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Multilingual Service Encounters, Destination Image, and Revisit Intentions in Saudi Tourism: A Conceptual Model

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ABSTRACT: Tourists form destination images not only from landmarks, promotional campaigns, and online reviews, but also from ordinary communicative encounters. A confusing booking message, an accurately translated safety instruction, a patient hotel conversation, or a poorly explained transport disruption can each become evidence through which a visitor judges an entire destination. This article develops a conceptual model linking multilingual service encounters to destination image and revisit intentions in Saudi tourism. English is treated as an important lingua franca, but not as a universal solution. The model focuses on the consistency with which information, tone, promises, and problem-solving practices are carried across Arabic, English, and other visitor languages at physical and digital touchpoints. It proposes that multilingual service quality influences cognitive destination image through perceived accessibility, reliability, and organisational competence, while it influences affective image through welcome, reassurance, and interpersonal respect. Tourist satisfaction mediates the movement from encounter evaluations to revisit intentions, and service recovery becomes especially influential when failures expose gaps between translated promises and operational action. The model further identifies moderators including trip purpose, prior destination familiarity, linguistic distance, encounter criticality, digital dependence, and the availability of human assistance. Eight propositions and a mixed-method research design are offered for future testing across hotels, attractions, airports, transport services, restaurants, events, and digital platforms. The article argues that multilingual communication should be managed as destination infrastructure rather than as a collection of isolated translations. Saudi tourism organisations can strengthen loyalty when visitors encounter coherent information, intelligible English, culturally respectful interaction, and dependable follow-through across the journey.

1. INTRODUCTION

Destination image is often discussed as though it were produced mainly before travel. Advertising, social media, guidebooks, films, news coverage, and recommendations certainly shape expectations, yet the image carried home by a visitor is repeatedly revised during the trip. A destination becomes concrete through a sequence of encounters: searching for entry information, completing a digital booking, navigating an airport, checking into accommodation, purchasing transport, asking for directions, interpreting a museum label, reporting a problem, and receiving assistance when plans change. Each encounter supplies evidence about what the destination is like and how it treats people who do not share the dominant language.

This process is particularly important in Saudi Arabia, where tourism development brings together a rapidly expanding portfolio of destinations, events, heritage attractions, hospitality businesses, transport systems, and digital services. International visitors may have limited Arabic, while employees and residents differ considerably in their experience of using English or other languages in occupational settings. English commonly functions as a bridge language, but the visitor journey is not conducted through English alone. It also involves translated websites, Arabic place names, multilingual signs, machine-translated messages, maps, payment interfaces, menus, audio guides, call centres, and conversations in which both parties may be using a second or additional language. The practical question is therefore wider than whether an employee “speaks English.” It concerns whether a destination communicates coherently across languages, channels, organisations, and moments of uncertainty.

Research on destination image shows that cognitive assessments of attributes and affective responses to place help explain satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Chen & Tsai, 2007). Service-quality research similarly demonstrates that tourists interpret interactions through reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, environmental quality, value, and satisfaction (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Cronin et al., 2000; Grönroos, 1984). These traditions are closely related, but their connection through multilingual communication remains insufficiently developed. Language is often treated as a staff-training issue, a translation problem, or a demographic characteristic of tourists. Such treatments miss its destination-level role. Communication makes services usable, explains rules, enables recovery, signals inclusion, and converts unfamiliar systems into manageable experiences.

A further problem is that multilingual provision is frequently assessed by counting available languages or checking whether English text exists. Availability is not the same as quality. A destination may provide an English website whose terminology differs from the booking confirmation, a transport application whose location names do not match station signs, or a hotel policy translated accurately but explained inconsistently by staff. Conversely, a grammatically imperfect conversation may still create confidence when the employee listens, confirms details, uses visual support, and takes ownership of the request. The relevant construct is therefore multilingual service consistency: the degree to which tourists receive accessible, intelligible, accurate, respectful, and operationally aligned communication across touchpoints.

This article develops an integrative conceptual model connecting multilingual service encounters with destination image, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intentions in Saudi tourism. It has four aims. First, it conceptualises multilingual communication as part of the service system rather than a decorative addition. Second, it explains how encounter-level experiences may accumulate into cognitive and affective destination images. Third, it distinguishes the contribution of English proficiency from the broader quality of translated, digital, visual, and interpersonal communication. Fourth, it proposes a rigorous empirical design that avoids reducing destination loyalty to a single post-visit survey.

The article does not report completed fieldwork or present invented findings. It offers a theory-guided framework for subsequent testing. Its central argument is that visitors infer destination qualities from the way linguistic boundaries are managed. When information is coherent and assistance is available, multilingual communication can make a destination appear competent, welcoming, and easy to navigate. When messages conflict, promises are mistranslated, or staff cannot repair misunderstanding, the problem may be attributed not merely to one employee but to the destination as a whole. The pathway from language to loyalty is therefore indirect, cumulative, and highly sensitive to the organisation of the visitor journey.

2. MULTILINGUAL SERVICE ENCOUNTERS AS A DESTINATION-LEVEL SYSTEM

A service encounter is usually defined at the point where a customer interacts with an employee, technology, or service environment. In tourism, however, encounters are interdependent. The traveller who asks a hotel receptionist about a tour may rely on information first seen on a destination website, repeated in a booking application, confirmed by a transport operator, and interpreted by a guide. The quality of one exchange depends partly on whether these sources agree. It is more useful, therefore, to think of the tourist journey as a communicative service system.

This broader view prevents two errors. The first is the assumption that all communication problems can be solved by recruiting highly fluent English speakers. English proficiency is valuable, particularly in complex encounters, but staffing every touchpoint with advanced speakers may be neither feasible nor necessary. Clear templates, aligned terminology, visual support, escalation procedures, and well-designed digital interfaces can reduce unnecessary linguistic load. The second error is the assumption that technology replaces human communication. Smart-tourism systems can improve access and personalisation, yet they also create new dependencies on interface language, data accuracy, connectivity, and the visitor's digital literacy (Buhalis & Law, 2008;

Gretzel et al., 2015; Neuhofer et al., 2014). When an automated process fails, the availability of a person who can interpret the system often determines whether inconvenience becomes distrust.

English occupies a distinctive position within this system. It is widely used as a lingua franca among speakers who have different first languages, so communicative effectiveness cannot sensibly be measured against imitation of a single native-speaker norm (Jenkins et al., 2011). Tourism employees need intelligibility, attentive listening, relevant occupational vocabulary, pragmatic judgement, and repair strategies. Guests also contribute to understanding through their own proficiency, accent familiarity, willingness to paraphrase, and use of digital tools. Communication is co-produced, although the service provider retains greater responsibility because it controls information and procedures.

Multilingual service quality can be organised around six dimensions. **Accessibility** concerns whether essential information is available in a language or format the visitor can use. **Intelligibility** concerns whether spoken and written messages can be understood without disproportionate effort. **Accuracy** concerns whether meaning, conditions, names, dates, prices, and safety information are correct. **Consistency** concerns agreement across channels and organisations. **Pragmatic respect** concerns tone, politeness, turn-taking, and the avoidance of language that makes visitors feel burdensome or inferior. **Repair capacity** concerns the ability to identify misunderstanding, verify meaning, use alternative modes, and escalate the encounter.

The destination-level perspective also recognises cumulative effects. A minor linguistic inconvenience may be forgotten when later encounters are smooth, while repeated inconsistencies can create a narrative of disorganisation. Critical encounters have disproportionate weight. Errors involving safety, money, entry conditions, medication, identity documents, religious or cultural rules, and missed transport are more likely to influence global judgement than an awkward greeting. The effect of communication quality depends therefore on both frequency and consequence.

3. TOUCHPOINT CONSISTENCY, ENGLISH PROFICIENCY, AND TRANSLATION QUALITY

Tourism communication crosses institutional boundaries. Airports, airlines, hotels, attractions, restaurants, ride services, event organisers, tour operators, payment providers, and destination-management organisations may use different systems and translation practices. From the visitor's standpoint, however, these organisations often belong to one journey. Inconsistency between them creates cognitive work: the tourist must decide which name, time, route, price, or rule is authoritative.

Terminological alignment is a basic requirement. Place names may have several Romanised spellings; heritage terms may be translated differently across signs and websites; ticket categories may change between sales channels; and an English label may not match the phrase recognised by local staff. Such variations are not merely editorial. They can hinder search, navigation, booking, and help-seeking. A multilingual service strategy should therefore maintain controlled terminology for destinations, facilities, transport nodes, event categories, accessibility services, and common policies while preserving culturally meaningful local names.

English proficiency remains crucial where messages cannot be fully standardised. Frontline staff must interpret unexpected questions, explain exceptions, negotiate alternatives, and respond to emotion. Canale and Swain's (1980) broader account of communicative competence is useful because it directs attention beyond grammar to sociolinguistic appropriateness and strategic competence. In tourism, strategic competence includes asking clarifying questions, repeating key details, writing a number or name, using a map, checking understanding, and knowing when to seek assistance. Studies of English needs in Saudi tourism likewise emphasise the occupational character of language demand rather than abstract proficiency alone (Al-Malki, 2023; Al-Malki et al., 2022; Aldosari et al., 2025; Mohammed & Sanosi, 2024).

Translation quality also needs an operational definition. Linguistic accuracy is indispensable, especially for legal, financial, health, and safety information, but the service value of a translation depends on usability. A technically faithful text may still fail if it is too dense for a mobile screen, uses unfamiliar terminology, omits local context, or directs visitors to an unavailable service. Tourism translation should be reviewed against the actual journey: what action must the visitor take, what could be misunderstood, and what support is available when the instruction does not fit the situation?

Digital touchpoints intensify these concerns. Electronic service-quality research highlights efficiency, fulfilment, availability, privacy, and responsiveness as key elements of online evaluation (Parasuraman et al., 2005; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003). In multilingual tourism systems, these elements have linguistic counterparts. Search functions must recognise variant spellings; forms must explain required fields; error messages must suggest a remedy; automated chat should signal its limitations; and

translated content must remain synchronised when schedules or policies change. A multilingual interface that appears complete but fails at payment or authentication may cause greater frustration than a transparent notice that human assistance is needed.

Consistency does not require identical wording in every language. Literal sameness can be misleading because audiences differ in background knowledge and conventions. Functional consistency is more important: each version should enable equivalent understanding and action. A visitor reading English should not receive fewer essential conditions than an Arabic reader, and a translated cultural explanation should not erase uncertainty or controversy merely to become simpler. The goal is equivalence of service access, not mechanical sentence matching.

Service recovery offers the clearest test of the system. When a booking is missing, a route changes, or a ticket condition is disputed, rehearsed greetings are of little value. The visitor needs an explanation, acknowledgement, options, time estimates, and confirmation of what will happen next. English proficiency helps employees formulate these elements, while translation and digital records provide evidence. If the explanation is vague or contradictory, uncertainty can become a judgement about organisational competence. If the recovery is clear and fair, a failure may be contained and, in some cases, become evidence that the destination is dependable under pressure.

4. FROM SERVICE ENCOUNTERS TO DESTINATION IMAGE

Destination image is commonly understood as a multidimensional representation containing cognitive beliefs and affective evaluations. Cognitive image concerns what visitors believe about a destination's attributes: accessibility, infrastructure, safety, hospitality, attractions, value, cleanliness, organisation, and convenience. Affective image concerns how the destination feels: welcoming or alienating, relaxing or stressful, lively or dull, reassuring or intimidating (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004).

Multilingual encounters can shape both dimensions. Accurate directions, understandable rules, and coherent booking information contribute to cognitive judgements of organisation and accessibility. Patient listening, respectful explanation, and willingness to help contribute to affective judgements of welcome and comfort. These effects are not reducible to language skill. The tourist interprets communication as evidence of broader qualities. A well-managed conversation can signal preparation and care; an unanswered question can suggest indifference; an inconsistent translation can imply weak coordination.

The cognitive pathway begins with perceived manageability. International travel involves uncertainty, and language differences can increase the effort required to complete ordinary tasks. When a destination provides intelligible signs, English-capable assistance, predictable terminology, and effective digital guidance, visitors are more able to act independently. This supports an image of accessibility. Accuracy and fulfilment then support an image of reliability. When stated times, prices, inclusions, and procedures match experience, communication becomes evidence that organisations keep promises.

The affective pathway begins with interpersonal recognition. Tourists do not necessarily expect every employee to speak their language fluently, but they are sensitive to whether difficulty is treated with patience or dismissal. Interactional behaviours such as maintaining attention, allowing time, checking meaning, and avoiding ridicule can generate reassurance even when vocabulary is limited. Conversely, technically correct English delivered with impatience may damage the emotional tone of the encounter. Pragmatic respect is therefore central to affective destination image.

Destination image formation is selective. Visitors do not average every encounter mathematically. They remember moments that are emotionally intense, narratively distinctive, or consequential to the trip. A guide who explains a complex heritage issue thoughtfully may become emblematic of cultural depth. A transport misunderstanding that causes a missed event may become emblematic of poor organisation. Online reviews often convert such episodes into general statements about a destination. This generalisation may be unfair to individual providers, but it is behaviourally important.

Multilingual consistency can reduce the gap between projected and experienced image. Promotional communication may present Saudi destinations as accessible, hospitable, and technologically advanced. These claims become credible only when operational touchpoints sustain them. A polished English campaign followed by confusing arrival information creates disconfirmation. Coherence between promotion and service delivery supports authenticity at the destination-brand level: the destination appears to be what it says it is.

5. TOURIST SATISFACTION, REVISIT INTENTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION

Satisfaction is an evaluative response to the relationship between expectations and experience. It is influenced by service quality, perceived value, emotions, and the importance of particular events (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Cronin et al., 2000). In tourism, satisfaction links specific encounters with broader behavioural intentions, including revisiting, recommending, sharing positive content, and choosing related destinations (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chi & Qu, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

The relationship is nevertheless asymmetric. Excellent translation cannot compensate indefinitely for poor transport, weak cleanliness, unsafe practice, or an unfulfilled reservation. Communication is an enabling condition and an interpretive frame, not a substitute for the service itself. Indeed, clear language can expose operational failure more sharply. A visitor may fully understand that a promised facility is unavailable. The model therefore treats multilingual communication as interacting with core service performance.

Revisit intention is also more complex than satisfaction. A highly satisfied tourist may not return because of distance, cost, a desire for novelty, visa conditions, or limited time. Conversely, a visitor may revisit for family, business, religious, or event-related reasons despite mixed service evaluations. Recommendation and positive word of mouth may therefore be more immediate indicators of destination loyalty than literal return. Research should measure several behavioural outcomes and distinguish intention from observed behaviour.

Destination image provides a second pathway. Communication quality can strengthen favourable cognitive and affective images, which in turn support loyalty (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Zhang et al., 2014). A destination perceived as easy to navigate, reliable, welcoming, and responsive is more likely to enter a tourist's future choice set. This effect may be especially relevant for first-time visitors who possess limited prior knowledge and use service encounters to infer what another trip would be like.

Service recovery can have a powerful influence on memory and advocacy. A failure creates uncertainty about whether the provider cares and whether the system can be trusted. Clear multilingual recovery reduces ambiguity by explaining what occurred, what is possible, and who is responsible for the next step. Fair compensation and follow-through remain essential, but language allows the visitor to recognise them. Recovery quality should therefore moderate the consequences of failure severity for satisfaction and destination image.

6. AN INTEGRATIVE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The proposed model begins with **multilingual service consistency**, a higher-order construct reflected in accessibility, intelligibility, accuracy, cross-channel consistency, pragmatic respect, and repair capacity. It does not assume that every touchpoint must offer every language. Rather, it assesses whether the combination of English, translated resources, visual communication, technology, and escalation support enables tourists to understand and act.

The first outcome is **perceived service quality**. Consistent multilingual communication should strengthen reliability because promises and procedures are understood accurately; responsiveness because visitors can request and receive assistance; assurance because explanations signal competence; and empathy because communication can be adapted to individual needs. This relationship should be strongest in information-intensive encounters.

Proposition 1: Higher multilingual service consistency is positively associated with tourists' perceptions of service quality in Saudi tourism encounters.

English proficiency contributes to this higher-order capability, but its effect is primarily interactional. Employees who can listen, clarify, explain, and repair are better able to convert organisational resources into usable service. Advanced grammar without occupational knowledge or authority may have limited value.

Proposition 2: Frontline English communicative proficiency is positively associated with perceived service quality, and this relationship is mediated by communication clarity and repair effectiveness.

The model then separates cognitive and affective destination image. Accuracy, accessibility, and cross-channel agreement should influence beliefs about organisation, convenience, reliability, and safety. Pragmatic respect and supportive recovery should influence feelings of welcome, reassurance, and comfort.

Proposition 3: Multilingual service consistency is positively associated with favourable cognitive destination image through perceived accessibility and organisational competence.

Proposition 4: Pragmatic respect and interpersonal responsiveness in multilingual encounters are positively associated with favourable affective destination image through perceived welcome and psychological safety.

Service quality should contribute to satisfaction, but the effect of communication depends on core service delivery. When language is clear and the promised service is delivered, quality judgements reinforce one another. When communication is strong but delivery is poor, satisfaction remains constrained. When delivery is adequate but communication is confusing, the visitor may underestimate quality or expend unnecessary effort.

Proposition 5: Perceived service quality mediates the relationship between multilingual service consistency and tourist satisfaction, while core service performance positively moderates this mediated relationship.

Destination image and satisfaction should jointly influence loyalty. Cognitive image supports confidence that another visit will be manageable, while affective image supports desire and emotional attachment. Satisfaction provides an overall evaluation of the completed journey.

Proposition 6: Cognitive and affective destination image, together with tourist satisfaction, mediate the relationship between multilingual service consistency and revisit and recommendation intentions.

Failure conditions alter the model. The more consequential the failure, the greater the need for precise, responsive communication. A minor delay may require a brief explanation; a cancelled booking requires options, records, and follow-through. Recovery communication cannot replace restitution, but it shapes whether the remedy is understood as fair and dependable.

Proposition 7: Service-recovery quality weakens the negative effect of service failure severity on destination image and satisfaction, with the buffering effect strongest when recovery communication is clear, multilingual, and operationally fulfilled.

Finally, the model recognises tourist heterogeneity. First-time visitors, tourists with low English proficiency, visitors from linguistically distant backgrounds, and those heavily dependent on digital systems may be more sensitive to communication infrastructure. Repeat visitors may have learned local routines and tolerate ambiguity differently. Trip purpose also matters: business, leisure, heritage, event, religious, and visiting-friends-and-relatives journeys involve different risks and expectations.

Proposition 8: The effects of multilingual service consistency on service quality and destination image are moderated by tourist language proficiency, prior familiarity, trip purpose, encounter criticality, and digital dependence.

Table 1. Multilingual touchpoints and their destination-level implications

Touchpoint	Principal communication demand	Typical risk of inconsistency	Likely destination-image inference
Pre-trip website or application	Searchable information, booking conditions, names and dates	Outdated translation, unmatched terminology, incomplete conditions	Technological competence, accessibility, reliability
Airport and arrival services	Wayfinding, entry procedures, transport connection	Conflicting signs, unclear queue instructions, unavailable assistance	Organisation, safety, welcome
Accommodation	Check-in, policies, payment, requests, recovery	Staff-system mismatch, vague explanation, unfulfilled promise	Professionalism, care, trustworthiness

Touchpoint	Principal communication demand	Typical risk of inconsistency	Likely destination-image inference
Attractions and heritage sites	Interpretation, ticketing, cultural guidance	Oversimplification, inconsistent names, unreadable signs	Cultural depth, respect, authenticity
Transport and mobility	Routes, fares, disruptions, location names	Romanisation mismatch, application-sign conflict, poor recovery	Ease of movement, coordination, dependability
Food and retail	Menu, ingredients, price, payment, complaint	Mistranslated items, allergy ambiguity, unclear charges	Hospitality, safety, value
Events and entertainment	Entry, schedule, seating, restrictions	Last-minute changes not synchronised across languages	Efficiency, fairness, preparedness
Post-visit communication	Refunds, feedback, loyalty, review response	Automated replies, untranslated evidence requirements	Accountability, relationship orientation

7. PROPOSED EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

A robust test of the model should combine journey-level, encounter-level, and organisational evidence. A single survey administered at departure would be convenient but insufficient. It would rely on memory, blur distinct touchpoints, and make causal ordering difficult. A sequential mixed-method design is more appropriate.

The first phase should map the multilingual visitor journey. Researchers could conduct structured audits of destination websites, booking platforms, airports, transport systems, hotels, restaurants, attractions, and events in several Saudi destinations. The sample should represent mature and emerging destinations, urban and heritage settings, and different service-price levels. Auditors would record language availability, terminological alignment, update consistency, readability, human-assistance routes, and the match between digital claims and physical delivery. The purpose is not to reward literal translation volume but to assess functional access.

The second phase should use longitudinal tourist data. Participants could complete a short pre-arrival survey measuring prior destination image, expectations, travel experience, trip purpose, language repertoire, English self-efficacy, and digital dependence. During the trip, brief mobile diaries could capture critical encounters soon after they occur. Each entry would identify the touchpoint, language or mode used, perceived clarity, emotional response, effort, outcome, and whether repair was needed. Event-contingent sampling would reduce retrospective distortion while preserving natural experience.

A post-visit survey would measure multilingual service consistency, perceived service quality, cognitive and affective image, satisfaction, perceived value, revisit intention, recommendation intention, and willingness to share positive content. Established destination-image and behavioural-intention measures can be adapted carefully rather than copied without contextual validation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). New multilingual-service items should be developed through interviews, expert review, cognitive testing, and pilot analysis.

The study should distinguish tourist English proficiency from employee proficiency. Tourist proficiency can be self-reported and supplemented by a short scenario-based comprehension measure. Employee proficiency should not be inferred from guests' accent preferences. For participating organisations, role-based assessments can evaluate listening, explanation, clarification, occupational vocabulary, and repair. Observational coding or mystery-guest tasks may provide behavioural evidence. Accent should be recorded only where relevant to intelligibility, not ranked according to native-likeness.

The third phase should examine organisational processes. Interviews with destination managers, translators, digital-content teams, hotel supervisors, guides, and frontline employees could explore terminology governance, content updating, escalation, training, and responsibility for multilingual errors. Document analysis might compare source policies, translated versions, staff scripts, and digital messages. This phase would explain why consistency succeeds or breaks down.

Sampling should reflect the diversity of Saudi tourism. Nationality alone is an inadequate proxy for language. Researchers should record first language, other languages, English use, travel-party composition, age, accessibility needs, trip purpose, length of stay, and previous visits. Religious tourists, business travellers, leisure tourists, event visitors, and heritage tourists may experience different communicative systems. Analysis should test measurement invariance before comparing groups.

Structural equation modelling could estimate the proposed mediation pathways, but multilevel modelling may be required because encounters are nested within tourists and tourists within organisations or destinations. Diary data can be analysed at the encounter level, while post-visit image and loyalty operate at the journey level. Latent growth or change-score models could examine how destination image shifts from pre-arrival to post-visit. Qualitative incidents would contextualise statistical paths and identify mechanisms that fixed-response scales miss.

8. MANAGERIAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The framework shifts attention from isolated language courses to multilingual service governance. Destination organisations should begin by identifying high-consequence touchpoints. Safety instructions, booking conditions, payment information, transport disruption, accessibility support, entry requirements, and complaint procedures deserve stricter translation and update control than promotional slogans. Risk-based prioritisation is more useful than attempting to translate every text equally.

A shared terminology system can reduce avoidable inconsistency. Standardised Romanisation, place names, ticket categories, service labels, and common policy terms should be accessible to public agencies and private providers. Standardisation should not erase local linguistic heritage; it should make cross-channel navigation possible. Local names can be retained while stable English forms and explanations are provided.

Recruitment and training should be role-specific. Employees who manage complaints, safety, complex bookings, medical concerns, or heritage interpretation require stronger interactive English than roles supported by predictable scripts. Training should use realistic scenarios and assess successful task completion. Useful outcomes include correct understanding, clear confirmation, appropriate tone, effective use of visual aids, and accurate escalation. Native-like pronunciation is neither a necessary nor a fair target.

Translation workflows need operational ownership. Language professionals should work with subject specialists and frontline staff, especially for content involving law, safety, heritage, food, and accessibility. A translation is not finished when it is linguistically approved; it must be tested on the relevant device, location, and action sequence. Update responsibility should be explicit so that English and other versions do not lag behind Arabic changes.

Frontline staff also need informational authority. Communication training cannot solve a system in which employees lack access to current schedules, refund rules, or booking records. The employee who speaks excellent English but cannot act may create frustration by making the organisational limitation fully visible. Language capability, system access, and decision authority should therefore be designed together.

Service-recovery protocols should include multilingual elements: acknowledgement of the problem, verified facts, available options, time estimates, compensation conditions, named responsibility, and written confirmation. These elements help prevent a second misunderstanding. Organisations should monitor whether recovery messages are fulfilled, because a clearly stated but broken promise damages trust more than an initially uncertain response.

At the destination level, multilingual service metrics can complement visitor-volume indicators. Possible measures include success rates for multilingual task completion, consistency errors across channels, time to reach human support, complaint recurrence caused by misunderstanding, visitor effort, and post-visit perceptions of accessibility. Metrics should support improvement rather than encourage staff to avoid difficult interactions.

Community participation remains important. Tourism communication should not turn local people and culture into a polished English product designed solely for external convenience. Heritage terminology, place naming, and cultural explanation require

local ownership. Multilingual accessibility is strongest when it opens a respectful route into Saudi contexts rather than replacing them with generic global vocabulary.

9. DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The model also resists linguistic simplification. English proficiency matters, but fluency alone does not guarantee quality. An employee may speak smoothly while giving incorrect information, whereas a less fluent employee may communicate effectively through confirmation and repair. Likewise, the existence of English text does not demonstrate multilingual accessibility. The relevant outcome is whether visitors can understand, decide, and act with reasonable confidence.

Several limitations should guide future research. First, the model is intentionally broad and may behave differently across tourism domains. Hotel communication is relational and continuous, airport communication is time-critical, heritage interpretation is knowledge-intensive, and digital booking is interface-dependent. Domain-specific models may be required after an initial comparative study.

Second, the direction of causality is not always simple. A favourable destination image may lead tourists to interpret ambiguous encounters generously. Longitudinal measurement can reduce this problem but not remove it entirely. Experimental vignette studies could manipulate message clarity, consistency, and recovery while holding the service outcome constant.

Third, multilingual communication is difficult to measure because quality depends on language combinations and context. A scale developed with English-speaking tourists may not capture the experience of visitors who use English reluctantly or depend on another language. Item development should include diverse linguistic groups and should allow for visual and technological support.

Fourth, revisit intention is constrained by factors outside service communication. Geographic distance, novelty seeking, cost, family obligations, and trip purpose may weaken the path from satisfaction to return. Recommendation, destination preference, and actual repeat behaviour should therefore be assessed alongside intention.

Fifth, destination-level coordination raises governance questions. No single organisation controls every touchpoint. Research should examine how responsibility is distributed among public authorities, destination-management organisations, technology vendors, transport operators, and hospitality firms. Network analysis may reveal where information changes and where translation accountability becomes unclear.

10. CONCLUSION

Tourists experience a destination through communication as well as through place. In Saudi tourism, English-speaking staff, translated information, digital interfaces, signs, maps, and recovery messages together determine whether visitors can navigate services and feel recognised. These elements should not be managed separately. Their consistency helps transform unfamiliarity into confidence and individual encounters into a favourable destination image.

The conceptual model developed in this article proposes that multilingual service consistency improves perceived service quality and shapes both cognitive and affective destination image. Accessibility, accuracy, and cross-channel agreement support perceptions of organisation and reliability; pragmatic respect and responsive assistance support feelings of welcome and safety. Satisfaction then helps convert these evaluations into revisit and recommendation intentions, while service recovery, tourist characteristics, and encounter criticality alter the strength of the pathways.

The practical implication is demanding but clear. Tourism organisations cannot build loyalty through polished English promotion alone. The promise of accessibility must survive booking, arrival, movement, interpretation, payment, disruption, and post-visit contact. English proficiency contributes when it is paired with occupational knowledge, translation quality, visual support, system access, and authority to act. Multilingual communication is therefore not a peripheral courtesy. It is part of the infrastructure through which a destination becomes understandable, trustworthy, and worth returning to.

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