

# TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF SAUDI WOMEN WORKING IN TOURIST HOTELS, AN EMERGING FIELD IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper aimed to assess the training needs of Saudi women working in tourist hotels “Reception,” an emerging field in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study sample included (87) Saudi women who work in (32) hotels of (3 to 5 stars category), in the regions of (Riyadh, Jeddah, Madinah, and Makkah). The study found three types of training needs for Saudi women in the sector: cognitive needs (hotel management, hotel reservation applications, total quality management in the hospitality sector, and individual and group reception protocols); skill needs; (public relations and protocol, managing reception offices, technology use, and guest complaints management skills); and value needs (dealing with tourists, reception offices management, and teamwork values). The study recommended planning training for Saudi women according to the priority areas identified when assessing their training needs. The training plan includes precedents related to knowledge, skills, and tourism values throughout training. It is followed by advanced training in the field to enhance the opportunities Saudi women have available to them and improve their performance to reach the desired level of effectiveness and efficiency.*

**Keywords:** Training- Training Needs Assessment- Hospitality

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization has enabled the tourism sector to become the main driver of the world’s economy in the 21st century and is the largest and strongest industry financing the global economy today (Guritno, 2019, P: 46). Tourism provides considerable foreign exchange for various countries and is responsible for creating millions of new jobs; this demonstrates its significance in generating financial revenues. Additionally, tourism plays an important role in cultural, social, and political relations as it brings people of different cultures and countries together. The rate at which the tourism industry develops directly corresponds with the development and expansion of hotel businesses that offer services for tourists (Ramadani & Zuzaku, 2016). In the tourist sector, the human resources departments of service industry companies, such as hotels, are often the departments that create the principal value for their organizations (Katunian, 2019, P: 406). The expertise of human resources teams is unique to their organization and can be difficult for competitors to emulate. Human resources are an intangible asset and can give a company an organizationally competitive advantage. Therefore, any organization that wishes to succeed amid tight competition should focus on upgrading its human resources team. This would also apply to human resources within the tourism sector; a strategic step towards improving performance is improving the quality of human resources (Hermawati et al., 2020).

One of the fundamental roles many organization administrators carry out is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their human resource teams in the organizations they serve. This is usually done through on-the-job up-skilling (training), where employees are provided with learning opportunities. Training is a learning process facilitated by experts for a short period to help

employees improve and acquire knowledge, skills, experience, competence, and attitudes that they need to perform their job better for the achievement of their organization's goals (KOMBO & KAKUBA, 2020, P: 10- 151). The money that organizations have invested into employee training and development has steadily increased over the past ten years. Despite this, studies of Training Needs Assessment (TNA) are lacking. Many training initiatives neglect to perform a comprehensive TNA before developing a training program, and many training programs are initiated without conducting a Training Needs Assessment at all (Cigularov & Dillulio, 2020). A Training Needs Assessment (also called a "training needs analysis") is a process carried out by an organization to collect and analyze data supporting creating a suitable training program. The data collected enables an organization to decide when training is needed and how to improve individual performance, requiring training and exactly what their training needs are. The data should be systematically analyzed and interpreted, considering individual, group, and organizational skills gaps. According to Ferreira & Abbad (2013), the data collected should have seven key characteristics: (based mainly on culture and organizational philosophy; proactive rather than reactive; distinguish between situations that can be addressed through training and those that cannot; allow various corporate actors who are directly or indirectly interested and involved in training to participate; based on observable skills rather than leaders', managers' and professionals' perceptions; consider the varied use of sampling techniques and data analysis; and have a cost/benefit.

A Training Needs Assessment (TNA) is an ongoing process of collecting information on ways to improve the performance of employees and meet the objectives of an institution. A TNA helps evaluate individual worker competency and highlight emerging needs facilitating the planning and execution of training programs. Therefore, a TNA has deemed the most important stage in conducting successful employee training (Yaseen et al., 2019). A TNA is necessary because it can identify dissatisfaction and desire for change. Each time a request for a TNA is made, the implication is that there is a discrepancy between the way things are and the way they should be. The TNA will show what training is required to close that gap, called a need, by answering some familiar questions: why, who, how, what, and when. A TNA will aim to solve a current problem, avoid a past or current problem, create or take advantage of a future opportunity, and provide learning, development, or growth. The training needs of an organization can be determined using the following formula: Desired Capability – Current Capability of Participants (Ministry of Interior and Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2015).

A Training Needs Assessment will determine whether there is a gap between what an employee's role is and whether the employee can fulfill the responsibilities of their role. There are many kinds of needs for individuals, which may be personal, performance-related, or career-related. Needs may include, but are not limited to; updating knowledge, skills, and job-related competencies; increasing job satisfaction and the fulfillment of personal goals; making decisions about career choices and career progression; identifying personal strengths and weaknesses; identifying and achieving work values and work targets; developing communication, personal effectiveness, and life skills; improving qualifications; individual learning and self-development; and building self-awareness, self-confidence, and motivation (South African Management Development Institute –SAMDI, 2007). Training Needs Assessments (TNAs) are a powerful tool in supporting necessary organizational change and adaptation. The improvement of organizational performance, and the chances of an organization's survival, is supported by TNAs because they follow a process of identifying individual and organizational knowledge and competencies in need of attention. This enables the organization to create a plan of training to address those needs, allowing the organization to adjust to internal and external demands successfully. When used as a strategic tool of organizational change, TNAs can contribute to an organization's capability as a 'learning organization' (Gyeltshen et al., 2021).

A TNA must be conducted in a structured manner to facilitate the design of an effective training program. The organization's goals and its effectiveness in achieving these goals need to be assessed, and the gaps or discrepancies between employee skills and the skills required for effective job performance should be ascertained. Training needs can be assessed by deploying several tools, including; surveys, interviews, observations, tests, assessment centers, focus groups, document reviews, advisory committees, etc. Which tools are used in the TNA will depend on the nature of the training intervention (Mukerjee, 2019). The development of Saudi women entering into the labour market of the tourism sector is considered an emerging field. The first field of tourism where Saudi women worked was the tourist reception, a specialization in hospitality management. Inclusion of the tourism sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is also an emerging field "except for religious tourism". In its eighth dimension, the National Transformation Program states "Marketing the KSA as a regional and global tourist destination through the development of the tourism sector". Therefore, the problem statement focuses on the necessity of training Saudi women working in the tourism sector, provided that the training is based on their actual training needs. The present study aimed to: Assess the training needs of Saudi women working in the field of tourist hotels "Reception", an emerging field in the KSA.

The study's main question is: What are the training needs of Saudi women working in tourist hotels, an emerging field in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia? The following sub-questions have been raised as well:

The growth of the female Saudi workforce in new fields, such as the hospitality sector, confirms Saudi Arabia's policies on women's empowerment. Women's empowerment is a major concern of human rights and development. Development helps reduce inequality between men and women, and the empowerment of women helps accelerate development (Batool et al, 2016). Women's empowerment means women are given the opportunity to fully participate in social, political, and economic spheres of life, enabling them to implement government programs and organizational policies that affect their lives. Empowerment can be understood better when contextualized into women's social, educational, economic, political, and psychological empowerment (Manuere & Phiri, 2018). So, the vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2030, launched in 2016, included a concern for women, which was evident in: "increasing the percentage of women's participation in the labor market from 22% to 30%". The number of women working in the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia is 20,732 compared to 531,824 men. Of the total number (552,556) involved in tourism, women made up 3.8% compared to 96.2% men. The number of Saudi women working in the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia was 6,540 compared to 14,192 non-Saudis. The percentage of Saudi women employed in the tourism sector was 1.18%, and 31.5% of the total women employed in the sector (Statistics Authority, 2018).

The study of Alasgah & Rizk (2021) looked at the empowerment of Saudi women in the tourism sector, according to the Kingdom's 2030 vision, and discussed what constitutes and what hinders their empowerment. The results showed that the number of Saudi women in the tourism sector is still significantly lower than men. However, in recent years the number of Saudi women within the tourism sector has increased by more than 90%, with the city of Makkah placing top amongst the cities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where a high number of empowered women are working in the sector. However, a statistically significant difference was found according to the age and the educational level of Saudi women in the tourism sector pursuant to the Kingdom's 2030 vision. The study of Al-Khalif (2015) emphasized the need to focus on developing the knowledge, awareness, and skills of Saudi women, as well as the importance of the role of Saudi women in implementing development programs, and the necessity of adapting development programs to the actual needs of the organization. The National Center for Human Resources Development in Tourism 'Takamul', affiliated with the General Authority for Tourism and National Heritage, has confirmed its endeavor to increase Saudi women in the tourism sector workforce. They intend to

increase from 22% to 30% by qualifying Saudi women through specialized training programs, enabling them to work in the tourism sector in all Kingdom regions. The center said that the number of women who benefited from training programs in the tourism and national heritage sector organized by the center amounted to 9,000 trainees, indicating that the center targeted around 25,000 female trainees up to 2020 (Takamul, 2019).

In the highly competitive hotel industry, training is a key improvement measure recognized by all parties (trainers, trainees, and training officials) due to its positive impact on preparing and implementing training programs. The purpose of training has several goals: increase productivity and improve quality of work; improve skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitude amongst staff; enhance the use of tools and machinery; reduce waste, accidents, turnover, lateness, absenteeism, and other overhead costs; eliminate obsolescence in skills, technologies, methods, products, capital management, etc. (Mike-Rowland & Ogunlade, 2017). The article of Koev, et al., (2019) studied what happens when introducing SMART-education technology to the training and development of hotel personnel within the tourism industry. First, the basis for which SMART-education technology is used for staff training was identified according to methodological and organizational dimensions. Then, the features of quality and development of SMART-education technology were outlined, and the principles of SMART-education for hotel personnel in the tourism sector were developed. Finally, a model of SMART-education for hotel personnel was developed based on solving case problems and mastering the practical professional content.

The study by Sebola, et al., (2019) demonstrated the importance of training in the hospitality industry for establishments to achieve satisfactory service quality levels, enabling them to attract and retain customers. Many studies have been conducted that sought to identify the effectiveness of training employees to achieve customer satisfaction. Still, these studies often overlook the human-related issues involved in implementing an effective training program. For example, when there is a discrepancy between customer needs and customer satisfaction, the quality of performance does not meet customer expectations, then the right training can reduce these gaps. Training plays a significant role in transforming employees' attitudes who have become jaded or complacent towards the values of the organization they work for, or those who have a shortfall of skills and confidence. A carefully designed training program will effectively change these attitudes and attain objectives and outcomes for the organization. A good training program will have clearly defined goals and enable employees to understand how those goal they their everyday tasks. The prime objective of the study by Mahmud, et al., (2019) was assess the impact of a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) on the performance of the employees. The study showed that the TNA played a positive role in improving employees' performance.

## METHODOLOGY

This study belongs to the descriptive group of studies. It aimed to estimate the training needs of Saudi women who work in the tourism hotel sector (reception). "Training needs list for Saudi women in the tourism hotel sector (reception)" was relied upon (authors prepared). The list included three main dimensions, the first dimension: cognitive needs (10 phrases), the second dimension: skill needs (10 phrases), and the third dimension: value needs (8 phrases). Validity and reliability have been confirmed as follows; internal consistency validity: the correlation coefficients between the dimensions of the training need list (Cognitive needs 0.835\*\*, Skill needs 0.875\*\*, Value needs 0.895\*\*) and the total degree of the list (0.606\*\*) is statistically significant at the level of significance (0.01). Reliability: the reliability coefficients of Cronbach's alpha for raw degrees and standardized degrees for training needs list is high (0.787), and that the reliability coefficients (0.576\*\*) by the Test-Retest method are statistically significant at the level of (0.01). A 5-point Likert format was assigned (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=indecisive, 4=agree, and 5=strongly

agree). The study sample included (87) Saudi women who work in (32) hotels of (3:5 stars category), in the regions of (Riyadh, Jeddah, Madinah, and Makkah), these are tourist areas in the KSA in which there are many tourist hotels.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Characterization of the Study Population

Variables	Categories				
	Age	21-30	31- 40		Total
N.	82	5		87	
%	94.25	5.75		100%	
Work Period	1 year	2 year	3 year>	Total	
N.	58	22	7	87	
%	66.67	25.29	8.04	100%	
Geographical regions	Riyadh	Jeddah	Makkah	Madinah	Total
N.	28	18	26	15	87
%	32.18	20.67	29.89	17.24	100%
Previous training programs	01- Mar	04-Jun	7>	Total	
N.	23	46	18	87	
%	26.44	52.87	20.69	100%	
Previous training programs in tourist hotels (reception)	01- Mar	04-Jun	7>	Total	
N.	52	26	9	87	
%	59.77	29.89	10.34	100%	

Table (1) showed the characteristics of the research sample, as the majority of the respondents (82%) were in the age category (21-30), 5% in the age category (31-40). The relatively young age of the respondents is due to the recent occurrence of Saudi women joining the tourism sector and the relatively recent event of specialized university studies in Saudi Arabia for female students. Therefore, 66.67% of respondents in the tourism sector have worked for one year, 25.29% for two years and 25.29% have worked for more than three years. The respondents were distributed by 32.18%, 29.89%, 29.89%, and 17.24% among four geographical regions, namely Riyadh, Makkah, Jeddah, and Madinah. These areas have high levels of tourism, as the regions of Makkah and Madinah are among the most active areas of the world in religious tourism, while Jeddah is one of the most popular recreational tourist areas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the coast of the Red Sea, along with Riyadh, the capital. The number of training programs previously conducted in the tourism sector, ranged from (4-6) for 52.87% of the respondents, (1-3) programs for 26.44%, and (7) programs or more for 20.69% of the respondents. The number of training programs in the tourist hotel sector (reception), ranged from (1-3) for 59.77%, (4-6) programs for 29.89%, and (7) or more programs for 10.34% of the respondents. Notably, there is still only a small number of training courses for tourist hotel reception duties. More programs are required for women to raise their efficiency, enable them to progress in their careers, and open the way for more Saudi women.

## Training needs for Saudi Women in the Tourist Hotel Sector (Reception)

### Cognitive Needs

Phrases	Strongly agree	Agree	Indecisive	Disagree	Strongly disagree	$\varepsilon\xi$	$\bar{x} w$	Rank
1. Geographical and tourism knowledge.	11	17	41	10	8	274	3.15	10
2. Recent trends in hotel management.	48	39	9	5	2	435	5	1
3. Hotel reservation applications.	51	22	11	3	-	382	4.39	2
4. Organizing tourist events.	19	38	25	4	1	331	3.8	6
5. Tourist hotel systems and regulations.	12	21	39	9	6	285	3.28	9
6. Tourist management and marketing in light of crises.	17	37	29	4	-	328	3.77	7
7. Combating ordinary and electronic tourism crimes.	13	24	40	8	2	299	3.44	8
8. Regular and electronic tourist marketing.	22	36	24	5	-	336	3.86	5
9. Individual and group reception protocols.	44	28	8	4	3	367	4.22	4
10. Total Quality Management in the hospitality sector.	50	18	13	5	1	372	4.28	3
$\bar{x} w$	3.92							
S.D	0.57							
R.S	32.94%							
V.C	14.50%							

Table (2) presents the cognitive training needs of the respondents, where recent trends in hotel management ranked first with a weighted average of (5.00), hotel reservation applications ranked second with a weighted average of (4.39), total quality management in the hospitality sector ranked third with a weighted average of (4.28), individual and group reception protocols ranked fourth with weighted average of (4.22), regular and electronic tourist marketing ranked fifth with weighted average of (3.86), organizing tourist events ranked sixth with a weighted average of (3.80), while needs related to the following were ranked seventh to tenth; tourist management and marketing in light of crises, combating ordinary and electronic tourism crimes, tourist hotel systems and regulations, and geographical and tourism knowledge, with weighted averages of (3.77), (3.44), (3.28), (3.15). This highlights the relative importance of cognitive needs related to recent trends in hotel management, hotel reservation applications, total quality management in the hospitality sector, and individual and group reception protocols. The Variation Coefficient between the respondents in cognitive needs was 14.5%, which is a simple factor, and there is convergence in the cognitive needs of the respondents, which confirms a need, with a relative strength of the dimension of 32.94%.

## Skill Needs

Phrases	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indecisive	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	εξ	$\bar{x} w$	Rank
1. Technology use skills.	54	14	13	4	2	375	4.31	3
2. Public relations and protocol skills.	59	13	11	3	1	387	4.49	1
3. Electronic tourist marketing skills.	18	41	22	6	-	332	3.82	6
4. Tourism media skills.	10	23	44	8	2	292	3.36	9
5. Hotel management skills.	15	43	19	7	3	321	3.69	7
6. Skills of preparing tourism reports and correspondence.	19	40	23	4	1	333	3.83	5
7. Supervisory skills.	12	18	46	9	2	290	3.33	10
8. Tourist program planning skills.	13	19	45	8	2	294	3.38	8
9. Skills of managing reception offices.	57	16	10	4	-	387	4.45	2
10. Guest complaints management skills.	52	17	11	5	2	373	4.29	4
$\bar{x} w$	3.9							
S.D	0.46							
R.S	32.77%							
V.C	11.80%							

Table (3) displays the skill needs of the respondents. Public relations and protocol skills ranked first with a weighted average of (4.49), the skills of managing reception offices ranked second with a weighted average of (4.45), and the technology use skills ranked third with a weighted average of (4.31). Guest complaints management skills ranked fourth with a weighted average of (4.29), while skills related to; preparing tourism reports and correspondence, electronic tourist marketing, hotel management, tourism program planning, tourism media, and supervisory ranked fifth to tenth with weighted averages of 3.83, 3.82, 3.69, 3.38, 3.36 and 3.33, respectively. The relative importance of public relations and protocol, managing reception offices, technology use, and guest complaints management skills were noted among the respondents. The Variation Coefficient was 11.8%, which is a small difference and maximizes the skill needs of the respondents, confirmed by the relative strength of the dimension at 32.77%.

## Value Needs

Phrases	Strongly Agree	Agree	Indecisive	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	εξ	$\bar{x} w$	Rank
1. The value of dealing with tourist delegations.	36	28	9	3	1	376	4.32	1
2. Individual reception values.	42	25	14	5	1	363	4.17	4
3. The value of tourist guides.	18	40	23	6	-	331	3.8	7
4. Value of tourist marketing.	21	38	25	2	1	337	3.87	6
5. Value of reception offices	45	27	10	5	-	373	4.29	2

management.								
6. Value of teamwork.	48	21	13	4	1	372	4.28	3
7. Saudi hospitality values.	17	41	24	3	2	329	3.78	8
8. Evaluate guest complaints management	43	23	15	4	2	362	4.16	5
$\bar{x}$ w	4.08							
S.D	0.23							
R.S	34.29%							
V.C	5.60%							

Table (4) presents the value needs of the respondents, where the value of dealing with tourist arrivals ranked first with a weighted average f (4.32), the value of reception offices management ranked second with a weighted average of (4.29), teamwork skills ranked third with a weighted average of (4.28), and individual value and reception ranked fourth with a weighted average of (4.17). Evaluation of guest complaints management, tourism marketing, tourist guide, and Saudi hospitality ranked fifth to eighth, with weighted averages of 4.16, 3.87, 3.80 and 3.78, respectively. The importance of dealing with tourist reception offices management, and teamwork values of the respondents is noted, confirmed by the small variation coefficient between their value needs, reaching 5.6%, and confirmed by the relative strength of the dimension at 34.29%.

Analysis of tables 2, 3 and 4 shows the convergence of the relative strength of the three dimensions, cognitive needs (32.94%), skill needs (32.77%), and value needs (34.29%), from which we can deduce the need of each type for Saudi women in the tourist hotel sector (reception). In addition, the Variation Coefficient within each need type is very small, the least of which is value needs (5.6%), which we can conclude from the respondents' relative agreement of their training needs.

Cognitive Needs			Skill Needs			Value Needs		
Phrases	$\chi^2$	Significant	Phrases	$\chi^2$	Significant	Phrases	$\chi^2$	Significant
1	42.6	0.01	1	102.71	0.01	1	57.77	0.01
2	107.15	0.01	2	130.3	0.01	2	63.06	0.01
3	97.77	0.01	3	58.11	0.01	3	56.05	0.01
4	53.63	0.01	4	64.32	0.01	4	57.54	0.01
5	40.76	0.01	5	56.28	0.01	5	78.46	0.01
6	57.54	0.01	6	57.08	0.01	6	81.45	0.01
7	51.68	0.01	7	66.39	0.01	7	60.07	0.01
8	49.84	0.01	8	63.75	0.01	8	63.75	0.01
9	74.44	0.01	9	121.1	0.01			
10	86.51	0.01	10	93.63	0.01			

Table (5) indicates significant differences at the level of (0.01) in cognitive training needs, skill training needs, and value training needs for Saudi women in the tourist hotel sector. This is despite the small value of the coefficient variation in each type of need. However, the chi-square coefficient showed significant differences between the subjects in the sub-needs within each dimension. Magalhaes & Marques (2020) showed that rapid expansion in the hospitality sector emphasizes the importance of training human resources employees to meet the market demands.



The study concluded that many of the respondents felt the need to improve their skills, especially in digital, linguistic, and communication skills. The study of Charlie & Willson (2010) identified four key issues with training in the tourism and hospitality industry. Firstly, the labour requirement in the sector; secondly, the shortfalls in filling certain positions; thirdly, the requirement of sufficiently trained employees (in number, quality, and experience) and fourthly, the need for a training infrastructure and measures skills enhancement.

The study of Kraljic, et al., (2020) highlighted the importance of soft skills amongst tourism sector employees. Soft skills are skills associated with people's characteristics, attitudes, and abilities in communicating and building relationships with others. These skills are essential in enabling an individual to adapt to a dynamic environment, such as the tourism industry, and perform well while effectively coping with the challenges of their professional life. Apart from industry knowledge, tourism service providers should demonstrate kindness, professionalism, a positive attitude, and empathy. The study of Silva, et al., (2019) examines the ICT skills required for work in the tourist hotel sector, including managing issues in all departments, managing the relationship between the hotel and its guests before, during, and after a reservation, and using ICT to promote hotel sustainability and manage social networks online. This emphasizes the need to train human resources staff members in the field of hospitality and confirm that Saudi women who have recently joined the hospitality sector should also be included in a program of planned training according to their needs.

## CONCLUSION

The recent development of Saudi women joining the hospitality sector should be supported by training to increase their efficiency and performance. Training based on assessing their actual needs is the most appropriate means to improving their efficiency and effectiveness. The current study identified the most important training needs for Saudi women in the hospitality sector. They are cognitive needs – hotel management, hotel reservation applications, total quality management, individual or group reception protocols; skill needs – public relations and protocol; managing reception offices, technology use, guest complaints management skills; value needs – tourist reception management and teamwork values. Training Saudi women in hospitality, an emerging field, is linked to the capacity-building phase during which the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of women are developed and improved through training and qualification. This stage is the first step in the employment empowerment of Saudi women in the tourism sector.

In light of the study's findings regarding the actual training needs of Saudi women in the reception sector of tourist hotels, the study recommends planning training for Saudi women according to the priority areas identified through the assessment of their training needs. The training plan should include precedents related to knowledge, skills, and tourism values throughout their training and be followed by advanced training in the field. This will enhance the opportunities Saudi women have available to them and improve their performance to the desired level of effectiveness and efficiency.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the Center for promising Research in Social Research and Women's Studies Deanship of Scientific Research at princess Nourah University in the for funding this project in (1441 AH/2020 AD).

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