect on customer loyalty
3.2 The equipment of the hotel has effects on customer loyalty.
3.3 The ambient conditions in the hotel have effect on customer loyalty.
3.4 Reliability has an effect on customer loyalty.
3.5 Responsiveness has an effect on customer loyalty.
3.6 Assurance has an effect on customer loyalty.
3.7 Empathy has an effect on customer loyalty.

3.4 Respondents and Sampling Design

In this study, customers who stayed overnight at hotels located in Al-Ladhiqiyah, a coastal city in Syria were the target population. The respondents in this study were selected randomly from the target population. The sampling design in the present study was convenience sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, in which the hotels’ customers were selected, in part or in whole, at the convenience of the researcher. The researcher made no attempt, or only a limited attempt, to insure that this sample is an accurate representation of some larger group or population.

According to Sekaran (2009) and Anderson, Sweeney and Williams (2009), convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher; the respondents are selected without pre-specified or known probabilities. This sampling has been used in measuring customers’ perceived service quality and customer
loyalty in several researches, such as Kim, Jin and Swinney (2009), Master and Prideaux (2000) and Tsang and Qu (2000).

Moreover, the researcher tried to distribute the survey questionnaire to guests when they checked in. With the help of managers at hotels, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents who were requested to return the questionnaires after completion of responding to items of the questionnaire to the researcher when they check out. Regarding the sampling of the hotels, they were selected randomly because Al-Ladhiqiyah is a small town, in which there were no many hotels.

Figure 3.1 presents the procedures of the current research. As provided in Figure 3.1, the first step was formulating the research objectives. Next, earlier studies related to service quality and customer loyalty were reviewed. Next, theories related to service quality, tangible and intangible factors in hotel industry were discussed in detail. After that, theories related to the present study were reported. Next, the conceptual framework for this study was constructed on the basis of earlier studies focused on the effects of tangible and/or intangible variables on service on customer loyalty. After that, the questionnaire was design based on earlier studies on service quality. After that, data were collected at Al-Ladhiqiyah, a city in Syria. This was followed by data analysis and results reporting. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for improvement of service quality in hotels were presented in detail at the end of the research.
Figure 3.1: Research Procedures of the Study
3.5 Data Collection Instrument

The instrument that was employed for data collection in the present study was a questionnaire that was based on Parasuraman et al. (1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c), Wakefield & Blodgett (1996, 1999), Bitner (1992) and Skogland and Siguaw (2004). The questionnaire in the present study was piloted for testing its validity and reliability. Moreover, it was shown to experts to obtain their views on the items of all dimensions. These experts have been teaching and researching in business, marketing and management for a number of years.

As provided in Table 3.1, the questionnaire, which was administered by the researcher himself, consisted of four sections. The first section of the questionnaire was designed to obtain personal information concerning the demographic characteristics of respondents including gender, age, annual income, number of visits to hotels in the past year and the purpose of visits per a year. This section helped the researcher to provide a profile of all respondents in the present study. However, the respondents’ answers were not one of the variables.

Table 3.1: Number of Items for the Dimensions in the Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Personal information</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Design of the hotel</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Equipment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ambient conditions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reliability</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Responsiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Assurance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Empathy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. OPSQ</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Loyalty</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of items</td>
<td>47 items</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OPSQ = Overall Perceived Service Quality
The second section of the questionnaire focused on indentifying the customers’ perceptions of tangible aspects, including the design of the building, equipment in the hotel and the ambient conditions. The total of items in this section is sixteen items: eight items for design, three items for equipment and four items for ambient conditions. This section was adopted with some modification from Wakefield & Blodgett (1999). Some items were added to better fit within the context of the study and the hotel industry. Respondents were asked to express their opinion on the 16 items of tangible service quality attributes on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ with value 1 and 7 respectively. To create a list of tangible service quality attributes for the questionnaire, previous studies were reviewed. Frequently used attributes in tangible service quality studies (Parasuraman et al., 1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c; Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996, 1999) were referred to.

The items in the third section of the questionnaire identified the customers’ perceptions of intangible aspects of service quality. The total number of items in this section was eighteen items which were all directly based on Parasuraman et al. (1988). Five items were given for the dimension of reliability, four items for the dimension of responsiveness, four items for the dimension of assurance and five items for the dimension empathy. Again, respondents were requested to express their perceptions of the intangible service quality attributes on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ with values 1 and 7 respectively.

The fourth section of the questionnaire was designed to identify customers’ loyalty. Respondents in this study were asked to express their opinions on their
loyalty to the hotel they were staying in. The total number of items in this section was seven items. This section was adopted from Skogland and Siguaw (2004). Moreover, using the dimensions with the seven items mentioned above was suggested by different researcher (Hayes, 2008). The respondents were requested to express their opinions on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ with values 1 and 7 respectively.

The English questionnaire was translated into Arabic language by an expert in translating from Arabic to English. The Arabic version of the questionnaire was then translated back to English to ensure consistency by a professor who is expert in translating from Arabic to English. The English version of the questionnaire is presented in appendix A and the Arabic version is presented in appendix B. The following section deals with how the data were analysed.

3.6 Data Analysis

After the researcher collected all the completed surveys, invalid surveys were discarded. The questionnaires were administered to 221 customers. The response rate was 94.6% because the valid questionnaires were 209. The data obtained through the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The data were tabulated and entered in SPSS for descriptive statistics, factor analysis and regression analysis. To achieve the stated objectives and to test the hypotheses, descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used.

Descriptive statistics for all questionnaire items and research variables were computed in order to check for missing data and errors in data entry. Data entries
were then listed and checked against the original questionnaires. Once the data were entered and coded, the researcher checked the assumptions and performed multiple linear regression analysis to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level. Regression analysis explains if there is a relationship between two or more variables and it also clarifies whether the relationship is linear as in positive or negative.

Descriptive statistics was used to describe the basic features of the data. Descriptive statistics was applied to determine mean and standard deviation scores on all attributes. A frequency analysis was conducted for all the questions to examine the distribution of the responses. In addition, hotel guests’ demographic information was analyzed. Descriptive statistics was also used to consolidate the data to determine mean and standard deviation of the attributes of intangible service, tangible service, perceived service quality and customers’ loyalty. A frequency analysis is conducted to examine the distribution of respondents’ demographic profiles.

Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the relative impact of intangible service dimensions and tangible service dimensions on customers’ perceptions of service quality and loyalty. Regression analysis is a statistical technique to analyze the relationship between a dependent variable and a set of independent variables. Unlike correlation analysis, regression analysis describes the nature of the relationship. Regression analysis used in the current study provided measurements of the accuracy of the predictors, based on the explained variance and measures the importance of the predictor variables that is, independent variables in explaining the variance in the criterion variable that is, dependent variable.
Assumptions in multiple regression analysis include linear relationship, constant variance of the error terms (homoscedasticity), independence of the error terms (uncorrelated) and normality of the error term distribution. These assumptions are detected by residual plots, Levene’s test and Kolmogorov Smirnov test. As suggested by Hair Anderson, Tatham & Black (1998), multiple R and R Squared were used to assess overall model fit. Multiple R is the correlation coefficient for the simple regression of X and the dependent variable Y. R-square is the correlation coefficient squared, also referred to as the coefficient of determination. This value indicates the percentage of total variation of Y which explained by X (Pallant, 2007). Another measure of the accuracy of predictions is the standard error of the estimate which is the square root of the sum of the squared errors divided by the degrees of freedom. It represents an estimate of the standard deviation of the actual dependent values around the regression line.

As recommended by Hair et al. (1998), several measures need to be defined for each variable in the equation. Those are the regression coefficient, the standard error of the coefficient and the t value of variables in the equation. The beta value is the value calculated from standardized data. The beta value allows us to compare the effect of one independent variable on Y to the effect on Y of other independent variables at each stage. The standard error of the coefficient is the standard error of the estimate of b value. It is an estimate of how much the regression coefficient varies between samples of the same size taken from the same population. The t-value of variables in the equation, measures the significance of the correlation of the variable reflected in the regression coefficient. Correlation and t values are available
to assess their potential contribution as for variables which are not in the equation (Hair et al., 1998).

Regression analysis that was used to analyze the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables could show the proportion of variance between variables due to the independent variables. The level of significance was set at 0.05 because it is the most standard in social sciences (Burns & Burns, 2008). The parameters were estimated so as to give a best fit of the data. It is significant to mention that regression can be used for prediction, inference and hypotheses testing and modelling of causal relationships. These uses of regression depended mostly on the underlying assumptions being satisfied. Although regression analysis was criticized as being misused for these purposes in many cases where the appropriate assumptions cannot be verified to hold (Berk, 2004; Freedman, 2005), it has been employed in different studies measuring the relationships between service quality and customer loyalty. In this study, regression in SPSS was used to analyze the percentage of relationship changes between dependent variables as a result of the independent variables. Studies on service quality and customer loyalty that used regression analysis include Gupta and Chen (1995), Tsang and Qu (2000), Fu and Parks (2001) and Akbaba (2006).

3.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the internal consistency of the items of the questionnaire. The respondents were USM students who had the chance to stay at hotels in any Syrian city. The respondents to the questionnaire in the pilot study were thirty-three respondents. The pilot study that was carried out with 33 respondents to
identify unanticipated problems or issues provided valuable information about instrument administration, scoring routine and analysis techniques. Most importantly, from the results of the pilot study, some items in the questionnaire were deleted to acquire more reliable information from the scales prior to collecting the final data for the study. Moreover, some items were rephrased for better face validity. Such items focused on equipment in hotels.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

For establishing content-based validity evidence, the questionnaire was submitted to a panel of three experts who possess a substantial amount of knowledge and research experience in the field of business marketing and management to ensure the validity of each of the constructs. First, the panel of experts was provided with detailed information about the fundamental purpose and overall design of the study to assist them in making improvement decisions. After that, the panel of experts was asked to carefully review each of the questionnaires to determine whether the individual items adequately represent the domains of the underlying constructs in terms of wording, clarity, format and adequacy. In other words, the panel of experts was asked to conduct a structured review of each of the questionnaires to ensure their content relevance and content representativeness.

According to Churchill and Brown (2004, p. 333), “content validity is the adequacy with which the important aspects of the characteristics are captured by the measure”. Simply, the content validity ensured the instrument fully included the important features of the construct that was being measured. To achieve the content validity, a review of literature was conducted to find the important variables related
to the constructs of both service quality and hotel rating systems. Additionally, the measure of service quality used in this study was adopted from the well-established measurement of the SERVQUAL and the adaptation of internationally accepted hotel rating model.

Churchill and Brown (2004) defined reliability as an “ability of a measure to obtain similar scores for the same object, trait, or construct across time, across different evaluation, or across the items forming the measure” (p. 335). They also explained the two types of reliability which were an inter-judge reliability and an internal consistency. The inter-judge reliability of a measure was operated when different subjects evaluated a single object. An internal consistency was another reliability used to determine the correlation of items in the measure. This study observed only the internal consistency because the study asked for a score from each respondent toward a statement. The internal consistency allowed the researcher to check if each respondent’s scores of different parts in the measurement appeared in a similar pattern. The coefficient alpha, generally known as Cronbach’s alpha, indicated that the internal consistency existed. Nunnally (1978, p. 245) as cited in Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991) suggested “reliabilities of 0.7 or higher will suffice”. Thus, the greater the coefficient alpha is, the more reliable the measurement is. The reliability analysis of the collected data revealed that the scales had an internal consistency supported by highly satisfied alpha value.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on describing the research design of the study the main instrument (a questionnaire) that was used for data collection. Next, procedures for
data collection and the sampling technique were also explained. In addition, this chapter showed how data were analysed using descriptive statistics, factor analysis and regression analysis. This chapter also provided explanation on how the pilot study was conducted and how it was useful for the main study.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of tangible and intangible factors on overall perceived service quality and customers’ loyalty. Data for the present study were collected from 209 guests who were staying in some hotels in Al-Ladhiqiyah during data collection in December 2009 and January 2010. The instrument that was used for data collection was a questionnaire consisting of 47 items. The current chapter discusses the results of data analysis. In reporting the results of data analysis, the current chapter starts with reporting the results of demographic data of the respondents. Next, it provides a description of the reliability analysis. The results of regression analysis are reported in detail.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section is devoted for reporting the results of the demographic data of the respondents. Table 4.1 presents a summary of the major characteristics of the respondents. As it is shown in Table 4.1 below, the total of the respondents was 209. The female respondents were 102 and constituted 51.2% out of the total respondents. On the other hand, there were 107 male respondents constituting 48.8% of the total respondents. The majority of the respondents were either between 28-37 years old (27.3%) or between 38-47 years old (24.9%). Concerning the annual income, 37.3% of the respondents were in category of less than $20000 followed by 25.4% in the range between $20001 and $35000. Most of the respondents (38.3%) visited Al-Ladhiqiyah between one to two times per a year. In addition, 21.5% of the
respondents visited that city 3-4 times per a year. Concerning the purpose of visit, while 34% of the respondents came for leisure, 24.9% came for visiting their relatives in Al-Ladhiqiyah. Moreover, 22.5% visited that city for both business and leisure.

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of the factor of age among the respondents. As shown in Figure 4.1, most of the respondents who were guests in some hotels of Al-Ladhiqiyah were between 28 and 37 years old (27.3%), followed by the category of 38 to 47 years old (24.9%). On the other hand, the distribution of the respondents according to the categories of their gender is presented in Figure 4.2. The gender results indicated in Figure 4.2 show an almost an equal distribution with 51.2% being male and 48.8% female.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age</td>
<td>18-27</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28-37</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38-47</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47-57</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 57</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Annual income</td>
<td>Less than $20000</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between $20001- $35000</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between $35001- $50000</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between $50001- $75000</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above $75000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Visits per year</td>
<td>1-2 times</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-4 times</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-6 times</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7-8 times</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 8 times</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Purpose of visit</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure and business</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting or conference</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visiting relatives</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.1: Distribution of Age among the Respondents

Figure 4.2: Distribution of Gender among the Respondents

While Figure 4.3 presents the distribution of the annual income of the respondents, Figure 4.4 provides the distribution of the number of visits of the respondents per a year. The final feature of the characteristics of the respondents is the purpose of their visits. Figure 4.5 shows that the majority of the guests who were at some hotels in Al-Ladhiqiyah came for the purpose of leisure (34%), followed by the purpose of visiting relatives (24.9%).

80
Figure 4.3: Distribution of the Annual Income among the Respondents

Figure 4.4: Distribution of Number of Visits per a Year among the Respondents
4.3 Results of Factor Analysis

Factor analysis and reliability tests were initially used. Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine how many factors were appropriate and which items belonged together. As suggested by Krishnaswamy, Sivakumar and Mathirajan (2009), the steps that were followed for doing factor analysis were four: (1) data collection and generation of the correlation matrix, (2) extraction of initial factor solution, (3) rotation and interpretation and (4) construction of scales or factor scores to use in further analyses.

The results of the factor analysis produced a clean factor structure with high reliability loading on the factors. Most variables loaded heavily on one factor and this confirmed that there was minimal overlap among factors and that all factors independently structured. As shown in Table 4.2, for factor analysis of the items/questions for tangible factors, each item score of tangible dimensions was greater or equal 0.4. Results of factor analysis for the intangible dimensions are
provided in Table 4.3, results of factor analysis of OPSQ dimension is provided in Table 4.4 and results of factor analysis of the customer loyalty dimension is provided in Table 4.5. As shown in Tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5, the score for each item/question is greater than 0.4, based on Nunnally’s (1978) suggestion. Therefore, all these items were not removed and were used for the multiple regression analysis.

Table 4.2: Factor Analysis of the Items on the Dimensions of Tangibles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Items/questions</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td>1. The overall outside appearance of the hotel is attractive.</td>
<td>0.643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The interior design of the hotel is attractive.</td>
<td>0.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Layout of the hotel makes it easy to get around.</td>
<td>0.638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Seats in the hotel are comfortable.</td>
<td>0.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Lights in the environment of the hotel are appropriate.</td>
<td>0.453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. The furniture in the hotel is comfortable.</td>
<td>0.539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. The decoration in the hotel is attractive.</td>
<td>0.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. The signs in the hotel provide adequate direction.</td>
<td>0.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>1. The electronic equipment in the hotel is of high quality.</td>
<td>0.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Equipment in the hotel is modern-looking.</td>
<td>0.538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The audio/video machines in the hotel are interesting.</td>
<td>0.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambient Conditions</td>
<td>1. The hotel is kept clean all time.</td>
<td>0.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The temperature in the hotel is comfortable</td>
<td>0.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The appearance of the employees in the hotel is neat.</td>
<td>0.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Walkways and exits in the hotel are kept clean.</td>
<td>0.560</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3: Factor Analysis of the Items on the Dimensions of Intangibles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Items/questions</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>1. The hotel keeps its promise of doing things on time.</td>
<td>0.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. If I have a problem, the hotel enthusiastically shows the willingness to</td>
<td>0.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>solve it right away.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The hotel service is dependable.</td>
<td>0.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The hotel provides services as promised.</td>
<td>0.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The hotel maintains accurate records.</td>
<td>0.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>1. Hotel employees are able to tell me exactly when services will be provided.</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Guests in the hotel are able to expect prompt services.</td>
<td>0.669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Hotel employees are willing to help guests.</td>
<td>0.709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Even if busy, hotel employees are available to meet my needs.</td>
<td>0.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>1. Guests are able to trust employees in the hotel.</td>
<td>0.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I feel safe in my dealing with hotel employees.</td>
<td>0.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Hotel employees are polite at all times.</td>
<td>0.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Hotel employees have sufficient support from the hotel to do jobs well.</td>
<td>0.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>1. The hotel provides me with individual attention.</td>
<td>0.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Hotel employees provide me with individual attention.</td>
<td>0.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Hotel employees understand my specific needs.</td>
<td>0.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The hotel has my best interest at heart.</td>
<td>0.767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Factor Analysis of the Items on the Dimension of OPSQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Items/questions</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPSQ</td>
<td>1. My overall perception of tangible factors in this hotel is great.</td>
<td>0.816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. My overall perception of Intangible factors in this hotel is great.</td>
<td>0.816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Factor Analysis of the Items on the dimension of Customer Loyalty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Items/questions</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Loyalty</td>
<td>1. I consider myself to be a loyal guest of the hotel.</td>
<td>0.795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. In the near future, I intend to use the hotel more often.</td>
<td>0.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. As long as I travel to this area, I do not foresee myself switching to a</td>
<td>0.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>different hotel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. If the hotel were to raise the price of my stay, I would still continue to</td>
<td>0.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be a guest of the hotel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. If a competing hotel were to offer a better rate or discount on their</td>
<td>0.523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>services, I would switch.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. I would highly recommend the hotel to my friends and family.</td>
<td>0.688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. I am likely to make negative comments about the hotel to my friends and</td>
<td>0.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Results of Reliability Tests

Reliability is defined as “the degree to which a measuring instrument is free from random error so as to supply consistent results” (Cooper & Schindler, 2006, p. 323). Reliability also refers to the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable (Hair et al., 2006, p. 137). Cronbach’s alpha is a statistical measurement that is widely used to assess the internal consistency reliability of multi-item scales at an interval level of measurement.

In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha was used as an indicator of internal consistency reliability because it refers to the degree to which the set of items of a scale are internally consistent in their measurements and to their measuring of the same underlying construct (i.e., the extent to which the items were coherent and had a constant difference in phase) (Hair et al., 2006, p. 710). This is because a scale’s internal consistency is one of the important aspects of reliability (Pallant, 2005, p. 90). The minimum level that is generally agreed upon for the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of a scale is 0.70 (Hair et al., 2006, p. 137; Pallant, 2005, p. 90). The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients of the nine constructs measured in this study are provided in Table 4.6 in this section. As shown in Table 4.6, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient values for all dimensions are higher than 0.70, the accepted minimum value of 0.70. In the following section, the answers for the research questions are provided.
Table 4.6: Results of Reliability Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions (Variables)</th>
<th>Alpha Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible Factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment of the hotel</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambient conditions</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intangible Factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPSQ</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Loyalty</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Results of Regression Analysis

The present research attempted to answer three research questions. The three research questions and the hypotheses are listed below:

Hypothesis 1: The tangible variables have effect on OPSQ of tangibles.

Hypothesis 2: The intangible variables have effect on OPSQ of intangibles.

Hypothesis 3: Tangible and intangible factors of the hotel have effect on customers’ loyalty.

Table 4.7: Regressions Models and Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regression model</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Independent variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>OPSQ of Tangible Factors</td>
<td>Design, Equipment, Ambient Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>OPSQ of Intangible Factors</td>
<td>Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Customers’ Loyalty</td>
<td>Design, Equipment, Ambient Conditions, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The regression models investigated in this study were four. These four regression models were as follows:
1. OPSQ of Tangible Factors = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ (Design) + $\beta_2$ (Equipment) + $\beta_3$
   (Ambient Conditions)

2. OPSQ of Intangible Factors = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ (Reliability) + $\beta_2$ (Responsiveness) + $\beta_3$
   (Assurance) + $\beta_4$ (Empathy)

3. Customers’ Loyalty = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ (Design) + $\beta_2$ (Equipment) + $\beta_3$ (Ambient
   Conditions) + $\beta_4$ (Reliability) + $\beta_5$ (Responsiveness) + $\beta_6$ (Assurance) + $\beta_7$
   (Empathy)

In the first regression model, the dependent variable is OPSQ of tangible factors and the three independent variables are design, equipment and ambient conditions (see Table 4.7). In the second regression model, the OPSQ of intangible factors were formulated to be predicted by four independent variables: reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. In the third regression model, the customers’ loyalty is the dependent variable and the independent variables are design, equipment, ambient conditions, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Before conducting regression analysis, all tests of regression assumptions, as suggested by Pallant (2007), were conducted and there was no significant violation of the assumptions and outliers found in the model. The degree of variable collinearity is considered acceptable with the variance inflation (VIF) less than 10 and the condition indices less than 30 (Belsley, 1984). Indications show that there was no variable collinearity in the model. Furthermore, there was no major deviation from normality. In the following three main sections, the answers of the three research questions are reported.
4.5.1 Research Question One

Research question one proposed that the design of the hotel, the equipment at the hotel and the ambient conditions of the hotel had an effect on customers’ overall perceived service quality of tangible factors. To answer this research question, three hypotheses were developed. The three hypotheses were:

1.1 The design of the hotel has effect on customers’ OPSQ of tangibles.
1.2 The equipment of the hotel has effects on customers’ OPSQ of tangibles.
1.3 The ambient conditions in the hotel have effect on customers’ OPSQ of tangibles.

To test the three hypotheses in the first research question, regression analysis was used to determine the impact of tangible service factors on customers’ overall perception of tangible service quality. Based on Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) and Bitner (1992), the present study proposed three tangible factors: design of the hotel, equipment in the hotel and ambient conditions. It was proposed that these three tangible factors had effect on overall perceived tangible quality. The independent variables were the design of the hotel, the equipment at the hotel and the ambient conditions at the hotel. The dependent variable was overall perceived service quality of tangible factors.

Regression analysis was run on SPSS version 15. The ENTER variable selection method involving all three tangible factors of service quality was utilized for the total of 209 respondents. Table 4.8 presents a summary of the results of the first regression model. As shown in Table 4.8, the results of the first regression model indicates that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 83.173, p = 0.000; P ≤ 0.01$) and 54% of the OPSQ of tangible factors was explained by the
three tangible factors of service quality. Moreover, the F-ratio value of 83.173 was significant ($p=.000; P≤ 0.01$), indicating that the results of the equation hardly could have occurred by chance. In addition, the results of the regression coefficient from the first multiple regression showed the influence of the three independent variables on the OPSQ of tangible factors. The coefficients indicated that all variables (i.e. design, equipment and ambient conditions) had high contribution to explaining the dependent variable. However, the variable of design exerted the strongest influence on the overall perception of tangibles factors, followed by other independent variables.

As provided in Table 4.9, the results of the regression coefficient obtained from multiple regression analysis showed the influence of the three intangible variables on the OPSQ. The coefficients indicated that the factors of design and ambient conditions exerted the strongest influence on the customers’ OPSQ, followed by the factor of equipment which exerted the weakest influence.

Table 4.8: Summary of Regression Model 1 (N=209)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPSQ of Tangible factors</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>0.549</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>83.173</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ambient conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P≤ 0.01
Table 4.9: The Influence of the Three Intangible Variables on OPSQ in Regression Model 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>3.863</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>3.782</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambient conditions</td>
<td>.308</td>
<td>.270</td>
<td>3.635</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: OPSQ of Tangible factors

*P ≤ 0.01

4.5.1.1 Hypotheses 1-1, 1-2 and 1-3 Testing

Hypothesis 1-1 was that the design of the hotel had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:

1. The design of the hotel had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality,
2. The design of the hotel had no effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality.

Hypothesis 1-2 was that the equipment at the hotels had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:

1. The equipment at the hotels had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality,
2. The equipment at the hotel had no effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality.

Hypothesis 1-3 was that the ambient conditions of the hotel had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:
1. The ambient conditions at the hotels had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality,
2. The ambient conditions at the hotels had no effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality.

As shown in Tables 4.8 and 4.9, hypotheses 1-1, 1-2 and 1-3 are supported by the results of regression analysis at $P \leq 0.01$. Therefore, the factors of design, equipment and ambient conditions were good predictors of OPSQ of tangible factors. Accordingly, there was a relationship between these factors and the dependent variable (i.e. OPSQ of tangible factors).

4.5.2 Research Question Two

Research question two proposed that intangible service factors had an effect on OPSQ of intangible factors. To answer this research question, four hypotheses were developed based on previous research. The four hypotheses were:

1.1 The reliability has effect on customers’ OPSQ of intangible factors.
1.2 The responsiveness has effects on customers’ OPSQ of intangible factors.
1.3 The assurance has effect on customers’ OPSQ of intangible factors.
1.4 The empathy has effect on customers’ OPSQ of intangible factors.

To test these four hypotheses, linear regression analysis was used to determine the impact of intangible service factors on OPSQ of intangible factors. Based on Parasurman et al. (1988), the present study proposed four tangible factors: reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. It was proposed that these four
intangible factors had effect on customers’ OPSQ of intangible factors. The dependent variable was overall perceived service quality of tangible factors.

The linear regression analysis was run on SPSS version 15. The results of regression analysis are presented in Tables 4.10 and 4.11. As provided in Table 4.10, the results of the second regression model indicates that the regression model was statistically significant \( (F = 176.624, p = 0.000; P \leq 0.01) \) and 77% of the OPSQ of intangible factors was explained by the four intangible factors of service quality. Moreover, the F-ratio value of 176.624 was significant \( (p=0.000; P \leq 0.01) \), indicating that the results of the equation hardly could have occurred by chance.

As it is provided in Table 4.11, the results of the regression coefficient from the multiple regression showed the influence of the four independent variables on the overall perceived service quality. As presented in Table 4.11, the coefficients indicated that the variables of empathy had its major contribution to explaining the dependent variable \( (P \leq 0.01) \). On the other hand, it was found that also assurance and reliability had their contribution to explaining the dependent variable \( (P \leq 0.01) \). However, the results of the regression analysis of the effect of the variables of empathy and assurance were highly significant at \( p \leq 0.01 \). On the other hand, the results of the regression analysis of the In other words, the variable of empathy and assurance exerted the strongest influence on the overall perception of intangibles factors.
Table 4.10: Summary of Regression Model 2 (N=209)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPSQ of Intangible factors</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>176.624</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P≤ 0.01

Table 4.11: The Influence of the Independent Variables in Regression Model 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regression Model 2</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>2.233</td>
<td>.027*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>1.639</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>2.713</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td>6.234</td>
<td>.000**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variable: OPSQ of intangible factors
* P≤ 0.05  **P≤ 0.01

4.5.2.1 Hypothesis 2-1, 2-2, 2-3 and 2-4 Testing

Hypothesis 2-1 was that the reliability had effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:

1. The reliability had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality,
2. The reliability had no effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality.

Hypothesis 2-2 was that the responsiveness had effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:

1. The responsiveness had effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality,
2. The responsiveness had no effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality.
Hypothesis 2-3 was that assurance had effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:

2-3: The assurance had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality,

2-3: The assurance had no effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality.

Hypothesis 2-4 was that empathy had effect on customers’ overall perceived service intangible quality. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:

1. The empathy had effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality,

2. The empathy had no effect on customers’ overall perceived service tangible quality.

As shown in Tables 4.10 and 4.11, hypotheses 2-1, 2-2, 2-3 and 2-4 were supported by the results of regression analysis.

4.5.3 Research Question Three

Research question three proposed that tangible service factors (design, equipment and ambient conditions) and intangible factors (reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) had their effect on customers’ loyalty. To answer this research question, seven hypotheses were developed. The seven hypotheses were:

3.1 The design of the hotel has effect on customers’ loyalty.

3.2 The equipment of the hotel has effects on customers’ loyalty.

3.3 The ambient conditions in the hotel have effect on customers’ loyalty.

3.4 The reliability has effect on customers’ loyalty.
3.5 The responsiveness has effects on customers’ loyalty.

3.6 The assurance has effect on customers’ loyalty.

3.7 The empathy has effect on customers’ loyalty.

To test these seven hypotheses and find out the relationship between these seven independent variables and the dependent variable of customers’ loyalty, regression analysis was used. The seven independent variables were the design of the hotel, the equipment in the hotel, the ambient conditions at the hotel, the reliability, the responsiveness, the assurance and the empathy. Based on Skogland and Siguaw (2004), seven items measuring customers’ loyalty were included in the questionnaire in the current study. It was proposed that these seven independent variables had their effect on customers’ loyalty.

Regression analysis was run on SPSS version 15. The results of the regression analysis for regression model 3 are presented in Tables 4.12 and 4.13.

Table 4.12: Summary of Regression Model 3 (N=209)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customers’ Loyalty</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>0.777</td>
<td>0.769</td>
<td>100.053</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ambient Conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p≤ 0.01
As provided in Table 4.12, the results of the regression coefficient showed that there was a great influence of the seven independent variables on the customers’ loyalty. As presented in Table 4.13, the coefficients indicated that all reliability, assurance and empathy had high contribution to explaining the dependent variable (i.e. customer loyalty) at $p \leq 0.01$.

### 4.5.3.1 Hypothesis 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, 3-6 and 3-7 Testing

Hypothesis 3-1 was that the design of the hotel had effect on customers’ loyalty. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:

1. The design of the hotel had effect on customers’ loyalty.

2. The design of the hotel had no effect on customers’ loyalty.

Hypothesis 3-2 was that the equipment at the hotels had effect on customers’ loyalty. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:

1. Equipment at the hotels had effect on customers’ loyalty.

2. Equipment at the hotels had no effect on customers’ loyalty.
Hypothesis 3-3 was that ambient conditions had effect on customers’ customers’ loyalty. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:
1. The ambient conditions had effect on customers’ loyalty,
2. The ambient conditions had no effect on customers’ loyalty.

Hypothesis 3-4 was that the reliability had effect on customers’ loyalty. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:
1. The reliability had effect on customers’ loyalty,
2. The reliability had no effect on customers’ loyalty.

Hypothesis 3-5 was that the responsiveness had effect on customers’ loyalty. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:
3-5: The responsiveness had effect on customers’ loyalty,
3-5: The responsiveness had no effect on customers’ loyalty.

Hypothesis 3-6 was that assurance had effect on customers’ loyalty. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:
1. The assurance had effect on customers’ loyalty,
2. The assurance had no effect on customers’ loyalty.

Hypothesis 3-7 was that empathy had effect on customers’ loyalty. The null hypothesis and the alternative one were:
1. The empathy had effect on customers’ loyalty.
2. The empathy had no effect on customers’ loyalty.
As shown in Tables 4.12 and 4.13, hypothesis, 3-4, 3-6 and 3-7 were supported by the results of the regression analysis at $P \leq 0.01$. On the other hand, hypotheses 3-1, 3-2, 3-3 and 3-5 were not supported by the results of regression analysis.

4.6 Summary of the Results

The hypotheses of the present study were 14. Table 4.14 presents a summary of the results of regression analysis that was used for testing the hypotheses. As it is provided in Table 4.14, nine hypotheses were supported by the results of regression analysis. These hypotheses are 1-1, 1.2, 1-3, 2-1, 2-3, 2-4, 3-4, 3-6 and 3-7. On the other hand, hypotheses 2-2, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3 and 3-5 were rejected by the results of the regression analysis. In addition, Figure 4.6 shows the final results regarding the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables.

As shown in Figure 4.6, the circular shapes are given for dependent variables; in the middle of the figure, the rectangular shapes are provided to show the independent variables. The strong relationship between an independent variable and a dependent is indicated by a solid line. On the other hand, the weak relationship between an independent variable and a dependent is indicated by a dash line. In other words, rejected hypotheses were indicated by dash lines.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The current chapter reported the results of data analysis. It also reported the results of the factor analysis and regression analysis. The following chapter focuses
on the discussion and conclusion. The following chapter also presents some recommendations for future research.

Table 4.14: Summary of the Results of all Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 1</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The design of the hotel has effect on customers’ overall perceived</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service tangible quality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 The equipment of the hotel has effects on customers’ overall</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceived service tangible quality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 The ambient conditions in the hotel have effect on customers’ overall</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>Supported</td>
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<tr>
<td>perceived service tangible quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 Reliability has an effect on customers’ overall perceived service</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.027*</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
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<td>intangible quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 Responsiveness has an effect on customers’ overall perceived service</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intangible quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3 Assurance has an effect on customers’ overall perceived service</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.007*</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
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<td>intangible quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.4 Empathy has an effect on customers’ overall perceived service</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intangible quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 The design of the hotel has effect on customer loyalty.</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 The equipment of the hotel has effects on customer loyalty.</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 The ambient conditions in the hotel have effect on customer loyalty.</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Reliability has an effect on customer loyalty.</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Responsiveness has an effect on customer loyalty.</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Assurance has an effect on customer loyalty.</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Empathy has an effect on customer loyalty.</td>
<td>Regression analysis</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p ≤ 0.05  ** *p ≤ 0.01
Figure 4.6: Modeling the Relationship between Dependent and Independent Variables

--- strongest influence

--- no influence
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The present study focused on investigating the effects of tangible and intangible factors at hotels on the customers’ overall perceived service quality and loyalty. The specific objectives of the current research were:

1. To examine the effect of tangible service variables on customers’ overall perceived service quality of tangible factors.
2. To examine the effect of intangible service variables on customers’ overall perceived service quality of intangible factors.
3. To examine the effect of tangible and intangible factors on customers’ loyalty.

Data were collected from 209 respondents using a questionnaire adapted to measure the effects of tangible and intangible factors on OPSQ and customers’ loyalty. The sampling technique that was used for selecting the respondents was convenience sampling. Data were collected from guests at some randomly selected hotels at Al-Ladhiqiyah, Syria. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, factor analysis and regression analysis. Three models of regression were formulated to test the 14 hypotheses of this study. In the regression analysis of the three regression models, the outputs of the regression analysis were compared with the standardized coefficients (Beta weight, β) of each relation to find the variations in the effect of tangible and intangible factors on OPSQ and loyalty. Moreover, the results of the
significance were compared to the p-value of significance that was set to 0.05 and 0.01.

The current chapter offers a summary of the current study and conclusions related to the four research questions, practical recommendations derived from study results are discussed in the first part. The current chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for managers and owners of hotels and suggestions for future research in hotel industry.

5.2 Descriptive Results from Respondents

The respondents in the current study were 209. The male respondents were 107 (48.8%) and the female respondents were 102 (51.2%). Rankings in age groups were as follows: about 27.3% of the respondents were 28-37, followed by 24.9% at 38-47, 21.5% at 18-27 and 18.7% at 47-57. For annual income, 37.3% of respondents were in the range of less than $20000, followed by 25.4% in the range of $20001 to $35000, 16.3% between $35001 to $50000 and 13.9% in the range of $50001 to $75000 and 7.2% above 75000 $. In terms of number of visits per a year, 38.3% of the respondents visited Al-Ladhiqiyah between one to two times per a year, followed by 21.5% of the respondents visited that city between three to four times per a year. Regarding the purpose of visit, 345 of the respondents visited that city for leisure, followed by 24.9% of the respondents visited that city for the purpose of coming to see relatives and 22.5% of the respondents came for both leisure and business.
The following sections focus on discussing the major findings and conclusions of the three research questions of this study. After that, implications for hotel industry and tourism industry are provided. Finally, recommendations for future research in the fields of hotel industry are provided.

5.3 Discussion of the Findings of the Study

In this section, the major findings of the present study are discussed according to the research questions. In addition, the results of the presents are discussed in relation to the results of previous studies reviewed in the second chapter. In other words, this section is devoted to discussing the connection of the results of this study to the results and findings of previous studies. The reliability coefficients of four dimensions of modified SERVQUAL were consistent with the original version developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988). Cronbach’s coefficient of the total scale of the original SERVQUAL had very high internal consistency ($a=.92$) according to Nunnally's (1978) analysis, the Cronbach's coefficient of the total scale for the modified SERVQUAL used in this study was considered as having high internal consistency ($a=.90$) as well. For the validity, the modified SERVQUAL showed highly acceptable score ($a=.70-.80$), which was consistent with the original version. This also was consistent with the findings of Lau, Akbar and Fie (2005) that the internal consistency of modified SERVQUAL instrument had the overall alphas higher than 0.80. This confirms Parasuraman et al.’s (1988) findings that the SERVQUAL instrument could be employed in numerous services without revision as the SERVQUAL has high reliability and validity.
Most service quality studies in the hospitality industry adapted the SERVQUAL scale to measure service quality. Such studies showed that the instrument SERVQUAL is useful and effective in measuring service quality in the hospitality industry. Similarly, the current study revealed that SERVQUAL is an effective and valid instrument to be sued in research related to service quality and its dimensions and factors.

5.3.1 Research Question One

Research question one focused on examining the effect of tangible service variables on OPSQ of tangible factors. In this research question, the dependent variable is OPSQ of tangible factors and the three independent variables are design, equipment and ambient conditions. The present study shows that the design of, the equipment and the ambient conditions at hotels have their great influence on customers’ OPSQ of tangible factors. Moreover, the factors of design and ambient conditions have the strongest influence on customers’ OPSQ of tangible factors, followed by the factor of equipment in hotels.

The present study shows that tangible factors in hotels industry have their effects on both customers’ perceptions of service quality and loyalty. The results revealed in this study related to the effects of the design of the hotels on customers’ loyalty are not in agreement with the results of Dubé and Renaghan (2000) because they confirmed the importance of architecture and design as key value drivers for guests. Moreover, the respondents in Dubé and Renaghan (2000) ranked the physical appearance of the hotel exterior, the public space and the guest room only slightly lower than the hotel’s location and brand name. Similarly, the present study shows
that the exterior design of this study had the greatest effects on both perceptions of service quality and loyalty.

Similar to some of the research objectives of Bitner (1992) and Wakefield, Blodgett (1996), the present study focused on the fixed elements in hotels including the design and the ambient conditions. Bitner (1992) stated that ambient factors are major components of servicescape and are important to understanding customers’ behaviour. Wakefield, Blodgett tested the model in three leisure service settings: college football, minor league baseball and casinos and found that servicescape significantly affects perceived quality of the leisure service setting. The results of the present study are in agreement with the findings of Wakefield, Blodgett (1996) and Bitner (1992).

5.3.2 Research Question Two

Research question two focused on examining the effect of intangible service variables on OPSQ of intangible factors. In this research question the dependent variable is OPSQ of intangible factors; the four independent variables are reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The present study shows that these independent variables have their effects on customers’ OPSQ of intangible factors. Furthermore, the results of the regression analysis that the variables of empathy and assurance have the strongest influence on customers’ OPSQ, followed by the factor of reliability. On the other hand, the results show that responsiveness have no effect on customers’ perception of the quality of tangibles.
With regard to the importance of service quality factors, studies such as Berry and Parasuraman (1991), Parasuraman et al. (1988) and Rust and Oliver (1994) conducted on service quality emphasized that the factor of reliability is the foremost factor that customers consider in evaluating a company's quality of service among the four service quality factors suggested by Parasuraman et al. (1988).

The findings of Parasuraman et al. (1988) indicated that reliability was the highest rated dimension as viewed by customers in four industries (a bank, a credit card company, a repair and maintenance company and long-distance telephone company). However, in this present study, the variables of empathy and assurance were the highest rate dimensions, whereas reliability and responsiveness were the lowest rated dimensions. Therefore, this finding was inconsistent with the findings of Parasuraman et al. (1988).

5.3.3 Research Question Three

Research question three focused on examining the effect of tangible and intangible factors on customers’ loyalty. In this research question, the dependent variable is customers’ loyalty; the seven independent variables are design, equipment, ambient conditions, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The results of this research question revealed that the seven independent variables have great effects on customers’ loyalty. The results also showed that the tangible factors at hotels have no influence on customers’ loyalty.

The results of a regression analysis in the present study showed different results in relation to the relative importance of the four variables of intangible factors
of service quality. That is, the results revealed that the factors of assurance, empathy and reliability variables have great influence on customer loyalty. In this respect, it seems necessary to critically consider those factors. In more detail, the factor of tangibles indicates the physical evidence of the service, such as physical facilities, appearance of personnel, other customers in the service facility and tools or equipment utilized to provide the services (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

These results are similar to Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) and Boulding, Kalra, Staelin and Zeithaml (1993). Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) found that overall perception of service quality directly influence customers’ behavioural intentions, including their tendency to say positive things, to recommend the company and to remain loyal to the company. Similar to these findings, Boulding, Kalra, Staelin and Zeithaml (1993) found that there is a connection between service quality and repurchase intention and willingness to recommend the place to others.

As given in Skogland and Siguaw (2004), the present study adopted the seven items on customers’ loyalty for obtaining respondents’ perceptions of their loyalty. However, this present study did not confirm the findings of Skogland and Siguaw (2004) which revealed that the main factors influencing customer loyalty were hotel design and facilities. This is because this study showed that tangibles dimensions of service quality were significant explanatory variables of customer loyalty.

This study did not strongly confirm Ganesh, Arnold and Reynolds’s statement (2000) that “people factor” (i.e., service quality), in terms of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy may be the most significant in determining
overall contentment and repeated purchasing in service industries. This is because the present study showed that only two dimensions of SERVQUAL (reliability and empathy) were significant explanatory variables of customers’ loyalty. Furthermore, the present study strongly confirmed King’s (1995) proposition that a hotel needs to understand what customer's needs and desires and fulfil them (empathy) to help increase customer loyalty and create repeat-patronage of customers. Similar to the findings of the current study, King (1995) found that empathy and assurance were significant explanatory variables of repeat-patronage dimension of customer loyalty.

Some of the findings of the current study confirmed Lau et al.’s (2005) findings that empathy and assurance were highly significant predictors of customers’ loyalty. On the other hand, some other findings of the present study were in agreement with the findings of Lau et al. (2005) which revealed that responsiveness and reliability were not significant in contributing toward customers’ loyalty.

5.4 Practical Implications

There are some practical implications of this study. The present study shows that the exterior design of a hotel including the decor and the furniture in the public spaces and rooms have their effect on the customers’ perceptions of service quality and loyalty. Moreover, the equipment found at hotels and the conditions of the rooms and the public spaces in hotels influence customers’ evaluation of the service quality. Therefore, the owners and managers of hotels should pay attention for this issue as it may maintain loyal customers that will be a good source for the profitability of the hotels.
This study emphasizes that the physical environment of hotels is one of the best drives for customers’ selection and recommendations of hotels to their friends and relatives. The study results showed that physical environment influences the perceived service quality that relate to customer loyalty. This conclusion is in agreement with the findings of other studies that emphasized the role the physical environment does play in customers’ loyalty and satisfaction process (Bitner, 1992; Lucas, 2003). Therefore, managers and owners of hotels should take into consideration of such factors taking care of the cleanliness of the furniture, rooms and public places at hotels.

The current study showed that all intangible aspects of service quality are of great importance for customers when evaluating the quality of service they receive at hotels. Therefore, paying attention to (1) employees’ to provide prompt service, (2) delivering he promised service, (3) employees’ ability to inspire trust and confidence and (4) the personal attention given to customers can increase income of hotels and can also create loyal customers.

The present study revealed that assurance and empathy dimensions of service quality in hotel industry are significant explanatory variables of dimensions of customers’ loyalty of hotel guests in Al-Ladhiqiyah measured by customer loyalty. These dimensions should be major areas of focus for hotel managers to increase customer loyalty in terms of repeat patronage.
5.5 **Recommendations for Future Research**

Studies on tourism and hospitality in Arab courtiers are still very few. For future research in the field of tourism and hospitality in Arab countries, the present study has some recommendations for future research. First, it is recommended that future research can focus only on the physical environment of the hotels to investigate its effect on the customers’ perceptions of service quality.

Second, the present study suggests that future research can combine both qualitative and quantitative research for investigating the effects of tangible and intangible factors on customers’ OPSQ and loyalty. This is because data in the present study were collected through employing a questionnaire that was distributed to 209 customers. Using a mixed research design is recommended because it can help researcher to triangulate data sources and methods of data collection. In such mixed research design, a researcher can interview customers to gain deep information about their perceptions of service quality at hotel industry and more reliable information on their suggestions for improving service quality.

Third, the researcher recommends that other studies can investigate other tangible factors because this study focused only three tangible factors: design, equipment and ambient conditions. Other factors that can include in future studies can include layout accessibility, seating comfort and music perceptions, etc.

Fourth, studies on customers’ perceptions of tangible and intangible factors in hotel industry and their effects on customers’ loyalty are also recommended in hotel industry in Arab countries.
Fifth, future studies can be conducted across some cultures in order to compare the differences of customers’ perceptions of service quality.

Sixth, future studies should focus on the relationship between customers’ loyalty and other factors that can cause customers to use services with a hotel, such as the hotel's reputation, special services, promotion and location.

Finally, future studies can focus on conducting a replication study using a larger sample size and encompassing different cities in Syria to strengthen generalizability of findings about the relationships between service quality and customer loyalty.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The current chapter discussed the conclusions of the present research that focused on investigating the effects of tangible and intangible factors hotels at Al-Ladhiqiyah on the customers’ OPSQ and customers’ loyalty. This study shows that both tangible and intangible factors have their effects on customers’ OPSQ and loyalty. However, this study shows that the tangible factors at hotels have a greater effect on customers’ perceptions of service quality and loyalty.
REFERENCES


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Appendices
**APPENDIX A**

**Questionnaire (English Version)**

**Tourism in Syria: Investigating the Effects of Tangible and Intangible Factors on Customers’ Perceived Service Quality and Loyalty in Hotel Industry in Al-Ladhiqiyah**

**Introduction:**
This survey is about your perceptions of tangible and intangible factors in the hotel you are currently staying in. This questionnaire consists of four sections. Please answer them all.

**Section 1: Demographic Data**
The following questions are related to demographic information. For each question, please choose one answer that is the most appropriate for you.

1. What is your gender? Male ☐ Female ☐
2. What is your age? 18 – 27 ☐ 28 – 37 ☐ 38 – 47 ☐ 48 – 57 ☐ Over 57 ☐
3. What is your annual income in US Dollars? Less than $20000 ☐ Between $20000 – $35000 ☐ Between $35001 - $50000 ☐ Between $50001- 75000 ☐ More than $75001 ☐
4. How many times per year do you visit this hotel? 1– 2 ☐ 3 – 4 ☐ 5 – 6 ☐ 7 – 8 ☐ Over 8 ☐
5. What is your purpose of this travel? For business ☐ For leisure ☐ For leisure and business ☐ To join a convention ☐ Visit relatives ☐

**Section 2: Tangible Factors of Service Quality**
Tangible factors are factors that can be seen and touched. These factors are related to the design of the hotel, the equipment in the hotel and the surrounding conditions. Please indicate how you strongly agree or disagree to each statement given below by circling the most appropriate option to you. The options are as follows:

1. Strongly disagree 2 Disagree 3 Moderately disagree 4 Neutral 5 Moderately agree 6 Agree 7 Strongly agree

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The overall outside appearance of the hotel is attractive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The interior design of the hotel is attractive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Layout of the hotel makes it easy to get around.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Seats in the hotel are comfortable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Lights in the environment of the hotel are appropriate.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The furniture in the hotel is comfortable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The decoration in the hotel is attractive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. The signs in the hotel provide adequate direction.

9. The electronic equipment in the hotel is of high quality.

10. Equipment in the hotel is modern-looking.

11. The audio/video machines in the hotel are interesting.

12. The hotel is kept clean all time.

13. The temperature in the hotel is comfortable.

14. The appearance of the employees in the hotel is neat.

15. Walkways and exits in the hotel are kept clean.

16. My overall perception of tangible factors in this hotel is great.

### Section 3: Intangible Factors of Service Quality

Intangible factors of service quality are factors that cannot be seen but can be comprehended. These factors include the customer’s dependence on hotel’s service, hotels’ employees’ quick response to their customers’ requests, employees’ understanding of customers’ feelings and customers’ confidence in employees’ abilities. Please indicate how you strongly agree or disagree to each statement given below by circling the most appropriate option to you. The options are as follows:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Moderately disagree
4. Neutral
5. Moderately agree
6. Agree
7. Strongly agree

1. The hotel keeps its promise of doing things on time.

2. If I have a problem, the hotel enthusiastically shows the willingness to solve it right away.

3. The hotel service is dependable.

4. The hotel provides services as promised.

5. The hotel maintains accurate records.

6. Hotel employees are able to tell me exactly when services will be provided.

7. Guests in the hotel are able to expect prompt services.

8. Hotel employees are willing to help guests.

9. Even if busy, hotel employees are available to meet my needs.

10. Guests are able to trust employees in the hotel.

11. I feel safe in my dealing with hotel employees.

12. Hotel employees are polite at all times.

13. Hotel employees have sufficient support from the hotel to do jobs well.

14. The hotel provides me with individual attention.

15. Hotel employees provide me with individual attention.

16. Hotel employees understand my specific needs.

17. The hotel has my best interest at heart.
18. My overall perception of Intangible factors in this hotel is great.

Section 4: Customer’s Loyalty
Customer’s loyalty is a concept that is used to refer to the customers’ repeat of purchase and his/her recommendation of the hotel he visited to friends and others. Please indicate how you strongly agree or disagree to the statement given by circling the most appropriate options to you. The options are as follows:
1 Strongly disagree 2 Disagree 3 Moderately disagree 4 Neutral
5 Moderately agree 6 Agree 7 Strongly agree

1. I consider myself to be a loyal guest of the hotel.
2. In the near future, I intend to use the hotel more often.
3. As long as I travel to this area, I do not foresee myself switching to a different hotel.
4. If the hotel were to raise the price of my stay, I would still continue to be a guest of the hotel.
5. If a competing hotel were to offer a better rate or discount on their services, I would switch.
6. I would highly recommend the hotel to my friends and family.
7. I am likely to make negative comments about the hotel to my friends and family.

Thanking You
The Researcher

Omar Z. Enizan Alsaqre
السياحة في سوريا: بحث أثر العوامل المادية وغير المادية على الإبداع العام لجودة الخدمة وعلى الولاء لدى الزبائن في بعض فنادق اللاذقية

المقدمة:
العرض من هذا الاستبيان هو معرفة تقييمك للعوامل المادية والغيرمادية في الفندق الذي انت زُبِع به الآن. هذا الاستبيان يتكون من أربعة أقسام. ارجو منك مشكوراً, الإجابة على جميع الأسئلة.

القسم الأول: معلومات شخصية

1. ما هو جنسك؟
   - ذكر
   - أنثى

2. كم عمرك؟
   - 11-22

3. كم دخلك السنوي (بالدولار)؟
   - أقل من 20000
   - بين 20000-35000
   - بين 35001-50000
   - بين 50001-75000
   - أكثر من 75000

4. كم مرة تزور هذا الفندق في العام؟
   - 1-2
   - 3-4
   - 5-6
   - 7-8
   - أكثر من 8

5. ماهو سبب الزيارة؟
   - للاعمال التجارية
   - للراحة
   - للراحة والأعمال التجارية
   - للاجتماع
   - لزيارة الأقارب

6. ما هو دخلك السنوي (بالدولار)؟
   - أقل من 20000
   - بين 20000-35000
   - بين 35001-50000
   - بين 50001-75000
   - أكثر من 75000

القسم الثاني: العوامل المادية لجودة الخدمة

العوامل المادية لجودة الخدمة هي العوامل الملموسة وتتضمن تصميم الفندق، والأجهزة الموجودة في الفندق، وظروف بيئة الفندق، من فضلك اخبرنا عن درجة مواجهتك للعوامل في الفندق، من خلال عشرة درجات. اقصى الدرجة هي 5، وننصحك بالتوجه إلى الدرجة 1.

1. المحكية
   - المحكية CONTEXT
   - المحكية OUTLINE

الإجابات المتاحة: 1. لا أوافق 2. أوافق باعتدال 3. أوافق بشد 4. لا أوافق 5. لا أوافق بشد

المجموعة الأولى: العوامل المادية لجودة الخدمة

1. المظهر الخارجي الشامل للفندق جذاب.
2. التصميم الداخلي للفندق جذاب.
3. التنسيق داخل الفندق يجعل التمثي فيسهلاً.
4. كراسي السفراء في هذا الفندق مريحة.
5. مستوى الأداء في هذه الفندق مناسب.
6. الاشتهى في هذا الفندق مريح.
7. الديكورات في هذا الفندق جذابة.
8. العلاقات داخل الفندق تطعي ارشادات كافية.
9. الأجهزة في هذا الفندق ذو جودة عالية.
الأجهزة في هذا الفندق حديثة.
الأجهزة المرئية والمسموعة في هذا الفندق ممتعة.
ال الفندق نظيف طوال الأوقات.
درجة الحرارة في هذا الفندق مناسبة.
الفندق يحافظ على الوفاء بالوعد في وقته.
اذا كان لدي مشكلة، الفندق بتحمس يظهر الاستعداد ليجد لها حلا فوريا.
الخدمة في الفندق يمكن الاعتماد عليها.
ال الفندق يقدم الخدمات كما يعد بها.
ال الفندق يحتفظ بسجلات دقيقة
النزلاء في الفندق قادرون على توقع خدمات فورية.
العاملون في الفندق مستعدون لمساعدتي الزبائن.
العاملون في الفندق قادرون على تقديم خدمات فورية.
النزلاء في الفندق قادرون على تقديم خدمات فورية.
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يعتبر نفسي زبوناً وفياً لهذا الفندق.

في المستقبل القريب آني أن استمر زوني لهذا الفندق.

طالما اسافر إلى هذه المدينة، لا أتوقع التغيير إلى فندق آخر.

حتى ولو رفع الفندق اسعاره، سافر زوني لهذا الفندق.

لو هناك فندق منافس قدم أسعار أقل أو تخفيضات، سافر إليه.

اشجع الأصدقاء والأقارب أن يكونوا زبائن لهذا الفندق.

على الأرجح سأقول ملاحظات سلبية عن هذا الفندق للأصدقاء والأقارب.

الباحث: عمر الصكري

شكراً على تعاونك
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS
