

Original Article

DESIGNING RURAL RETREATS IN SAUDI ARABIA: A CLIENT-FOCUSED APPROACH

Samiah Hassan Al-Baghdadi and Abdul Rahman Abdullah Al-Harbi

Al-Taqwa Institute for Architecture and Design, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Abstract: Tourism enterprises stand as vital components of the broader tourism sector, and they have assumed a prominent role in Saudi Arabia's ambitious economic transformation outlined in the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative, which is focused on fostering a Prosperous Economy. This visionary blueprint encourages the exploration and investment in the Kingdom's rich natural and historical resources, with the aim of contributing a substantial 15% to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The strategy goes beyond mere economic growth, aiming to support the local private sector and attract foreign direct investment (FDI) for economic diversification. The tourism sector, as a key beneficiary, is anticipated to create nearly two million employment opportunities, positioning it as a linchpin for national development.

This study places a spotlight on the inherent potential of rural tourism, an essential component of the Saudi tourism landscape. The collaborative efforts of government organizations, agencies, and ministries play a pivotal role in nurturing and propelling this sector forward. The importance of rural tourism has gained further prominence in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis and the substantial changes experienced in the international travel market. These shifts have led to a reevaluation of local tourism's significance, prompting its development and support to cater to evolving user and customer demands.

Keywords: Tourism Enterprises, Saudi Vision 2030, Rural Tourism, Economic Development, Covid-19 Impact.

1. Introduction

Tourism enterprises are among the most important components of tourism, and Saudi Vision 2030 (Prosperous Economy) trends have recommended the development and investment of the Kingdom's natural and historical resources by contributing approximately 15% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in addition to supporting the local private sector and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) to develop and diversify the economy (OBG 2020).

The tourism sector is expected to create nearly two million job opportunities (OBG 2020). As the Kingdom has the fundamentals of rural tourism, which will be highlighted in this research, the role of government organizations, agencies, and ministries contributes to the development of this important sector. Consequently, this will raise the accommodation and tourism sector, especially after the Covid-19 crisis and major changes in the international

Original Article

travel market. These changes have reconsidered the importance of local tourism, its development, and support to meet the requirements of users and customers.

This research examines the needs and preferences of users in the rural tourism sector, which is considered a safe haven after the Covid-19 crisis (Fanelli & Romagnoli, 2020). It also works on designing standards that assist designers and investors in gaining access to the spaces and residential and spatial needs of the customer, making appealing points for their choice of rural lodges, as well as developing the agricultural and rural tourism sector and thus, the Kingdom's national economy. Therefore, the national economy of the Kingdom, raises individual income and invests their property and capabilities in the form targeted for the Kingdom's 2030 plan.

2.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to:

- Study international and Arab trends in rural lodges' design.
- Identify tourism fundamentals in Saudi Arabia.
- Formulate a model of lodgers' needs based on an analytical study of the needs and preferences of users of rural lodges in the Kingdom using a questionnaire.

2.1. Research Sections

The research consists of three sections:

First Section: Agrotourism and local, international, and regional rural lodges: lessons learned for evaluation.

Second Section: Agrotourism and components of rural tourism in Saudi Arabia.

Third Section: Exploratory study of customer expectations.

2.1.1 First Section Agrotourism and local, international, and regional rural lodges: lessons learned.

Many terms associated with rural tourism based on the purpose of the type of tourism have emerged such as eco-tourism, sustainable tourism, enclave tourism and rural tourism. While eco-tourism refers to —responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education (TIES, 2021), the term —sustainable tourism means —tourism which is economically viable but does not destroy the resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community (UNWTO *Tourism Highlights, 2004 Edition*, 2005). Enclave tourism seeks to provide all the necessary recreational requirements for tourists in the same area. Tourist activities and movements are arranged to facilitate maximum expenditures within the enclave, while access to locales outside the enclave is often restricted and regulated (Healy & Salem, 2017), and least profitable to the host country. Besides, the term "rural tourism" means a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, angling and sightseeing urban out-of-town tourism and discovery (UNWTO, 2019). In addition, the term —*Agritourism*, which depends on opening farms to tourists, has emerged (Kline, Carroll, Leung, Yu-Fai Cardenas, 2007). In this respect, Yu (2017) explains that it also includes providing fruit-picking services and enjoying farm services and its various areas with the opportunity to watch farmers practicing their daily work, displaying information related to the farm to visitors, arranging guiding visits to the farm, and selling farm products and fresh food.

The forms of lodges associated with the term rural tourism have varied. The term —Family Farm, which indicates a farm run entirely under the supervision of a family, has emerged globally. The family caters to tourists' needs

Original Article

for accommodation, food, and farm information presentation. This experience allows residents to experience farmers' lives for a period of time. In Lebanon, they are called *rural guesthouses* (*Rural Tourism Strategy in Lebanon*, 2014). In Morocco, rural hostel names such as *Maison d'hôtes*, have emerged. This includes the temporary transfer of part of the rural house to lodgers, welcoming them with hospitality, sustenance, and practicing daily activities. It is a good experience for tourists and has, in turn, contributed to raising family income, creating a source of livelihood, and helping to develop urban areas.

Many forms of rural lodges have appeared globally. In Italy (1980), *Albergo Diffuso* is a term that referred to a collection of heritage homes in a village used to accommodate tourists and served all their needs. Visitors were given opportunities to learn about the village's social and daily life and historical experiences in a limited social space (Dall'Ara, 2011).

Various forms of rural lodges have also appeared in Britain, including farmhouses, holiday cottages (houses especially for vacations), guest houses (farmers' houses), and B&BS, which provide bed and breakfast services. Camps and fenced lands are equipped to accommodate camping and caravans, equipped vehicles close to rural areas, and all the needs of tourists using this type of mobile housing. Several forms of rural hostels, including farmhouses, guest houses, vacation houses, holiday homes, and residential homes, also featured. In Austria, with their dependence on agriculture as the main source of national income for the country, more specialized farms have emerged and are named after their products like fruit farms with the following names: Vineyards, Strawberries, Flowers, etc. Some were also named after beneficiary groups such as *Farms for Babies and Kids*, or farms marked for methods, such as Organic Farms, or those specialized in animal husbandry such as Horse Farms, Barrier-Free Farms, and many terms for the hostels, such as Country estate and Chalet. (holiday category, 2021)

In India, specialized tea and coffee inn have been developed, which is the prime crop of India. Lodges are named accordingly, such as the Coffee farmhouse. In Japan, because of the existence of mountain and hill farms, local people have invested in the nature of the land. High-rise farm hotels, called *Farm Inn*, were built, and prepared to receive groups and companies for workshops and group motivational and development activities for teams (nirvanaorganicfarm.com, 2021).

In Malaysia, due to the nature of the region, new forms have emerged, such as *tree houses*, where the inn mimics tree houses which are built off the ground and provide a tourist experience of birds and bird houses (Mahaliyanaarachchi, 2015).

These treehouses have been seen in several countries as rental lodges among forests and farms. (Amazing-tree-house homes, 2021)

Finally, in the United States of America, new forms have emerged, such as upcycling and using train vehicles and buses, and arranging them in a way that can be used as rural lodges within farms. Equipped tents also appeared, which is beautiful in many countries, taking the cultural character of the region and its history into consideration (FarmstayManual, 2021).

Locally, various forms emerged, including the agricultural lodges (Rural Rest House), which, according to the official definition of the Ministry of Tourism, are buildings on an existing farm (Agricultural Rests), or at an environmental site (eco-hostel) surrounded by a single fence with a separate public gate. In building these hostels, people use materials that are suitable to the environment. They are operated in a manner that does not affect the

Original Article

natural flora and fauna, considering the surrounding community. They are managed under unified management (Investor Guide in Agricultural Hostel Activity, 2020).

Among the forms that have emerged locally are the small rural family lodges nearby farms, such as the Heritage Village House in the Al-Baha Region of southern Saudi Arabia and the medium family agricultural lodges that are part of farms such as Shumookh Village in the Southern Region. Regarding large family farms, their owners have invested in and converted them into rural hotels attached to the farms, such as Al-Malafa Resort in Al-Qassim Region. There has also been widespread increase in rural hotels and resorts that receive large numbers of lodgers and are close to farms and rural areas. They are equipped with various services and facilities. For the gathering of families and resting events, other houses have also spread. They are two-part tourist facilities, one for women and another for men, with sleeping suites with outdoor spaces, which are used as playgrounds and for swimming pools. Some of them contain diverse animals and water pools and are often rented entirely per night. Camps are also observed during mild and cold atmospheres. They are temporary establishments consisting of a range of tents linked to land and deserts and their diverse environmental activities. New types of residential housing were also observed. They are linked to the countryside, such as caravans, but these are limited. The caravan is rented where it is close to areas with a beautiful view of farms, mountains, or the sea. Finally, it has been noticed that living in stone caves of the regions containing such terrain has been revived. These caves have been occupied and rehabilitated for the reception and accommodation of lodgers, such as the Al-Shetwi Caves, in the southern region.

This research examines the rural lodges located in the agricultural areas of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and users' preferences for favorite services and spaces to attract them to rural tourism.

2.1.2 Second Section Agrotourism

(An Economic view of Tourism and the Regions Prosperity) Historical: Components of Rural Tourism in the Kingdom Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is located in a geographical area with extraordinarily rich features, diverse terrain, and wonderful nature among mountains, seas, deserts, and plains. It is home to many ancient historical and religious civilizations; Islamic civilization is one of the most important. It is characterized by the existence of the Two Holy Mosques (Muslims' Kepla), as well as a valuable reservoir of monuments, folklore, and local architecture with a variety of topographies that meet the innate requirements of people.

The Saudi Arabian agricultural market is one of the largest in the Arabian Gulf, with a worldwide market of US\$ 950,000,000 in the agricultural sector in 2018. It attempts to raise this value to 12,160.3 million US \$ by 2024, at a growth rate of more than 4.53% over the coming years, (Agriculture In The Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia

- Growth, Trends, Covid-19 Impact, And Forecasts ,2020–2021) (Agriculture In The Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia - Growth, Trends, Covid-19 Impact, And Forecasts , 2021)

Agricultural development, especially the development of the rural tourism sector, will play a significant role in the economic prosperity of these areas, especially after the government's facilities to encourage farmers to utilize their agricultural land and the support provided for the activation of the rural tourism sector (AgriTourism, 2021)

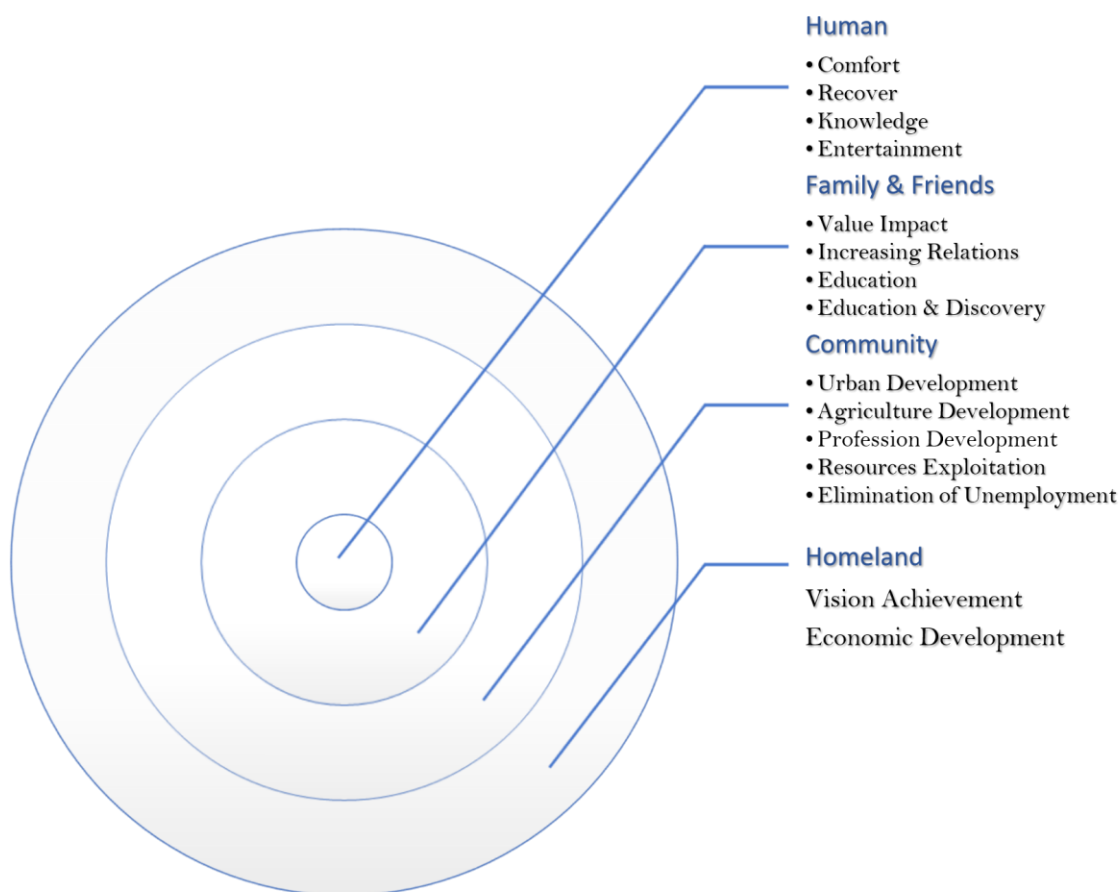
The activation of tourist lodges plays a major role in increasing per capita income and self-reliance. It

Original Article

will open great doors to addressing many problems and investing in the natural and material wealth that God has given to the homeland (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2018). In addition, the impact on lodgers and tourists will promote psychological comfort and healing by returning to nature and getting acquainted with the wealth of the nation, as well as the entertainment that individuals need to sustain their natural lives and help increase production. This will have a direct impact on the family and surrounding friends. Rural hostels will strengthen family ties, promote education and support learning and discovery. Consequently, this will contribute to the development of the community and the surrounding urban areas, the reduction of the migration of urban agricultural areas, the development of the agricultural sector, the promotion of handicrafts, the exploitation of available resources, the elimination of unemployment,

The exploitation of youth leisure time with a good impact on the individual and the country, the development of the economy, and the achievement of 2030 Vision. Figure 1 illustrates the impact of agricultural development on the country's economy.

Figure1: Expected Impact of Agrotourism Development



States seek to highlight their country attractions, which for RODGERS (2001) are classified into two types: natural attractions such as parks, beaches, forests, falls and natural lakes, mountains and slopes, wildlife and landscapes; and human-made attractions such as religious constructions (mosques and religious areas), historic buildings (castles), archeological buildings (palaces) and archeological housing, installations and

Original Article

memorials, public gardens, and cultural installations (museums, theaters), and other man-made attractions for tourists. **Table 1: Major attractions for any country**

Natural Attractions	Human-made Attractions
Parks	Cathedral, monasteries and mosques
Beaches and forests	Memorials
Falls and natural lakes	Public gardens
Mountains and slopes	Museums
Wildlife	Theaters
Landscapes	Castles and historic buildings
	Distinctive cultural places
	Entertainments

Source: (Rodger, 2001)

The components of tourist attraction are divided into three groups:

- Cultural components: farming customs and traditions - farmers' clothing products - local food products - craft products and local artifacts - cooking methods - local people life-style–area folk celebrations and seasons - languages, local dialects - popular hazes and musical instruments - folk sports and games - living habits.
- Natural components include landscape and environment - open spaces, hunting, nature-related activities, ecotourism, safari trips, rural adventures, climbing, walking, exploration, and nature meditation.
- Historical components: include folk folklore, historical sites, local building, heritage and history (AVCIKURT, Cevdet, DINU, Mihaela, HACIOĞLU, Necdet HACIOĞLUEFE, 2015)

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is rich in components that attract tourists (OBG 2020). The major components are listed in Table 3.

Table 2:Major components of Saudi Arabia tourism attraction

Terrain Diversity Saudi Arabia is located in the Arabian Peninsula surrounded by seas and mountains, deserts, hills, and plains that form a diverse terrain which attracts tourists.

Multiple Climate	The Kingdom weather is considered to be diverse by region and season, with low temperatures and snow in some areas in Winter and mild temperatures in high and rural areas in Summer. The atmosphere of Saudi Arabia is mostly moderate for most of the months of the year.
Environment	Livestock varies between cattle, animals, rare birds, plant wealth, the growth of aromaticplants , food and other plants, and the growth of trees and palms.

Original Article

Culture	Saudi Arabia is the land of civilizations, the land of messengers and prophets. Treasures of antiquities dating back to the prehistoric period have been discovered that are still being preserved as open museums under the Ministry of Culture, as well as post-Islamic relics. The Kingdom's large size and numeric boundaries have allowed it to be influenced by different dialects and customs between regions so that it can be a powerful attraction for tourists to discover such customs.
Transportation Diversity and Infrastructure Prosperity	The Kingdom is abundant with an excellent network of highways and urban roads covering all regions. Thus, this infrastructure facilitates access to farms through paved roads and contributes to the prosperity of the urban areas and facilitates access to them by cars.
State and Organization Support	The government has provided many soft loans and has supported the agricultural and tourism sector with many programs.
Permanent Investment of Manpower	The state endeavors to develop the labor force and promote the role of young people and educate them in scientific and agricultural fields. Ministries have allocated many free training courses for rural lodges activation and investment by their citizens.

2.1.3 Third Section Exploratory study of customer expectations.

This study aims to recognize users' preferences for rural lodges to help designers and investors access designs that meet these needs. A questionnaire was designed for the various sections. The first section collects the demographic data of the sample. The second section is designed to measure sample trends toward internal and rural tourism, and the third focuses on questions to measure the spatial needs and preferences of the sample in rural lodges to arrive at a proposed model of the client's needs. These preferences are divided into eight subsections:

Section I contains questions regarding clarity and transparency during the reservation process.

Section II have questions on service pricing.

Section III is related to the services expected in the countryside.;

Section IV discusses the importance of the hostel connection to the culture of the region.

Section V discusses the importance of enhancing the science and knowledge components of rural lodges.

Section VI enquires on the importance of activity type and availability. Section VII is on the significance of connection with nature and, Section VIII is related to the spaces required within these lodges.

The questionnaire was designed electronically using Google Forms.

Original Article

It was presented to the validators to review and modify questions and items. In addition, it was distributed to a pilot study to ascertain the questions' clarity and wording integrity. In light of validation and piloting, the questionnaire was improved and formulated in the final shape. It was then distributed with the help of social media in all regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

1/ 1/2021 to 3/1/2021. The total number of respondents (i.e., the sample) was 411. Based on the analysis, the following are the detailed results of the study.

First: Sample Demographic Data

Demographic data results in Table 3 show the diversity of the sample age group with the highest proportion of respondents over 46 years with a percentage of 80.5%; of them, 75.4% were married; and 67.9% had a family of five or fewer. It is clear that the majority of the sample was female (73.2%). Regarding job status, it varied between students (9.7%), non-employees (28.5%), employees (37.7%), and retirees (24.1%). Most of the participants were Saudi citizens (96.8%). Half of the sample is educated at bachelor's level, and the rest is distributed among the lowest undergraduate or postgraduate studies at 25.1% and 24.1%, respectively. The questionnaire was distributed across the five regions of the Kingdom, with the highest proportion in the western region, 65.5% in the central region, 22.9% in the eastern region, 6.8% in the southern region, and 2.9% in the northern region at 1.9%.

Table 3: Results of sample demographic data

Age						
	18>	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55>
Percentage	4.8 %		6.6 %	8 %	18.5 %	38.4 %
23.6 %						23.6 %
Marital Status						
	Single		Married			
Percentage	24.6 %		75.4 %			
Number of Family Members						
	Five or Less		More than Five			
Percentage	67.9 %		31.9 %			
Job Status						
	Student		Unemployed	Employed	Retired	
Percentage	9.7 %	28.5 %	37.7 %	24.1 %		
Sex						
	Male		Female			
Percentage			26.8 %	73.2 %		
Nationality						
	Saudi		Not Saudi			
Percentage	96.8 %		3.2 %			
Education Level						

Original Article

	Less than Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's	Postgraduate		
Percentage	25.1 %	50 %	24.1 %		
Region	Central	Western	Eastern	Northern	Southern
Percentage	22.9 %	65.5 %	6.8 %	1.9 %	2.9 %

Second: Measuring Sample Attitudes Toward Rural Tourism

Nineteen questions were formulated to measure sample attitudes toward tourism in general, and internal and rural tourism in particular. The results show that 43.9% had previously lived outside their area in Saudi Arabia, which was approximately half the sample (51.9%), and the rest of the sample had previously lived outside Saudi Arabia. This may be due to studying abroad or other purposes, allowing them to visit agricultural places in those countries. A large percentage of the sample (87.4%) did foreign tourism, while 82.3% of the sample did inland tourism. The preference for visiting the countryside constitutes a large number with 89.6%, while 57.5% actually resided in rural facilities with 65.5% on farms, 75% in rest houses, 56.8% in camps, and rural hostels were the lowest at 36.4%. Thus, these results show the importance of identifying people's needs to attract them to this type of tourism. The reasons for the visit was also diverse. The results show that 63.7% are due to recreation, which confirms the importance of providing the factors that help recreation in the rural hostel. Of the sample, 63.4% had visited the countryside because of family gatherings, 32.15% were attracted to the idea of discovering new areas, and 6.8% had visited for scientific reasons. As for the number of nights they spent during their trips, it ranged from one night, 45%, two and three nights by 43.5%, and more than three nights, 23.1%.

Thus, the role of investors comes in meeting the requirements of tourists and lodgers and attracting them to raise the number of nights and stay at the tourist hostel. Regarding the preferred types of hostels, the results show the following preferences for the sample (64.2% farm, 42.8% hotel, 25.8% rest house, 18.7% camp). When asked about the new types of rural hostels (Figure 4), a large proportion (74.5%) of the sample preferred the idea of housing in an integrated rural village (like the Italian model), followed by the independent farms with complete privacy (36.7%), farm houses with their people ranked third (24.6%), followed by caravans (14.4%), and small tents (7.8%). With respect to user preferences for traveling in groups, 72.8% of the sample indicated that they preferred small groups, while 21.8% preferred to travel with large groups, as shown in Figure 5.

Original Article

Figure 2: Sample's Rural Tourism Attitudes

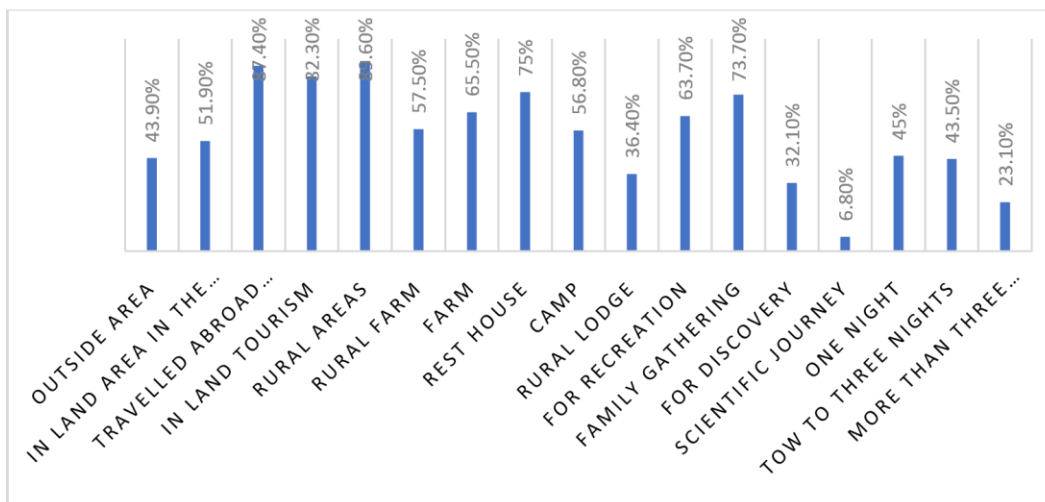


Figure 3 Sample's Rural Lodges Preference

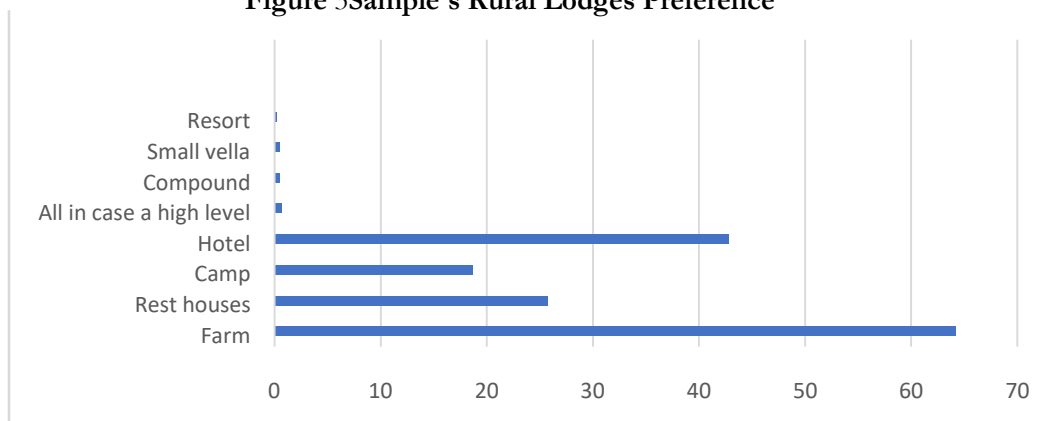
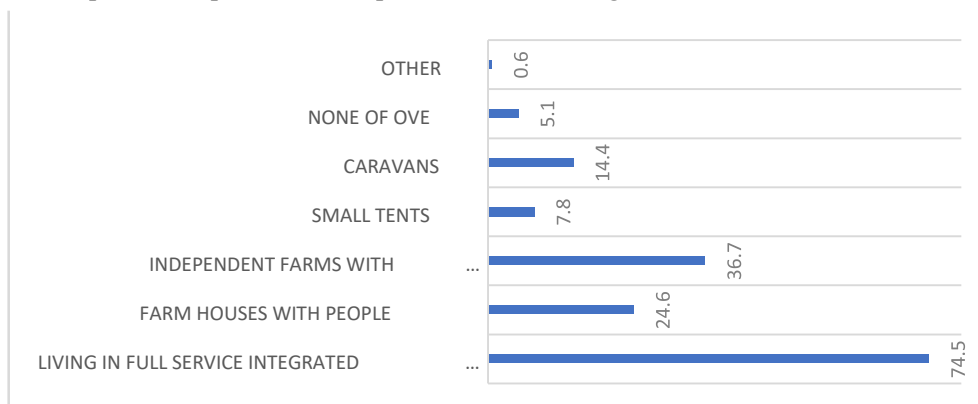
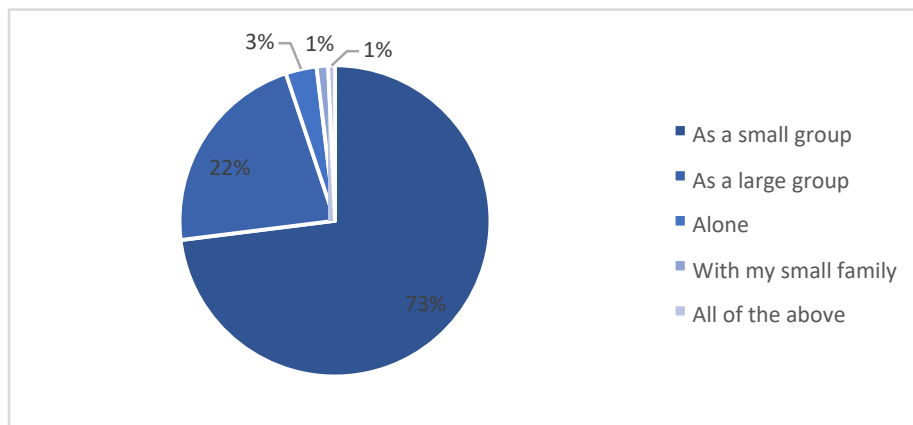


Figure 4: illustrates updated shapes of the sample favorite rural lodges



Original Article

Figure 5: User Preferences for traveling in Groups



1.2.3 Third: Measuring lodgers' preferences for rural lodges. To measure lodger preferences, they were divided into eight subsections:

1-Clarity and availability of information to rural hostels while reservation: Lodgers have the right to have adequate information about the tourist hostel, to learn about the different assessments from the evaluation of former lodgers or to evaluate the category of competent authorities, with some important information, the services provided by the hostel, the surrounding services, and access maps with sufficient illustrations. The results in [Table 8](#) show that the availability of hostel photos is particularly important to 98.3% of the sample, and 93% of them preferred clear photos. In addition, they prefer the availability of appropriate means of communication so that they can choose, compare, and take appropriate decisions before enjoying the experience.

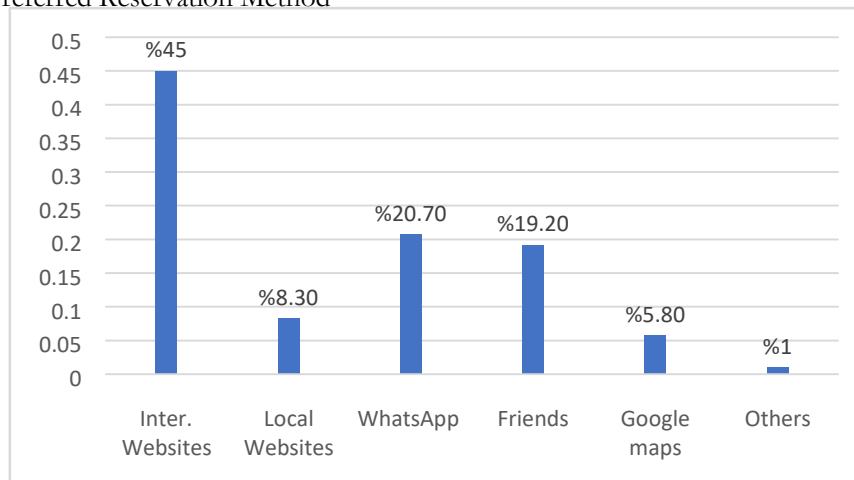
Global sites, such as Booking.com, Airbnb, and TripAdvisor provide a good amount of information in several languages. They are easily accessible via the Web. Of the respondents, 45% relied on them for booking. They achieved the highest number of methods. Local websites, on the other hand, collect rural lodges and provide a good amount of information and illustrations, attracted only 8.3% of the sample. Social media such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat are used by some rural lodges, but they are neither available on a single platform nor have enough information without direct contact with the service provider party and waiting for their response. They constituted 20.7% of the methods used by the sample upon reservation. Some hostels lack good advertising. Respondents made use of knowledge and friends who had already visited the lodges or identified the hostel directly or indirectly. They use them as a means of accessing a range of hostels. However, this kind of means does not allow them to be properly marketed. Out of 114, only 19.2% of the sample used this means to search for the appropriate hostel. Google Maps, another Internet-based device that defines sites, is an excellent way to identify tourist lodges and their surroundings from sites worth visiting with the possibility of adding photos, whether by the investor or former lodgers. However, it seems that only 5.8% depend on this method for booking.

Table 4: Users' preferences for photos clarity

Original Article

Users' Preferences for Photos Clarity				
Significance	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Photos Availability				
Percentage	98.3%	5.8%	1.2%	0.5%
Photos Clarity				
Percentage	93%	9%	5.3%	1.7%

Figure 6: Users' Preferred Reservation Method



2. Measuring Users' preferences in costs paid for services in rural hostels:

Price is a major factor in the choice of rural hostel, especially for large families, because this requires a search for a place that meets their needs at a price commensurate with their budget. In this study, prices were determined based on expected exchange rates. They are divided into two categories: preferred price category and overall price. The former is divided into four parts: (less than 200 SR, between 200 to 300 SR, between 300 to 400SR, and more than 400 SR). The expected pricing was measured from the sample point of view for each part of the pricing, including overnight stay, meals, and activities. For the latter, the overall pricing category covers all of the previously mentioned pricing parts. The significance of providing these services, if possible, was also measured.

Table 5 : Users' preferences for the costs paid for services in rural lodges					
	(Price for Service)				
Suggested price per a person	Less than 200 SR	Between 200 to 300 SR	Between 300 to 400 SR	More than 400 SR	
Overnight stay fee	43.3%	43.6%	10.9%	2.2%	
Providing full meals fees	71.3%	23.4%	4.9%	0.5%	
Total activities fee during stay	73.5%	20.4%	5.6%	0.5%	

Original Article

Given previous results, the sample responses for per capita accommodation fees ranged from less than 200 SR with a percentage of 43.3%, to 200-300 SR with 43.6%, and 10.9% of the respondents had no problem paying from 300 to 400 SR for overnight stays. However, only 2.2% of the sample could pay over 400 SR per person. For service fees and full meals provided, 71.3% of the sample consider that less than 200 SR per person per day is the right price, while 23.4% can pay between 200 to 300 SR and only 4.9% think the suitable price ranges between 300 and 400 SR and only 0.5% of the sample think that more than 400SR is appropriate. These results show the preferences of lodgers for having a kitchen or cooking space that will enable them to reduce the cost, as the results later show, and the importance of providing space for purchasing essential supplies inside or outside the hostel.

Regarding the fees for various activities, the family can pay during their stay in a hostel, 73.5% of the sample think that less than 200 SR is appropriate to pay per capita, while 20.4% think that from 200 to 300 SR is appropriate. For the rest, 5.6% between and 300-400 SR is appropriate, whereas only 0.5% of them think that SR higher than 400 is suitable. In this respect, it is important to provide lodgers with free or economic activities during their stay at the hostel, which helps to attract them and prolong their stay and frequent visits.

One of the models discussed is the Integrated Rural Lodges, which enhances the concept of enclave tourism, which was discussed in the first section, where the hostel provides all lodging and activities without having to leave the area. It is important to measure the degree of importance of this service at an overall price that helps the lodger during his or her stay. In response to its importance, 86.9% think that it is important to have an overall price that, in turn, provides an easy choice that considers the economic pricing appropriate for the income of Saudi families.

Table 6: Importance of having a comprehensive pricing (overnight stay + subsistence + activities)

Importance of Having a Comprehensive Pricing (overnight stay + subsistence + activities)			
Significance	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Percentage	86.9%	10.5%	2.6%

3. Measuring Users' Preferences for the availability of support services in rural lodges:

Availability of services within the hostel is one of the attractions for the lodgers when they choose the appropriate rural hostel. One of these services is the presence of assistants inside the hostel to provide help during the stay. This assistance includes a variety of services, such as food, cleaning, and tourist guidance services for the area and other services that provide comfort to lodgers. In response to this, 86.4% of the sample had a preference for assistants, while 31.6% preferred full privacy in the lodge. As a result, it is important to provide adequate information and instructions for use within the hostel and in the activities and facilities it includes.

Table 7:User preferences for assistant availability in rural lodges

Availability	Assistant Availability	No Assistants
Percentage	68.4 %	31.6%

Original Article

A close look at Table 8 shows that 93.7% insisted on the importance of providing grilling areas, 88.2% on the importance of having a restaurant, 76.9% for a café, 81.8% for internal transportation such as golf cars and bicycles, or being close to the city, and 66% prefer lodges near to the city from which the necessary supplies can be purchased.

Table 8: Importance of the services provided to lodges

Significance Service	Important	Somewhat important	Not Important
Grilling areas	93.7%	6.3%	0%
Restaurant	88.2%	10%	1.8%
Café	78.9%	15.6%	5.6%
Internal transportation	81.8%	13.1%	5.1%
Near to City	66%	28.25 %	7.8%

4. Measuring users' preferences for activities within a rural lodge

The results show that 57.4% of customers favor a few activities. This is probably because the first desire for rural tourism is recreation, as shown in [figure 2](#). The percentage of those who preferred multiple activities was 38.4%, which was moderate, while the lowest was 4.1% for those who did not prefer activities in the lodges. These results indicate the importance of activities in rural hostels to be activated. Table 9: Users' preferences for activities within a rural lodge

Existence of Activities			
Multiple Activities Preference			
Answer	Yes, better	Yes, but a few	I'd not prefer having activities
Percentage	38.4%	57.4%	4.1%

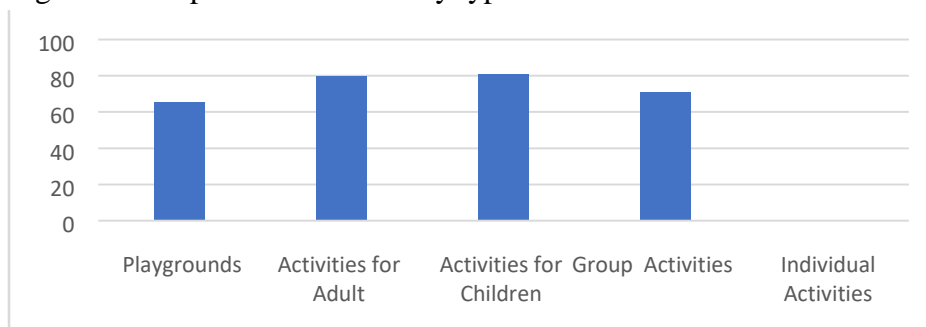
Regarding the quality and importance of activities, the results generally show the importance of the diversity of the target groups for the activities. However, the results do not show a significant difference between the types of activities. because the sample shows a need for all types of activities. This may be due to the preference of the sample to play in groups or with their families.

As shown in Figure 7, children's activities had the highest rank of preference among respondents (81.1%), followed by adult activities (79.8%), individual activities (78.8%), group activities (70.8%), and playgrounds (65.4%). These statistics will support planners and designers of rural lodges in allocating various spaces for activities in addition to assisting investors investing in their lodges based on guests' desirable form in terms of the

Original Article

availability of activities that are attractive to all family members and groups, such as companies and youth groups.

Figure 7: Sample's favorite activity type



5. Measuring users' preferences for information providence in rural lodges

For the sample's preferences for the availability of scientific information and knowledge, such as information on innate life and the area, 89.5% support the importance of providing such information. Regarding the possibility of holding various scientific meetings or workshops, 63% supported the importance of this type of meeting.

Table 10: Users' preferences for information providence in rural lodges

Significance Information	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Information about Innate life and the area	89.5%	7.8%	2.7%
Possibility of Holding Informative Scientific Meetings About the Area	63%	24.6%	12.4

6. Measuring Users' Preferences for the Availability of Authenticity and Heritage Elements in Rural Lodges
Each area has its own heritage and customs. This diversity is a rich source of professionals that raise the rates for rural lodges. The results show that 71.3% of the sample has preferred providing a variety of heritage and modern foods to satisfy all tastes. In contrast, 58% showed interest in internal and external activities related to heritage, such as folk games or learning technical skills derived from the heritage of the area. Preferences of hostel nearness to heritage sites reached 61.3% among the sample, and 62.5% showed the importance of providing obtainable exhibitions from the products of the area. This explains why customers prefer simple activities, as shown in Table 9.

Table 11: Users' preferences for the availability of authenticity and heritage elements in food and design of rural lodges

Folk Heritage
Connection to Heritage in food and Hostel design

Original Article

Answer	Like Local Heritage	Like Modern: Not Local	Like Mixed and diverse
Food Type	27.7%	0.7%	71.3%
Facility Design	24.8%	7.1%	67.9%

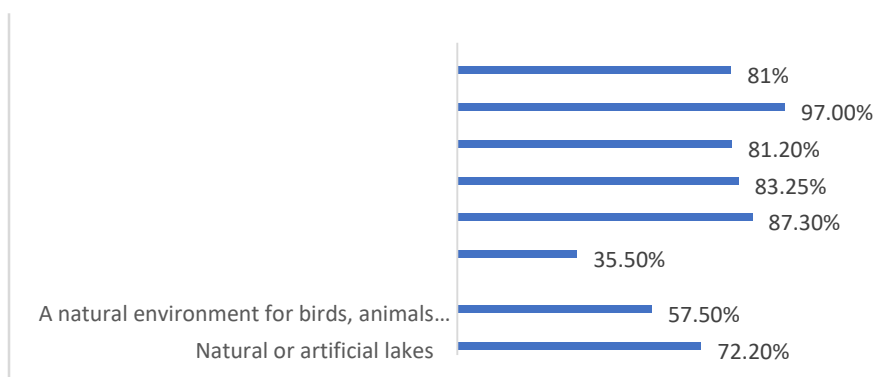
Table 12: Users' preferences for the element type of authenticity and heritage in rural lodges

Type of Activities Connected to Heritage			
Significance Activity	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Inside & Outside Activities Connected to Heritage	% 58	28%	14.1%
Near to Heritage Areas	% 61.3	27.5%	11.2%
Obtainable exhibits and donation from area products	% 62.5	24.1%	15.4 %

7. Measuring users' preferences to provide contact with nature and enhance health in rural lodges: The main role of rural tourism is to achieve convenience and enhance psychological health. In this respect, nature played an important role. The majority of the sample (97%) preferred a lodge with spaces that enabled them to look at the sky. In addition,, 87.3% view the importance of places that help them see sunrise and sunset or both. In addition,, 83.25% preferred shaded areas to protect them from sunlight and rain, and 81.2% wanted areas to set up a fire that also allowed for family assembly and night chatting. With regard to the availability of fresh food from farms, 81% preferred that. Furthermore, 72.2% prefer the availability of natural or industrial lakes, and 57.5% are in favor of a natural environment that attracts birds, animals, and a fish reserve. The results show a sample with little preference for insect reserves, such as butterflies, bees, and others, with a percentage of 35.5%. This result may draw attention to the importance of raising awareness of the presence of insects, considering their safety and damage avoidance.

Figure 8: Users' preferences to provide nature contact and enhance health in rural lodges

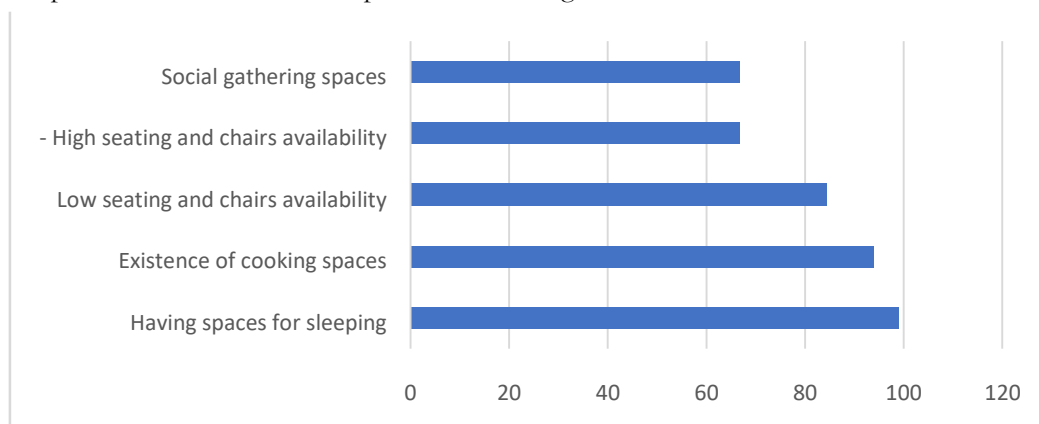
Original Article



8. Measuring users' preferences in diverse spaces of rural lodges:

The design of spaces plays a key role in achieving human requirements. These basics must be considered in the design of rural hostels. As demonstrated by the results of the sample, 99% agreed on the importance of providing sleep spaces, and 93% agreed on the importance of providing cooking space. In addition,, 92.9% asked for high seats and chairs, while 84.4% preferred providing floor or low chairs as a simulation of simple land settings. Finally, 66.7% of the sample agreed on the importance of providing spaces for social gatherings at various events. This is a good opportunity to invest in this kind of hostel where natural scenic landscapes and rich wealth are exploited and equipped for different family events.

Figure 9Users' preferences of the various spaces of rural lodges



For furniture and interior design requirements of rural hostels, such as furniture, floors, windows, and proper ventilation, the sample was asked what room spaces they preferred based on the number of beds to simplify the question. The results illustrate a disparity where 53.6% of the sample prefers medium spaces, which enlarge for approximately three beds, followed by small spaces with two beds, and only 15.8% prefer large spaces. This result helps architects to recognize users' preferences for spaces to avoid waste and raise the occupancy level of the inn, which, in turn, is economically beneficial to investors. When asked about bed type whether single or double, 70.6% of the sample thought that bed size should be appropriate for individuals. Thus, there is a need to consider the diversification of the bed type, as is universally adopted for tourist hostels in general. Meanwhile, there was no preference observed due to bed type, where 26.3% agreed on the importance of the availability of the single type, whereas 25.3% preferred the availability of a double type bed.

Original Article

Regarding the quality of the preferred floors, they have been identified in three types to make it easier to respond to. In addition, they are used in tourist lodges because of their ease of maintenance, cleaning, and sterilization (ceramic-moquette-carpet). The results showed that 58.4% preferred ceramic floors with pieces of carpet, 33.3% preferred moquette, and 21.4% preferred ceramic floors.

As far as inscriptions and decorations are concerned, which add beauty to spaces, the majority of the sample 93.4% prefer simple and soft decorations more than inscriptions, which are preferred by only 3.2%, whereas the respondents prefer multi-colored spaces with a percentage of 7%. This may be due to lodgers' desire to relax, which is the main goal of rural tourism.

For natural lighting and air entry within bedrooms and interior spaces, most of the sample (91.7%) preferred large windows that could be opened safely (98.3%), which also enhances the concept of connection to nature.

Regarding lodger preference for the type of curtains that cover windows, 61.6% of the sample is important for providing heavy curtains that obscure sunlight, while 38.4% prefer light curtains. This may be attributed to the fact that some lodgers prefer to stay and sleep more often in the day, and another type of lodger prefers to wake up early.

Concerning thermal comfort and their appropriate appliances, the sample prefers an air conditioner with a percentage of 93.1%, possibly because of the nature of the climate and the ability of the air conditioner to control temperature and ventilation, followed by the stove, especially in cold areas, and the fan, which is less favored by 45.5%.

Table 12: Users' preferences in various spaces for rural lodges

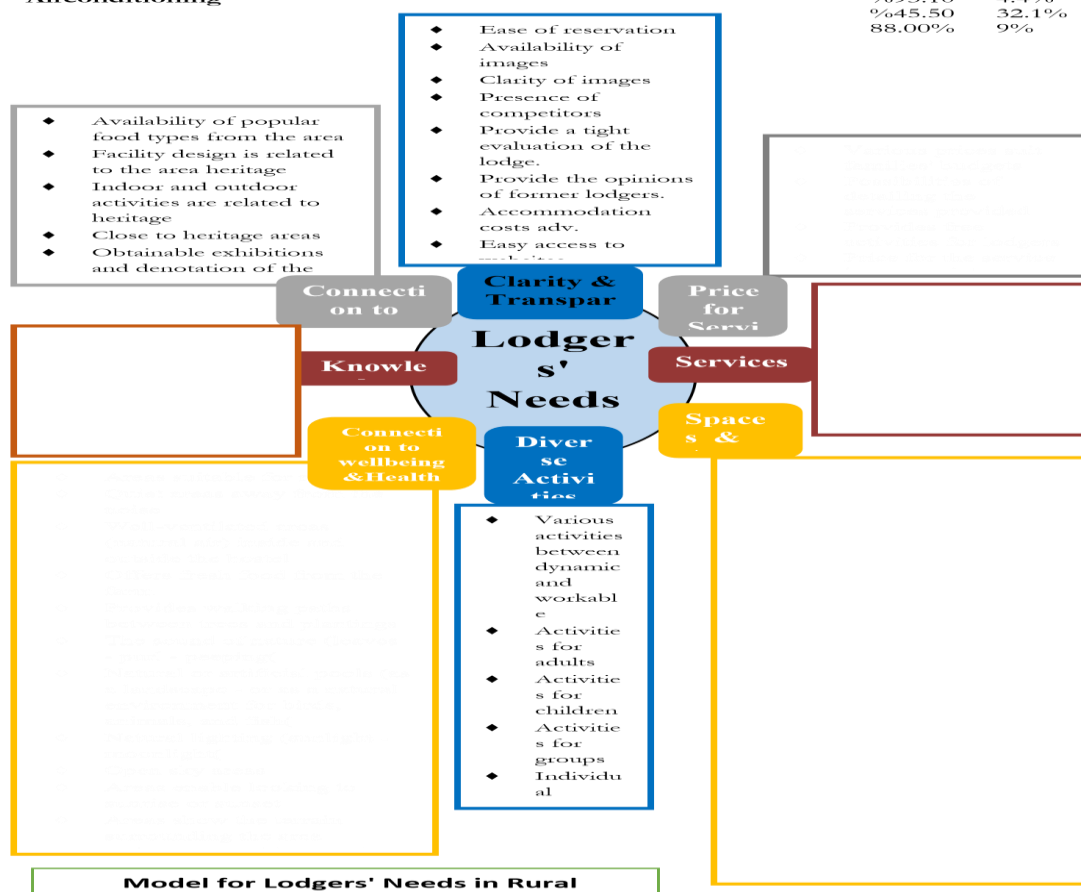
Room Size	Small (Two bed room)	Medium (Three bed room)	Large (More than three beds)	
Percentage	36.7%	53.6%	15.8%	
Bed Type	Single	Double	According to persons' number	
Percentage	26.3%	25.3%	70.6%	
Floor Type	Ceramic	Carpets	Ceramic and Carpets	
Percentage	21.4%	33.3%	58.4%	
Preferred Furniture Material Type	Wood	Plastic	Other	
Percentage	96.2%	5.2%	0.6%	
Engraving on Upholstery	simple and smooth	Abundantly patterned	Multi-colored	Other

Original Article

Percentage 93.4% 3.2% 7% 1.6

Existence of Good Ventilation(Natural Air) inside and outside the hostel			
Opening Windows Safely	Yes	No	
Percentage	98.3%	2.7%	
Window Size	Big	Small	Other
Percentage	91.7%	7.8%	0.5%
Natural Light Entry (Sunlight-Moonlight)			
Percentage	61.6%	38.4%	

Right Temperature			
Significance Degree	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Airconditioning	93.10%	4.4%	2.4%
	45.50%	32.1%	22.4%
	88.00%	9%	4.3%



Curtain Type Heavy Light

Results

Understanding visitors' satisfaction and their future behavior is particularly important and has an impact on the development of agricultural and rural tourism and their investments. The analysis of the results and the question

Original Article

Fans
Stove

of the target users makes a theoretical and practical sense to formulate the preferred model for lodgers based on their expectations. This, in turn, provides a clearer view of investors in this sector.

Based on the analysis and discussion of the results, the sample demographic data illustrate that the majority of the sample is middle-aged, educated, and employed persons with a medium or high-income level. They are mostly urban. The demographic data indicate the level of needs of visitors and operators must be well prepared to meet their needs and expectations. Thus, agrotourism farmers must have the capacity and efficiency to satisfactorily deliver services to this category of people in the market. The level of visitors' satisfaction will be greatly reflected in the prosperity of this sector and the achievement of global competitiveness. Accordingly, based on the analysis of the questionnaire and previous studies, a model was designed to help investors meet lodgers' needs and achieve satisfaction.

Conclusion

More research is needed to understand the means of attraction, to meet needs, achieve visitor targets, and the way these can affect the visitor's experience. There is also a need for research to improve the procedures for the evaluation of rural hostels and to confirm or improve the spaces of the rural hostel to meet the requirements of lodgers. These requirements will be met only by concerted efforts of several parties, such as government and private bodies, universities, and training and education institutes, where sciences such as marketing, management, design, art, agriculture, and other engineering, applied and scientific fields, are integrated. All of them support this important sector. This study concludes with a model that could contribute to the development of rural tourism and the level of rural lodges after measuring users' perspectives on their needs during the visit to the hostel. There is still a need for more in-depth research that will certainly support officials in their decision-making toward supporting and improving the agricultural and tourism sectors. Rural tourism may become an important source of income for many ranchers and a key element of rural development, with the need to maintain quality resource conditions and reduce the impact of visitors on agrotourism destinations. It is important to support nature-related spaces because they not only reflect on the nature of the farm and the level of care, but they also affect the experience of visitors and their likelihood of returning or recommending the farm to their relatives and friends. In this sense, support for nature-related spaces may be one of the factors that determine the long-term success of agrotourism companies.

Recommendations:

In the light of the results, the researcher recommends the following:

- Designing an integrated project with various bodies to support farmers, investors, and rural people to rehabilitate their areas to receive tourists and visitors and properly invest their property.
- Support and launching initiatives to promote rural guesthouses, such as those launched in some countries, through the restoration and rehabilitation of rural family houses that have an authentic village nature as a special feature of these areas.
- Ensuring that rural tourism shareholders are residents of the same area to ensure encouragement for developing their areas and primarily to ensure opportunities for them.

Original Article

- Selecting several farms to be typical in different areas of Saudi Arabia, from which other farmers will benefit by developing their farms and abilities and joining Agrotourism.

References:

Agriculture in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—Growth, trends,(2021), COVID-19 impact, and forecasts.[on line]Available : <https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/agriculture-in-the-kingdom-ofsaudi-arabia-industry>(2021, March 16).

Agritourism.(2021), mt.gov.sa.[on line]Available :<https://mt.gov.sa/Programs->

Activities/Programs/Pages/AgriTourism.aspx(2021, March 16). *amazing-tree-house-homes*. (2021, March 16). Retrieved from.[on line]Available : <https://www.housebeautiful.com/design-inspiration/house-tours/g3301/amazing-tree-house-homes/>.

AVCIKURT, Cevdet, DINU, Mihaela, HACIOĞLU, Necdet HACIOĞLUEFE, R. S. (2015). Tourism,Environment And Sustainability. ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI UNIVERSITY PRESS SOFIA.

Dall'Ara, G. (2011). Albergo Diffuso- a worldwide model of Italian hospitality. In *Marzo*, 18.

Fanelli, R. M., & Romagnoli, L. (2020). Customer satisfaction with farmhouse facilities and its implications for the promotion of agritourism resources in Italian municipalities. In *Sustainability*, 12(5).

<https://doi.org/10.3390/su12051749>

FarmstayManual.(2021) conservancy.umn.edu. [on line]Available : <https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/115893/FarmstayManual.pdf?sequence=1>.(2021, March 16).

Fanelli, R. M., & Romagnoli, L. (2020). Customer satisfaction with farmhouse facilities and its implications for the promotion of agritourism resources in Italian municipalities. In *Sustainability (Switzerland)* (Vol. 12, Issue 5). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12051749>

Healy, Salem, J. T. (2017). In. Enclave Tourism *The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Travel and Tourism*. Solid Action on Globalization and Environment. *Publications*,

Inc.<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483368924.n160>.

Holiday-categorie,(2021).[on line]Available :<https://www.farmholidays.com/holiday-categories>. (2021, March 16). *Investor Guide in Agricultural Hostel Activity*. (2020).

Original Article

- Kline, C., Leung, Y.-F., & Cardenas, D. (2007). Sustainable farm tourism: Understanding and managing environmental impacts of visitor activities. *Journal of Extension*, 45(2).
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (2018). TOWARDS SAUDI ARABIA'S SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW, First Voluntary National Review 2018 - 1439. In *UN High-Level Political* (p. 187). [on line] Available : https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20230SDGs_English_Report972018_FINAL.pdf
- Mahaliyanaarachchi, R. (2015). *Agri tourism farm and farm stay*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.3938.4721>. nirvanaorganicfarm.com. (2021, March 16). nirvanaorganicfarm.com. <https://nirvanaorganicfarm.com/>.
- OBG. (2020). The report: Saudi Arabia 2020. <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/paving-waygovernment-investment-sector-drives-growth>.
- Rodger, Janet. (2001). *AVCE Travel and tourism Advanced*. Oxford: Heinemann educational. *Rural tourism strategy in Lebanon*. (2014).
- UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2004 Edition. (2005). World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). [on line] Available : <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284407910>
- Yu, W. (2017). AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY OF FARM TOURISM AT SMALL-SCALE FARMS ON THE HAWAIIAN ISLAND OF OAHU. THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA.