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Factors affecting quality culture in Al Ahsa' Hotels

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Abstract

Quality movement emerged as revolutionary approach and philosophy in management which continuously search for needs and requirements of customers and try to incorporate them in organization systems, policies and procedures on an ongoing basis. Therefore, many companies around the world adopt the techniques and principles of that momentum. However, there is a dearth of knowledge regarding requirements of such direction in developing countries such as Saudi Arabia. The majority of research done in this area was conducted in different areas of the world, especially western countries. Little empirical research was done in developing countries that investigate the requirements to enhance the culture base for the quality to grow. Accordingly, this study tries to tackle this issue by investigating the existence of seven requirements of Total quality management adoption in the hotel industry in Saudi Arabia. To achieve its objectives, the study utilized a survey among mangers in selected five star hotels in the eastern region in Saudi Arabia. Results revealed that quality awareness is high in the selected hotels. Moreover, there are high levels of top management commitment to quality and focus on satisfying customer needs of the services provided by the hotels. The results obtained from this study have implications for managers and researchers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, companies have tremendous pressures to improve their quality of goods and services offered to customers. These pressures stem from various factors, Customers become very aware and conscious about quality of products and services and demand high quality products at reasonable prices. Advanced technologies and production methods also help in improving the quality of products. Moreover, globalization facilitates international trade and made high quality low-cost products available throughout the world. Therefore, companies do not only compete with local producers but also with producers around the world. In response to these pressures and demands, many companies in both developed and developing countries started adopting the principles and techniques of total quality management (TQM) to improve their

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performance and competitive position. Total quality management emerged as important approach and philosophy of management that spread all over organization and aims at continuously improving the quality of products, processes, and innovativeness of services to meet and surpass customer expectations (Arshad and Su, 2015)

However, for its successful implementation, TQM requires provision of healthy and adaptive environment in the organization, participation of all individuals at all levels in its programs and activities, and continuously meeting customer needs and expectations. TQM is based on a set of techniques and programs such as quality control circles, just-in-time, statistical process control, quality audit, and total productivity maintenance (Yapa 2012). However, in order to implement these techniques successfully, certain requirements need to exist among management and employees at all levels of organization. These requirements are important because effective adoption of TQM concepts and tools require consideration of the complexity of environment inside organization in which the organization operates (Salmador, Bueno, and Maranhao, 2008),

Despite the wide spread of the principles of TQM and vast research in the area of TQM, many developing countries are still in their early stages of TQM development (Talib et al., 2011). Moreover, there has been little empirical research in these countries to investigate the extent and requirements for adoption of TQM (Yusuf, Gunasekaran, and Dan, 2007). In the context of Saudi Arabia, very little research was conducted in the area of TQM. Most of the research done focuses mainly on manufacturing and health sector (Alaraki, 2014; Yusoff et al., 2016). Moreover, it is very difficult to apply the results of studies done in other countries in the context of a country like Saudi Arabia because of the cultural differences and other factors. Sila and Embrahimbour (2003) compared studies of TQM factors among various countries and found that these factors vary between countries due to differences between countries' business environments which in turn are affected by various factors including culture, religion, education level, information technology, government regulations, the extent of industrialization, and so on. Therefore, it is important to carry study in the context of Saudi Arabia to find exactly the factors or requirements necessary for successful implementation of TQM.

2. REQUIREMENTS OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM)

Previous research show revealed various requirements or success factors that are considered critical prerequisites for successful implementation of TQM as shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1TQM Requirements based on Previous Studies

Study	Country	Requirements/Success Factors
Tsang and Antony (2001)	UK	Customer focus, continuous improvement, teamwork and involvement, top management commitment and recognition, training and development, quality systems and policies, supervisory leadership, communication within the company, supplier relationships and supplier management, measurement and feedback, and cultural change.
Motwani (2001)	India	Top management commitment, employee training and empowerment, quality measurement and benchmarking, process management, and customer involvement and satisfaction.
Nilsson et al. (2001)	Sweden	Employee management, process orientation, customer orientation, customer satisfaction, and business results.
Ugboro and Obeng (2000)	USA	Top management leadership and commitment, teamwork, flow of information within the organization, and employee involvement and empowerment.
Antony et al. (2002)	Hong Kong	Top management commitment, role of quality department, education and training, customer satisfaction, and information and analysis.
Das et. Al. (2008)	Thailand	Top management commitment, process quality management, education and training, supplier quality management, employee empowerment and involvement, and benchmarking.
Gaddene and Sharma (2009)	Australia	Top management commitment, education and training, employee empowerment and involvement, and benchmarking.
Yapa (2012)	Sri Lanka	Top management commitment, customer satisfaction, use of quality management techniques and policies.
Alaraki (2014)	Saudi Arabia	Leadership, training, employee management, information and analysis, supplier management, process management, customer focus, continuous improvement.
Yusoff et. al. (2016)	Saudi Arabia	Top management commitment, employee empowerment, quality training, teamwork, the use of QC tools.
El-Tohamy and Al Raoush (2015)	Jordan	Leadership commitment to quality, customer focus, continuous improvement, teamwork, employee involvement, education and training.

Based on the table above, the current study selected seven requirements of implementation of TQM to be investigated in this study as follows.

- Quality Awareness and Culture

To implement TQM successfully, management need to develop organizational-wide awareness about the concept of TQM, its benefits, process, and requirements (Talib, Rahman and Qureshi, 2011). Establishing such positive TQM climate in the whole organization can help also in accepting the ideas of TQM by all parts and individuals in organization and implement it more effectively. Management need also to enhance environment of creativity in organization because there is no standard approach and formula for implementing TQM and the implementation depends on the situation and need of every organization (Yusuf, 2007)

- Top Management Commitment

Effective implementation of TQM requires full support and commitment from top management of organization. Lack of top management support is one of the reasons for the failure of total quality management efforts (Chowdhury, Paul, and Das, 2007). Managers can give support to TQM efforts by acting as a role model and offering rewards based on achievements in the area of quality. Moreover, top management should actively develop quality plans to meet organizational objectives, communicate company philosophy to the employees and involve them in the TQM effort and improvement activities, encourage employees to achieve their objectives, and provide adequate resources for employee performance and development (Das et al., 2008). Such practice can lead to increased job satisfaction and employee commitment to service quality (Okland, 2011).

- Measurement and Feedback

Successful implementation of TQM requires establishing a system of measuring the extent to which each concept and technique progress in its implementation in organization. Measurement takes place by comparing actual performance against internal and external standards of the company (Tsang and Antony, 2001). It was found that great part of the success of TQM programs depend on the measurement and analysis of performance and evaluation of customers' feedback which can help in understanding customers' needs and expectations and improving quality of products and services on a continuous basis (Salmador, Bueno, & Maranhao, 2008).

- Customer Focus

Customers are the most important part of successful TQM program. Failure to understand and follow changing customer preferences and expectations may result in unsatisfied customers and its subsequent low demand for the products or services of organization. Therefore, understanding customer requirements and providing goods and services of reasonable quality to meet their requirements is a most important goal of TQM implementation (Khanna, Sharma and Laroiya, 2011). It is necessary to involve customers in the design and implementation of TQM programs and fully understand their evolving needs and expectations and reflect them in improved products and services and production process that benefit both customers and organization (Das et al., 2008).

- Employee Involvement

To effectively implement TQM, organizations need to develop employee capabilities and encourage their empowerment and involvement in various implementation activities of TQM by making everyone responsible for producing quality goods and services, meeting customer requirements, and achieving a company-wide TQM goals(Oakland, 2011). Therefore, it is important for organizations to view their employees as important asset and create culture that encourage the mutual benefit through achievement of both organizational and personal goals (Benavides-velasco, Quintana-garcía, & Marchantelara, 2014). Employees should be encouraged to provide suggestions and ideas for quality improvement. Their involvement can enable them to acquire new knowledge, realize the benefits of the quality disciplines, and obtain a sense of accomplishment by solving quality problems (Das et al., 2008).

- Training

Developing effective training programs that improve the knowledge and skills of managers and employees about the concept, tools, and techniques of TQM is important requirements for successful implementation of TQM programs (Claver-Cortes et al., 2008). Training programs in the areas of TQM can enable employees to understand quality-related issues, solve quality problems, and enhance their skills of teamwork and efficient utilization of resources (Das et al., 2008). Furthermore, training is usually related to changes. These changes are necessary for providing atmosphere in the organization to accept new ideas of TQM and fully implement them in organization.

- Teamwork

To implement TQM successfully, there is a need to establish collaborative environment in the organization because the daily work of dealing with quality issues, such as performance, cost, and delivery of products and services, inevitably requires teamwork across organizational boundaries. Therefore, it is important for TQM implementation is the use the practices that enable teamwork and cross-functional problem solving. Bayazit (2003) found that teamwork is one of the factors that contribute to the success of TQM efforts in companies. Teamwork is central for building up environment of trust, improving communications and developing interdependence that enable change and implementation of plans, solving problems, and creating empathy and a sense of involvement in organization.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Design of the Study

This study is designed to be descriptive, cross-sectional in nature that utilizes questionnaire survey to collect the data needed for the study. To evaluate the level of existence of the seven TQM requirements, the study used descriptive statistical analysis, and correlation analysis using SPSS V 22 software.

- Study Population and Sample

To explore the requirements of TQM, a sample of managers selected from four hotels in Al ahsa region town, in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, was selected for investigation in this study. The four hotels were selected based on criteria that they are five star hotels which means that they are large in size. Large hotels are most likely to

implement TQM rather than small hotels. From each hotel a sample of 20 employees at managerial or supervisory levels was selected based on a combination of purposive and convenience sampling methods as shown in the Table 2 below.

Table 2Details about Hotels Selected as a Sample for the Study

Name of Hotel	No. of	No. of rooms	Sent	Received		
	workers		Questionnaires	Questionnaires		
Intercontinental	41	35	20	13		
Coral Plaza	29	20	20	10		
Al Ghazal	22	15	20	9		
Al Hofuf	25	12	20	6		
Total	117	82	80	38		

Study Instrument

A questionnaire was designed and validated to test the effect of the above-mentioned seven variables of TQM. The items for each variable were mainly adapted from previous studies to fit the characteristics and situation in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section includes questions that ask about background information about the respondent. These questions include age group, education level, years of experience, and occupation of the respondent. The second section includes questions about the degree of existence of the seven dimensions of TQM principles. Table (3) provides description of items in this section. A five point scale ranging from (1) 'not at all' to (5) 'always used' was used in designing the questions in this section.

Table 3Description of the Items Included in the Questionnaire

Factor	Items	Description					
Quality awareness	5-7	Managers are convinced that quality leads better performance, there is awareness employees regarding quality concepts, quality our main concern when dealing with o employees and suppliers.					
Top management support	8-11	Organizational structure support quality, there is effort to change employee thinking toward quality, there are considerable financial resources to support quality.					
Measurement and feedback	12-15	We get customer feedback about quality, we measure the quality of services offered by employees, we use statistical techniques to inspect hotel activities.					
Customer focus	16-18	Customers are treated in a good way, we record and respond to customer complaints and suggestions, we plan services according to customer needs and expectations.					
Continued							

Employee empowerment and involvement	19-22	We give employees tasks that match their expectations, we try to motivate and satisfy employees as internal customers, we seriously consider the opinions and suggestions of all employees.
Training	23-25	There is continuous training related to quality, we involve all managers and employees in quality training, we focus on improvement of service quality and how to deal with customers in our training programs,
Teamwork	26-28	There is spirit of coordination and teamwork among employees, we take our decisions collectively, we use quality circles to discuss work issues in the hotel.

- RESULTS

The finalized copy of the questionnaire was sent to 80 mangers in the four hotels directly by hand. After regular follow up, 38 completed questionnaires were received from respondents as shown in Table 2. The response rate is 47.5% which considered acceptable for survey studies. Table 4 shows descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of respondents. The table reveals that around 26% of respondents are less than 25 years old, 58% are in the 25-40 range, and 16% are more than 40 years old. The majority of respondents are educated with 55% having university degree and 40% having secondary certificate. However, only 15.8% of respondents have more than 5 years of experience and the majority has less than 5 years of experience. Furthermore, the results indicate that 40% of respondents are holding executive management positions, whereas 60% are operational mangers.

Table 4Descriptive Statistics about Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Less than 25	10	26.3
25-40	22	57.9
More than 40	6	15.8
Education Level		
Secondary	15	39.5
University	21	55.3
Other	2	5.3
Experience		
Less than year	16	42.1
1-5 years	16	42.1
More than 5 years	6	15.8
Occupation		
Executive Management	15	39.5
Operational Management	23	60.5

Table 5Descriptive Statistics about TQM Requirements

Factor rank		Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Quality awareness		3.6930	.21056
2. Top management support	38	3.0877	1.02721
3. Measurement and feedback		3.0526	1.10000
4. Customer focus		2.9342	.12580
5.Employee empowerment and		2.8421	.34430
involvement			
6. Training		2.6842	1.04894
7. Teamwork	38	2.3333	.84895

Table 5 shows ranking of the seven principles of TQM based on mean level of adoption of each principle. It is clear from the table that there is a high level of awareness of quality principles in the hotels (mean=3.7 with standard deviation 0>21). The table shows also that there is a high level of top management commitment to quality and high level of utilization of performance measurement and customer feedback of customer information and focusing on customers as a mean to improve quality. However, the table reveals that the hotels are below average in utilizing teamwork and collective means of performance in their daily work and decision making.

Table 6Spearman's Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	1.000									
2. Education level	.439**	1.000								
3. Experience	.493**	.368*	1.000							
4. Quality awareness	.237	.098	.745**	1.000						
5. Top management support	.086	.004	.487**	.818**	1.000					
6. Measurement and feedback	.097	.031	.506**	.829**	.989**	1.000				
7. Customer focus	.123	063-	.483**	.798**	.892**	.897**	1.000			
8.Employee empowerment and involvement	.360*	.235	.206	064-	049-	042-	029-	1.000		
9. Training	054-	004-	.181	.534**	.791**	.789**	.708**	015-	1.000	
10. Teamwork	079-	039-	467**	814**	972**	984**	901**	.055	799**	1.000

^{**}Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

^{*}Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows Spearman's correlation matrix of all the variables in the study except "occupation" because it is a dichotomous variable measured on a nominal scale, so it is not suitable for this type of analysis. The correlation analysis was conducted to explore bi variate relationships between variables and see which variables need to be considered together. The correlation matrix reveals that the two demographic variables; age and educational level show weak relationships with TQM variables. The only significant relationship (r=0.360, p < 0.05) is between age and employee involvement. However, the third demographic variable, experience, shows stronger relationships with TQM variables. Experience shows very strong relationships with quality awareness (r = 0.745, p < 0.01), top management support (r = 0.487, p < 0.01), measurement and feedback (r = 0.506, p < 0.01), customer focus (r = 0.483, p < 0.01), and teamwork (r = -0.467, p < 0.01). The matrix reveals also interesting relationships among the TQM variables. The variables that show strongest positive relationships with other variables are quality awareness, top management support, measurement and feedback, customer focus, and training. However, teamwork factor shows strong negative relationship with all TQM variables, except employee involvement, in addition to experience. This result indicates that teamwork runs in contrary to TQM practice instead of supporting them.

- DISCUSSION

This work tries to shed some light on how readiness of Saudi business organizations to adopt the principles and techniques of TQM by presenting opinions of selected five star hotel employees in Saudi Arabia. The study investigates existence of important requirements for TQM adoption that include:

- Spread of quality awareness in organization,
- Top management commitment to the TQM philosophy,
- Customer focus,
- Employee focus,
- Training, and
- Teamwork.

These requirements represent the main enablers for successful implementation of TQM. The empirical results of the study revealed that there is high level of readiness to apply TQM principles as indicated by existence of high level of awareness among the managers regarding the concept and importance of TQM, the managers are providing high support and resources that encourage quality initiatives, and existence of performance measurement techniques that assess quality of services rendered customers and feedback from customers about the quality of these services. The results suggest also that training and teamwork need further improvement as it shows the lowest level of existence in the hotels.

The empirical results further indicate that the concept of quality start gaining acceptance and high consideration of managers in the Saudi hotels to be applied throughout the organization. The managers in these hotels show a rational awareness and understanding of the bond that links TQM concept and techniques with enhancing the quality of services and customer and employee satisfaction that can result in improved performance and profitability of the hotels. The positive view of quality in hotel

industry is important to such type of industry. Hotel industry is characterized by high competitiveness and strong influence by customer preferences and experience (Wang, Chen and Chen, 2012). Therefore, adoption of TQM principles can help hotels in meeting these challenges by building strong ground for highly responsive atmosphere for customer needs and preferences and continuously improving the quality of services.

This study pointed out some areas that need further improvement. The most two areas that need further attention are training and teamwork that show the lowest level of adoption in the hotels. Training is very important to enhance employee awareness and skills of TQM concepts and practices. Possible explanation of this result is that training requires deployment of resources and time to launch training programs in the field of TQM, which may not be feasible to most hotels. The other area of weakness is teamwork which shows the lowest level of adoption in the hotels. Most TQM practices are based on teamwork because it is very difficult for individuals to implement, control, and evaluate all activities related to TQM. The low level of teamwork can be explained based on the nature of work in the hotels industry which based on shifts and working throughout the day. Therefore, it is very difficult for employees and managers to meet at one time and perform collective work.

Analysis of the correlation among study variables further supports the above-mentioned results. Experience show strong relationship with TQM variables. This result is expected because as managers spend more years in the organization, their knowledge, understanding, and abilities regarding TQM techniques and obstacles will be enhanced. The correlation analysis also reveals that TQM variable are complementary rather than opposing to each other. Ugboro and Obeng (2000) also found positive correlation between top management leadership, employees' empowerment, job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. They concluded that employee empowerment and improved levels of job satisfaction are facilitated by top management leadership and commitment to the TQM goal of customer satisfaction by creating an organizational climate that emphasizes total quality and customer satisfaction. This means that if a manger gets more awareness of TQM concept and techniques this will encourage them to give more resources and support in addition to provide healthy atmosphere in the organization for its adoption.

- CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Today business organizations face highly competitive and fluctuating environment especially in the hotel industry. This requires these organizations to put high emphasis on quality through adoption of TQM practices. However, it is very difficult to apply TQM principles unless there is healthy environment in these organizations that facilitate its adoption. This study investigates the readiness of selected hotels in Saudi Arabia to the adoption of TQM. The study suggests that there is strong evidence of managers' awareness and preparation for TQM adoption as indicated by various facets of structural and system variables. However, the study reveals also there are other areas that need improvement such as training and teamwork.

The findings of this study suggest that Saudi hotel managers need to exert more effort toward preparing their organizations to adopt the principles and techniques of TQM. In particular, they need to put more focus on designing training programs in the fields of

TQM suitable to the Hospitality Industry. Such programs can enable employees and managers to update their professional knowledge and skills that help them to apply current quality improvement techniques for the benefit of themselves and their companies. Furthermore, the managers of the hotels need to put more emphasis on teamwork as a mean performing tasks and activities in those institutions. Nevertheless, this requires building strong culture throughout the whole regime that support collaborative and joint efforts for the benefit of organizations.

It is important to highlight some limitations of this study and suggestions for future investigation. The major limitation of this work is that it is based on limited data that was collected from few organizations in one region. Therefore, caution must be taken in generalizing the results of this study over other geographical spots in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Future studies could take larger sample in different sectors to get better understanding of the status of TQM readiness. Moreover, future studies need to add more variables such as hotel performance to expand the level of enquiry that can bring more useful and interesting results. Finally, this research focuses only on managers as major respondents. Future research could focus on employees to get better understanding of TQM readiness in the hospitality industry.

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العوامل المؤثرة في ثقافة الجودة في بعض فنادق الأحساء

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(JAAUTH) المجلد 18، العدد 3، (2020)، ص 210-223.

اللفص

تواجه منظمات الأعمال اليوم بيئة شديدة التذبذب وتقلبات خاصة في صناعة الفنادق. وهذا يتطلب من هذه المنظمات التركيز بشكل كبير على الجودة من خلال تبنى ممارسات إدارة الجودة الشاملة. ومع ذلك، من الصعب للغاية تطبيق مبادئ إدارة الجودة الشاملة ما لم تكن هناك بيئة صحية في هذه المنظمات تسهل اعتمادها. تبحث هذه الدراسة في جاهزية فنادق مختارة في المملكة العربية السعودية لاعتماد إدارة الجودة الشاملة. تشير الدراسة إلى أن هناك أدلة قوبة على وعى المديرين وإعدادهم لاعتماد إدارة الجودة الشاملة كما هو موضح من جوانب مختلفة من المتغيرات الهيكلية ومتغيرات النظام. ومع ذلك ، تكشف الدراسة أيضًا أن هناك مجالات أخرى تحتاج إلى تحسين مثل التدريب والعمل الجماعي. وتشير نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى أن مديري الفنادق السعوديين يحتاجون إلى بذل المزيد من الجهد لإعداد مؤسساتهم لتبنى مبادئ وتقنيات الجودة الشاملة. على وجه الخصوص، يحتاجون إلى التركيز بشكل أكبر على تصميم برامج التدريب في مجالات إدارة الجودة الشاملة المناسبة لصناعة الضيافة. يمكن لهذه البرامج أن تمكن الموظفين والمديرين من تحديث معارفهم ومهاراتهم المهنية التي تساعدهم على تطبيق تقنيات تحسين الجودة الحالية لصالحهم وشركاتهم. علاوة على ذلك، يحتاج مديروا الفنادق إلى التركيز بشكل أكبر على العمل الجماعي كوسيلة لأداء المهام والأنشطة في تلك المؤسسات. ومع ذلك، يتطلب هذا بناء ثقافة قوية في جميع أنحاء النظام بأكمله تدعم الجهود التعاونية والمشتركة لصالح المنظمات. من المهم تسليط الضوء على بعض قيود هذه الدراسة والاقتراحات للتحقيق في المستقبل. القيد الرئيسي لهذا العمل هو أنه يعتمد على بيانات محدودة تم جمعها من منظمات قليلة في منطقة واحدة. لذلك، يجب توخى الحذر في تعميم نتائج هذه الدراسة على مناطق جغرافية أخرى في المملكة العربية السعودية. يمكن للدراسات المستقبلية أن تأخذ عينة أكبر في قطاعات مختلفة للحصول على فهم أفضل لحالة استعداد إدارة الجودة الشاملة. علاوة على ذلك، تحتاج الدراسات المستقبلية إلى إضافة المزيد من المتغيرات مثل أداء الفندق لتوسيع مستوى الاستفسار الذي يمكن أن يحقق نتائج أكثر فائدة ومثيرة للاهتمام. أخيرًا، يركز هذا البحث فقط على المديرين كمستجيبين رئيسيين. يمكن أن تركز الأبحاث المستقبلية على الموظفين للحصول على فهم أفضل لاستعداد إدارة الجودة الشاملة في صناعة الضيافة.