



IMPACT OF TOURISM ON SAUDI ARABIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The tourism sector in Saudi Arabia has experienced major changes in line with Vision 2030, which aims to expand the industry from religious travel to a larger market for leisure and heritage activities. One of the major factors affecting policy implementation is the lack of qualitative information on tourism's effects on Saudi tradition. This study explores the social and cultural impact of tourism on Saudi society within the framework of the Vision 2030. This study adopted a qualitative research design and used semi-structured interviews with residents of Saudi Arabia, tourists from different countries in Saudi Arabia, stakeholders from the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia, and two experts from the university. Fifteen interviews were conducted in total, which provides extensive knowledge about the nature of tourism in Saudi Arabia and its impact on society. The findings demonstrate that Saudi Arabia's tourism industry supports economic development, improves international connections, and promotes modernisation. However, issues surrounding the loss of traditional authenticity, the preservation of social norms, and religious tolerance remain at the forefront of the industry's expansion. This study demonstrates the need for Saudi Arabia to adopt a balanced approach that supports sustainable tourism while preserving its traditional heritage.

Keywords: Tourism, culture, society, economic growth, development

INTRODUCTION

The Saudi Arabian tourism industry has experienced massive changes since the launch of the Vision 2030 initiative, which aims to develop alternatives to oil dependence for economic growth. This initiative serves as the definitive strategy to make Saudi Arabia an international economic leader while leveraging tourism. Religious tourism has long dominated Saudi Arabia, as millions of people undertake annual visits to Mecca and Medina for Hajj and Umrah ceremonies (Alalmai et al. 2020). These sacred urban locations serve as Islam's holiest destinations and draw massive numbers of Muslim visitors from throughout the world while also defining Saudi Arabia's stance on tourism (Qurashi 2017).

Saudi Arabia has modernised its tourism strategy through the inclusion of leisure attractions to capture tourists beyond religious groups (Almakaty 2025). These strategic adjustments made by the Saudi government aim to maximise national heritage assets, historical sites, and geographic areas, extending from the Red Sea shores to desert regions and the ancient sites of Al-Ula. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia works to expand its tourism industry by welcoming diverse types of visitors that range from leisure travellers to landscape explorers and religious pilgrims, not just within but across the entire world (Almakaty 2025).

This rapid change in Saudi's tourism industry has resulted in deep social changes across the country. Saudi Arabia has historically been based on traditional Islamic values, but tourism threatens these values as the growing flow of international visitors exposes its population to new behaviours that challenge enduring customs and frameworks (Qurashi 2017). Many young Saudis are quickly embracing these new behaviours, and this trend has raised scepticism in conservative communities that seek to maintain the authenticity of Saudi society (Thompson 2019). On the whole, a range of concerns over the potential impacts of tourism development have created a significant demand for comprehensive planning and a need for more research on the effects of tourism on society and the local residents. A major concern, reported in the literature over the years and which increasingly influenced the tourism development sector, is the attitude and behaviour of local residents towards tourists and tourism activities in their communities (Alamineh et al. 2023). Exploring the impact of tourism on society is essential for developing an effective plan and strategy for tourism. Therefore, this study explores how the growth in Saudi Arabia's tourism sector has impacted its society, with a focus on the social and cultural impacts.

Despite the increased focus on the growth of tourism within the framework of Vision 2030, the literature remains largely quantitative and economically focused, thus lacking qualitative data on how locals perceive the social and cultural changes brought about by the development of tourism. Much of the research available has been about economic benefits, infrastructure, or religious tourism, yet the social everyday consequences, including behavioural change, cultural adaptation, and the tensions between modernisation and tradition, have been understudied. This gap demonstrates the importance of qualitative studies that reflect the voices, perceptions, and lived experiences of residents, tourists, and stakeholders in the fast-evolving Saudi Arabian tourism landscape.

This research problem seeks to examine the social and cultural effects of tourism on Saudi society in light of Vision 2030. To this end, the research has three objectives:

1. To examine how tourism-driven modernisation influences local traditions, behaviours, and values.
2. To understand the perceptions of residents, tourists, and stakeholders regarding the social change resulting from tourism growth.
3. To identify areas of tension between cultural preservation and tourism-driven transformation.

Despite the economic and environmental implications of tourism in Saudi Arabia, this study focuses on the social and cultural aspects of tourism development. These include changes in societal behaviour, cultural adaptations, generational differences, religious sensitivities, and evolving community dynamics. This study limits the scope, thereby offering a detailed and narrow perspective of how tourism intersects with social values, traditional identity, and daily cultural practices within Saudi Arabia. Since social and cultural change is a complex and value-based process, this study is best suited to a qualitative approach. Qualitative approaches permit an extensive examination of personal perceptions, lived experiences, and divergent opinions between residents, tourists, and other tourism stakeholders. This method aids a more comprehensive investigation of the ways tourism intersects with cultural identity and social change, thus aligning with this study's overall goal to clarify the human and societal implications of tourism in the face of Vision 2030.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism in Saudi Arabia has witnessed tremendous transformation, as the country has transitioned from religious tourism to expansion into leisure tourism due to its economic benefits. Saudi Arabia implemented the USD500 billion NEOM development alongside the AMAALA luxury resort and the Red Sea Project to support this transformation (Edwards 2024). These projects serve as architectural and technological achievements while demonstrating Saudi Arabia's dedication to becoming a world-leading tourist destination. Saudi Arabia aims to achieve a whopping 100 million yearly visitors through these projects and create 10% national gross domestic product (GDP) growth by 2030 (Damanhoury 2017; Bayaa 2023).

Despite the development of tourism in Saudi Arabia, challenges persist. First, the growing numbers of foreign visitors bring diverse cultural customs, which conflict with Saudi Arabia's strong Islamic heritage (Qurashi 2017). Furthermore, the implementation of infrastructure projects, including 24,000 new hotel rooms and better transportation systems, drove development but resulted in more stringent regulatory measures (Rokou 2016). Also, state moderation regulates and restricts tourist behaviour to balance national identity while allowing relative freedom to tourists (Damanhoury 2017; Bayaa 2023). All of these reflect a diplomatic struggle between societal traditions and modern development, thus raising controversies about how flexible Saudi society should become when welcoming global visitors. Saudi Arabia's focus on leisure tourism serves as part of its overall plan to decrease its dependence on petroleum revenue. The Saudi Seasons festivals serve as one example of how the country uses these events to promote all its historical sites, like Al-Ula, Diriyah, and untouched regions at the Red Sea Coast (Filippi and Mazzetto 2024). The festivals showcase Saudi Arabia's unique society and landscapes to residents and visitors alike, which has increased appreciation for Saudi Arabia's national heritage. However, this rapid development in the tourism industry creates concerns among critics, as they claim that this initiative prioritises economic growth, which can diminish the authenticity of Saudi society as well as the loss of identity (Nguyen et al. 2024).

The initiative to expand tourism in Saudi Arabia has brought various sustainability-related discussions to light. The environmental impacts of these projects and their effects on local resources and natural habitats have become major areas of concern (Hassan et al. 2022). Despite promising to implement sustainable protocols, the Red Sea Project continues to face challenges regarding its environmental effect on the ecosystem (Gohar and Kondolf 2016). The continued success of these projects depends on achieving the correct balance between environmental conservation and economic growth measures. Although other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Oman also sought to diversify their economies with tourism, their paths have been completely unique in comparison to Saudi Arabia. The UAE has sought an entertainment- and luxury-focused business model, with destinations including Dubai and Abu Dhabi providing cosmopolitan leisure and architectural flair (Bodolica et al. 2020). The recent tourism growth in Qatar focusses on sports, business travel, and urban developments, boosted by hosting global events like the FIFA World Cup 2022 (Song 2025). In contrast, Oman encourages the development of ecotourism and natural heritage conservation through its agenda of Vision 2040 (Khan 2025). The strategy of Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia, however, is a hybridisation of religious tourism and the new leisure, heritage, and cultural tourism. This ambivalent orientation sets Saudi Arabia apart in the region: although the country welcomes global modernisation, it still bases the identity of tourism on Islamic history and the maintenance of religious heritage. This stance makes Saudi Arabia not only a competitor in the Gulf tourism market but also a model in integrating economic diversification with cultural authenticity.

The Gulf region comparison shows further structural and cultural differences that transcend project typologies. In contrast to the UAE and Qatar, whose tourism policies are based on global cosmopolitanism and entertainment-based branding, Saudi Arabia is limited and framed by the centrality of Islamic identity and conservative social values. This implies that social change brought about by tourism is bargained more sensitively in Saudi Arabia, where cultural authenticity and religious legitimacy are not negotiable state interests. Despite its cultural orientation, the ecotourism model in Oman operates within a less conservative social environment compared to the Saudi landscape. These differences demonstrate that the tourism development in Saudi Arabia cannot be assessed simply in terms of economy or region; it should be considered through the prism of culture, religion, and national identity. This supports the necessity of sociologically driven study of the social and cultural effects of tourism in Saudi Arabia. The development of Saudi Arabia's tourism sector embodies a bold vision for the future. However, it also underscores the need for careful planning and thoughtful policies that balance economic growth with societal preservation and environmental sustainability.

In the studies reviewed, one common trend stood out: the rapid growth of tourism in Saudi Arabia serves as an effective agent of social change. Sociological theories like modernisation theory and cultural change theory stress that as societies are exposed to the world, there is the likelihood of experiencing changes in norms, behaviours, and identity. The same is echoed in the work by Qurashi (2017), Bayaa (2023), and Hothan and Butler (2025), who together demonstrate how global tourism brings in new cultural icons, ways of life, and social expectations. Instead of considering each source in isolation, such studies pull together into the notion that tourism development in Saudi Arabia serves as both an economic diversification plan and a driver of social reconfiguration. This shared understanding underscores why a study of the social and cultural implications of tourism is vital, especially in a society where tradition and religion form the core of the social fabric.

With respect to social exchange and globalisation, the combination of tourism and globalisation has resulted in increased social exchanges in Saudi Arabia. Through globalisation, travel has become more accessible, resulting in increased growth in international tourism (Brelík 2018). This process has allowed the influx of diverse social expression and perception into Saudi Arabia. Social exchange highlights two major impacts on Saudi Arabia. First, tourism between different nationalities improved social and cultural understanding (Madkhali et al. 2024). Tourist engagements expose Saudi citizens to different life approaches, which strengthens cultural understanding while creating prospects for worldwide business collaboration (Bayaa 2023). The positive impacts of this social exchange extend beyond individual interactions. For example, the exposure to international tourists has encouraged Saudi businesses to adopt more inclusive practices, such as providing multilingual services and catering to diverse dietary preferences (Alharethi and Kabil 2024). These developments in Saudi tourism boost visitor experiences while demonstrating the government's progress toward greater social openness. Through festivals and international events such as the Riyadh Season, Saudi Arabia creates opportunities to present its traditions along with establishing diplomatic connections with other nations. In fact, these events have increased the global appeal of Saudi Arabia through friendly acceptance and social vitality.

However, globalisation has presented more worries about the potential abandonment of Saudi heritage, as the widespread adoption of Western practices in leisure tourism threatens to dilute Saudi Arabia's unique traditions. Exposure to international tourism and global media has led many young Saudi Arabians to adopt Western behavioural standards and consumer preferences (Hothan and Butler 2025). This situation has resulted in discussions about finding equilibrium between contemporary development practices and preservation strategies for Saudi Arabia's traditions (Damanhoury 2017; Bayaa 2023). The economic dimension of globalisation has intensified concerns about turning heritage into commercial commodities. Critics maintain that

Vision 2030 initiatives threaten the authenticity of Saudi Arabia's traditional practices, as business interests have transformed these traditions into superficial attractions (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2024). The combination of economic growth with tradition preservation has created sustainability challenges because economic pressures threaten traditional authenticity. Tourism and globalisation offer Saudi Arabia numerous prospects, yet its integration means dealing with various complex hurdles. Saudi Arabia maintains successful global tourism development yet encounters persistent ethical dilemmas that demand ongoing resolution.

Consequently, tourism creates a complex range of consequences for local traditions and values since it both yields economic growth and causes traditional disruptions. The tourism industry brings substantial economic growth by creating jobs and earning foreign exchange, yet these benefits create serious concerns about how tradition and social evolution are affected. Saudi Arabia's transformation into a tourist destination raises questions about the authenticity of traditional values and practices. The inclusion of traditional festivals and cultural performances in the tourism sector creates the risk of turning religious ceremonies into standardised multimedia events (Damanhour 2017). Ethical dilemmas arise when traditions undergo modifications since changes may alter their fundamental values or original meaning. When historical sites are modified to attract visitors, they lose their original meaning and turn into staged attractions instead of serving as genuine Saudi historical markers (Qurashi 2017).

The rapid urbanisation of Saudi Arabia has impacted the behaviour and social conduct of people in the region. In fact, many younger Saudi citizens have shown increasing interest in global fashion styles along with entertainment preferences and lifestyle choices (Algumzi 2022). This shift in the social and behavioural characteristics of young Saudi Arabians has resulted in an intergenerational conflict, where older generations fear traditional Saudi values may disappear (Damanhour 2017; Bayaa 2023). Furthermore, the employment of women in tourism represents a key Vision 2030 objective and demonstrates the complexities of societal evolution. Segments of Saudi society consider this change a shift away from traditional gender role definitions, while supporters of this vision claim it results in both economic progress and social equality (Sobaih and Abu Elnasr 2024). The dual nature of these challenges underscores the requirement to develop effective policies that integrate progressive social developments alongside cultural considerations.

While religious tourism functions as Saudi Arabia's foundational cultural pillar, it faces new challenges from the leisure tourism sector because of the difficult choice between its religious heritage preservation and tourism sector expansion (Damanhour 2017). Tourists from non-Muslim backgrounds visiting different areas within Saudi Arabia face occasional conflicts by exhibiting modes of behaviour that contradict Islamic principles (Qurashi 2017). The public display of emotions and failure to follow dress code rules at destinations have sparked complex dialogues about maintaining cultural acceptance and inclusive strengths. Tourism-driven non-Islamic practices become more visible in public spaces, which sparks concerns among traditional Muslim communities (Qurashi 2017). Essentially, this increasing public visibility shows progress toward diversity acceptance while highlighting the ongoing challenge of maintaining inclusivity alongside Saudi Arabia's traditional customs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The review of literature shows a steady conflict between the perceived positive and negative impacts of tourism and the fear of cultural erosion, displaying patterns that are more likely to follow social exchange theory and cultural commodification theory. Articles illuminating the economic benefits of tourism (e.g., Edwards 2024; Filippi and Mazzetto 2024; Almakaty 2025)

capture the benefit aspect of the social exchange theory, and publications reporting behavioural change, value incompatibilities, and heritage transformation (Qurashi 2017; Algumzi 2022; Nguyen et al. 2024) capture the cost aspect. Likewise, any indication that traditions are being orientated towards tourist consumption, like the repackaging of festivals and heritage sites, directly underlines the main assertions of cultural commodification theory. Grounding the literature in these theoretical foundations, the review explains how the extant literature supports the analytical perspective of this study and why it is necessary to investigate social and cultural impacts of tourism in Saudi Arabia.

This study relies on two key theoretical frameworks, social exchange theory and cultural commodification theory, to describe the multifaceted connection between tourism, society, and culture in Saudi Arabia. Using these theories, one can gain insight into how individuals and communities assess the benefits and costs of tourism, and how these traditional practices can change due to pressure on the global market. The social exchange theory, first proposed by Homans (1958) and subsequently by Emerson (1976), posits that social behaviour can be elucidated through an exchange process wherein all participants endeavour to optimise benefits and mitigate costs. The social exchange theory has been commonly applied in tourism studies to examine how residents evaluate tourism development in terms of perceived benefits (employment, enhanced infrastructure, and global exposure) and social or cultural costs (overcrowding, loss of privacy, or value erosion). When the perceived benefits exceed the perceived disadvantages, residents are likely to be supportive of tourism initiatives. Applied to Saudi Arabia, social exchange theory can be used to understand why many citizens are enthusiastic to use tourism as a source of economic diversification as part of Vision 2030 and why others are more reluctant to adopt the practice due to moral degradation and cultural erosion. This theory offers an understanding of the bargain between modernisation and commitment to religious values that inform societal perceptions of tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The cultural commodification theory examines the transformation of local cultures, traditions, and heritage into commodities that are consumed commercially within tourism markets (Arnould and Thompson 2005). With the growth of tourism, cultural expressions that once had their social or spiritual significance are frequently repackaged as performances or souvenirs to attract tourists. This process can result in simplification or distortion of the traditions, which brings ethical issues of authenticity. In the Saudi context, the theory is especially applicable, as the Vision 2030 encourages heritage tourism and international festivals that showcase traditional practices in globalised forms. Using cultural commodification theory, this study interprets the local fears of turning sacred practices and customs into tourist experiences as a clash between cultural conservation and economic realism.

A blend of these two theories facilitates the creation of a more intricate picture of the changing tourism environment in Saudi Arabia. The social exchange theory describes the process by which individuals and communities balance the material and non-material products of tourism participation, and cultural commodification theory reveals the symbolic and ethical effects of cultural transformation. Collectively, they demonstrate that the development of tourism in Saudi Arabia is not only an economic or social undertaking but also a highly moral bargain between modernity and religion. Overall, the literature indicates a mixed discourse: tourism leads to economic growth and internationalisation, but it also creates social tension in terms of identity, local values, gender relationships, and cultural expression. The body of existing research concurs that such tensions are especially acute in Saudi Arabia because of the central role of religion and tradition in the construction of the life of society. However, the literature is missing a unified qualitative explanation of how these conflicts are experienced by residents, tourists, and stakeholders themselves, particularly regarding social change and cultural preservation. This divide makes the applications of social exchange theory and cultural commodification theory

relevant to understanding the nuanced, daily negotiations between forces of modernisation and cultural persistence. The current research adds to this discussion by integrating these theoretical perspectives with empirical understandings of various participants in the transforming tourism industry in Saudi Arabia.

METHODS

A qualitative technique was employed to collect, evaluate, and interpret the interview data obtained from this study's informants. A case study approach was chosen because this study places a strong emphasis on the real-life views, opinions, and concerns of the locals and experts regarding how Saudi Arabian citizens perceive the impacts of tourism on their culture. Concerning the scope, this study was conducted in active tourism zones such as Al-Ula, Jeddah, Mecca, Riyadh, and the Red Sea region. The essence was to explore the views, opinions, and concerns of the locals in these areas who have worked or had direct involvement in tourism activities for some years. All the fifteen informants were chosen using criterion-based purposive sampling, which is commonly used by qualitative researchers to identify informants who can provide comprehensive information on the phenomenon under investigation (Moser and Korstjens 2018). Criterion-based purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique that selects a specific sample following a pre-established set of criteria or goals (Kalu 2019). The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) the informant must have a direct involvement in tourism and must be above 18 years old; (2) the informants must be tourists or locals from Al-Ula, Jeddah, Mecca, Riyadh, and the Red Sea Region; and (3) they must be willing to participate and have knowledge and experience of tourism (Creswell 2014). Table 1 shows the participant profiles, and Table 2 provides the expert profile.

Table 1: Demographic profile of participants

Code	Category	Gender	Age (years old)	Occupation	Nationality
Participant 1	Local resident	Male	45	Business owner	Saudi
Participant 2	Local resident	Female	32	Teacher	Saudi
Participant 3	Local resident	Male	27	Tour guide	Saudi
Participant 4	Tourist	Female	40	Photographer	France
Participant 5	Tourist	Male	50	Engineer	China
Participant 6	Tourist	Female	29	Doctor	United States
Participant 7	Local resident	Male	42	Hotel manager	UAE
Participant 8	Representative	Female	38	Government tourism official	Saudi
Participant 9	Representative	Male	35	Government tourism official	Saudi
Participant 10	Stakeholder	Female	29	Cultural event organiser	Saudi
Participant 11	Stakeholder	Male	47	Tourism policy analyst	Saudi
Participant 12	Stakeholder	Female	33	Accountant	Saudi
Participant 13	Stakeholder	Male	52	Foreign investor in tourism	Saudi

Table 2: Demographic profile of experts

Code	Gender	Qualification	Specialisation	Experience (years)	Role in the study
Expert 1	Male	Doctorate (PhD) in Social Work	Cultural sociology	8	Provided expert insights on tradition preservation, policy, and social change.
Expert 2	Male	PhD in Social Work	Social development	5	Contributed expert perspectives on cultural identity, behavioural shifts, and sustainable tourism policies.

This study involved a total of fifteen participants, selected through purposive sampling to capture diverse perspectives across the tourism ecosystem. The sample consisted of four local residents, three foreign tourists, two representatives from the tourism sector, two academic experts, and four additional stakeholders involved in cultural or hospitality-related activities. This ensured adequate representation of groups directly engaged with tourism in Saudi Arabia. Although the overall sample size was relatively small ($n = 15$), it conforms with qualitative research standards that emphasise depth of insight and data saturation over statistical generalisation (Creswell and Poth 2018). This sample size was determined based on the saturation level reached in the data collection process. Data saturation was achieved by the twelfth interview, when no new ideas, perceptions, or social patterns emerged from additional participants. The final three interviews were conducted to verify consistency and ensure that the themes reflected a comprehensive range of viewpoints. The decision to stop data collection at this stage is consistent with qualitative research standards, where depth of information and repetition of ideas indicate adequate saturation.

Face-to-face individual sessions using semi-structured interviews to obtain data were conducted. However, to enhance the result, an interview was conducted with two experts (academicians) from the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Social Science, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU). Additional information comes from peer-reviewed literature, while reports and government publications offer extra perspective on the results. Before the commencement of the interview, the identified informants were contacted via SMS, e-mail, and phone calls. The researcher thanked those who made the effort to respond and thanked those who declined. As for those who showed interest, the researcher contacted them and scheduled the interview. The interviews were conducted in different settings, such as coffee shops, restaurants, tourist sites, and ministry offices. The interview sessions lasted between 35 minutes and 55 minutes. Both English and Arabic were used for the interview. However, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the Arabic versions were translated into English by an expert. Both versions of each transcript were then sent to an expert translator and editor to check the accuracy and help avoid bias in the results.

Furthermore, thematic analysis was used to analyse the responses in the following five stages: open codes, axial codes, theme clustering, analytical theme identification, and research connections to published works. Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, in which themes were identified through the natural occurrences of the responses the participants gave, as opposed to being forced by a priori theories. This methodology made sure that interpretations have captured the true opinions of respondents. The coding process followed a systematic multi-stage procedure. First, the researcher conducted open coding to identify initial concepts across all transcripts. The process commenced with open coding, where key words and phrases were recognised line by line. Second, axial coding was performed, where relationships between codes were examined and grouped into broader categories. This means the primary

codes identified in open codes were then coded using the axial code to relate similar ideas and patterns across interviews. Third, selective coding was used to synthesise these categories into four overarching themes that reflected the dominant social and cultural patterns described by participants. At this stage, similar codes were clustered into larger themes that captured key aspects of the impacts of tourism, such as economic growth versus tradition preservation, social and behavioural shifts, societal exchange challenges, and policy and infrastructure improvements. The researcher revisited the transcripts multiple times to confirm the stability and coherence of the codes. Memos and analytic notes were generated throughout the process to document decisions, improve consistency, and strengthen the reliability of interpretation. To enhance the reliability of this process, the researcher reviewed all transcripts multiple times to confirm consistent coding and interpretation. Notes taken during the interviews were also cross-checked to verify meaning, and emerging themes were compared with concepts identified in the literature review. This combination of data- and literature-driven reflection ensured both contextual sensitivity and conceptual depth.

To further improve the quality of the research, strict ethical guidelines were observed. First, the interviewer ensured that all participants were well aware of the purpose of their participation. The researcher received informed consent before proceeding with the interviews. The researcher also ensured the safety of all participants by concealing any vital or personal information that could identify them, thereby maintaining their anonymity. Finally, the researcher ensures transparency by reporting the outcome of the interviews exactly without alteration or bias. This study employed a triangulation approach, which integrated various data sources to strengthen the credibility and validity of the findings. Methodological triangulation was strengthened by cross-verifying the interview data with policy documents, reports, the Saudi Vision 2030 tourism framework, Saudi Tourism Authority reports, and select World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) publications and academic literature. This multimodal verification process allowed the findings to be compared against national trends, institutional data, and existing scholarship, thereby increasing credibility. Triangulation also highlighted areas where participant perceptions converged or diverged from formal policy narratives.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

An analysis of interview data highlighted both negative evaluations and contradictory viewpoints on the social impacts of tourism in Saudi Arabia. Residents, travellers, and tourism business representatives all had different views on the topic, thus illustrating both limitations and potential gains from the expansion of tourism operations. The findings revealed that the expansion of Saudi Arabia's tourism sector results in economic growth and modernisation; however, challenges regarding the loss of tradition and changes to social customs persist. Table 3 presents the summary of themes and supporting evidence.

Table 3: Summary of themes and supporting evidence

Theme	Primary findings	Supporting evidence	Connection to social exchange theory/cultural commodification theory
Economic growth vs tradition preservation	Economic benefits accompanied by cultural dilution concerns	WTTC (2024), GDP/employment data, and participant observations	Social exchange theory: Benefits versus costs cultural commodification theory – Cultural modification

(continued on next page)

Table 3: (continued)

Theme	Primary findings	Supporting evidence	Connection to social exchange theory/cultural commodification theory
Social and behavioural shifts	Youth adopting globalised behaviours; tensions with elders	Employment and gender participation statistics	Social exchange theory: Social change acceptance cultural commodification theory – Cultural hybridisation
Challenges in social exchange	Language barriers and limited cultural literacy	Saudi Tourism Authority (2024) survey	Social exchange theory: Perceived social costs reduce support
Policy and infrastructure	Strong development but inconsistent implementation	Vision 2030 frameworks and expert insights	Social exchange theory and cultural commodification theory: Balance of benefit, cost, and authenticity

Theme 1: Economic Growth versus Tradition Preservation

Key destinations like Mecca, Jeddah, and Al-Ula have experienced swift economic development through tourism, which generates new job opportunities and business growth (Naseem 2021). Stakeholders in the hospitality and retail sectors acknowledge that tourism leads to financial opportunities. However, tourism's economic transformation has resulted in social disadvantages for the region. The WTTC (2024) states that the tourism industry represented about 4.5% of Saudi Arabia's GDP in 2023 and employed nearly 1.6 million people across the country. This development coincides with the Vision 2030 goal to achieve 10% of GDP through tourism by 2030. These statistics support the observations of participants that tourism has become a significant economic pillar and prove that the policies of Saudi Arabia towards tourism are producing quantifiable consequences at national levels. These economic indicators offer a valuable factual background for how residents exhibited ambivalent responses to the rate of change and the impact on traditional culture. According to Participant 1, a business owner in Mecca:

Tourism has greatly benefitted the economy, especially businesses near the holy sites. However, with the increase in international visitors, I have noticed changes in our traditions. Some of the youths are adopting Western behaviours, which concerns many elders. While I welcome the financial benefits, I hope we can maintain our Islamic traditions and values.

Participant 11, a tourism policy analyst in Mecca, weighed in on the effectiveness of tourism policies:

The government has implemented policies to preserve the culture of the people, and measures are put in place to ensure consistency. Some regions experience more cultural dilution than others, especially those with high volumes of international tourists, but the government is doing its best to ensure a balance is maintained.

However, the analysis from the experts showed that Saudi is a traditional society that values its culture. Expert 2 affirmed that government policies are a direct reflection of culture's preservation. His statement was quoted as:

You know, we cannot separate the government from the tradition; the government emerged to preserve the tradition of the Saudi Arabian culture. So, you see, the Saudi Arabian tradition is what defines us and guides us. Despite the urgent need to diversify the

economy, which the government now allows for tourism across the country, the policies preserving our traditions should be maintained without changes to cater to investors or tourists. This is due to the short-term presence of tourists and investors in our country. Any alteration would significantly affect the culture in the future.

The tension between economic gains and cultural identity maintenance was consistent in the interviews. Some of the interviewees confirmed that tourism has diversified job opportunities and strengthened local businesses, especially in Mecca, Jeddah, and Al-Ula. They, however, also raised concerns that the influx of international visitors has quickened traditional change amongst younger Saudis, heightened exposure to Western practices, and affected traditional food, attire, and daily interactions. These perceived changes or shifts are in line with cultural commodification theory, where respondents observed that certain aspects of culture, including food, heritage festivals, and traditional crafts, are being transformed more to suit tourist expectations to a certain level of authenticity. National statistics substantiate this tension. According to the WTTC (2024), tourism contributed to 4.5% of Saudi GDP and more than 1.6 million jobs in 2023. Although these indicators affirm the large-scale economic gains, they also affirm the fears of participants that rapid development might change social norms at a faster rate than communities can assimilate, especially in high-traffic areas.

Theme 2: Social and Behavioural Shifts

Tourism has increased international cultural exposure, especially in large urban centres like Riyadh and Jeddah, where social traditions are transforming. Such transformations in the social environment receive support from certain residents who identify these changes as a pathway for diversity and social development. National data support these qualitative insights. The Saudi Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (2024) reported that female participation in the tourism workforce increased by 38% between 2020 and 2023, reflecting the success of Vision 2030 initiatives to promote gender inclusivity. Similarly, data from the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT 2024) show that youth employment in hospitality and events sectors has doubled within the same period. These developments highlight how policy-driven social transformation is influencing behavioural change, validating participants' accounts of evolving gender roles, work cultures, and social expression in urban centres such as Riyadh and Jeddah. For instance, Participant 2 observed that:

Tourism has created new job opportunities, especially for women and migrant workers, but it also brings a clash in tradition. In Jeddah, dress codes have become more relaxed. While this change promotes freedom, it also creates a feeling of cultural mix within communities.

Participant 1 noted that not all residents embraced this shift, “Higher tourist numbers expose people to diverse traditions, leading to influence on younger generations. Many of them now behave like Westerners”.

The youth's preference for international influences demonstrates an ongoing clash between traditional and social preservation and modernisation trends; younger generations welcome change while their older population prefers to protect traditional values. From a professional standpoint, Expert 1, who is an academican at IMSIU, stated that:

We are seeing a transformation of social practices, particularly among youth who are more exposed to tourists and global trends. While this is part of globalisation, it also challenges the social balance that has long been preserved. Social evolution is not negative, but the rate of change must be carefully guided by policy to avoid cultural erosion.

Expert 2 further buttressed the argument by stating that:

One of the major social changes I have observed is the shift in gender roles and family dynamics due to tourism's influence. While this opens new opportunities for women and modern thinking, it has also created anxiety among conservative circles. These behavioural shifts are not just about dress codes or food preferences; they strike deeper into identity and family structure.

Participants also spoke of observable changes in social behaviour, particularly in large urban centres. Liberalisation in tourism has led to the appearance of easier dress codes, the expansion of entertainment opportunities, and a growing tolerance of mixed-gender spaces. Participants, especially those in the younger age bracket, indicated that they adopted a globalised fashion and lifestyle, with older participants showing concern over the loss of traditional norms. These intergenerational variations demonstrate the processes described by the social change theory, whereby modernisation and global exposure remake identity and behaviour across age groups in an uneven manner. This assumption is borne out by policy statistics that the participation in the tourism sector by women has increased by 38% between 2020 and 2023 (The Saudi Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development 2024), which indicates changes in gender roles, workforce composition, and public perceptions.

Theme 3: Challenges in Social Exchange

Saudi Arabia continues to work diligently in expanding the tourism industry but faces significant challenges in traditional understanding between visitors and residents (Qurashi 2017). Numerous visitors complained about the shortage of authentic opportunities to meet Saudi nationals beyond the normal business dynamics. Participant 4 stated that, "The deep religious traditions captivated me. The traditional norms clashed with my Western perspective primarily because of the dress requirements. However, I recognise the value of adapting to local customs, even when some restrictions cause obstacles".

However, Participant 5 stated that language differences were a problem for some of the tourists: "The major challenge was the language barriers and a lack of English signage. This made it very difficult for me to navigate some areas".

On the other hand, Participant 7, who is a hotel manager, stated that "A lot of our guests remain in the dark about our local customs, and this often results in misunderstandings. However, we are providing staff training on handling these differences".

These experiences are consistent with institutional findings. The Saudi Tourism Authority (2024) admits that one of the most significant challenges to strengthening tourist satisfaction is language accessibility and orienting to the culture. International arrivals were 27 million in 2023, yet surveys reveal only 54% of visitors rated the availability of English signage as adequate (Lane 2024). This argument supports the remarks of participants about communication gaps and insufficient availability of multilingual services in hospitality industries. The National Tourism Human Capital Development Programme, introduced in 2022, has made it a strategic priority to address these issues. Participant 13 posited that "Stronger pre-arrival education for tourists would help prevent traditional and social conflicts. Furthermore, incentives for businesses that promote cultural heritage could be beneficial".

The experts in the interview contributed their professional opinion to this theme. Expert 1 stated that:

Many tourists come to Saudi Arabia with curiosity and openness, but they lack sufficient knowledge about our norms. This gap creates unintentional cultural friction. True social exchange cannot occur in the absence of cultural literacy. There must be efforts to teach both visitors and locals how to engage meaningfully.

Expert 2 also mentioned that:

The hospitality industry is improving, but we are not doing enough to prepare visitors for the social realities of our society. Signs, guides, and cultural education are still very minimal. When tourists break social norms, it is often not deliberate. They just don't know. We need structured platforms that explain our values before and during their visit.

The results indicated that difficulties in social exchange were commonly based on visitors' lack of cultural literacy and the absence of unified communication lines. Travellers found it challenging to adapt to local practices, clothing requirements, and religious attitudes, and locals and hotel employees accentuated language differences and poor English signage. These problems limited the scope of meaningful interaction between tourists and locals, and they confirmed the importance of organised cultural orientation steps. This trend is validated by national tourism statistics: even after welcoming over 27 million international arrivals in 2023, merely 54% of tourists were satisfied with multilingual signage (Saudi Tourism Authority 2024). The discrepancy between visitor expectations and institutional preparedness, as confirmed by the interviews, is evident in these results.

Theme 4: Policy and Infrastructure Improvements

The tourism sector joined forces with government officials to develop distinct policies that help reduce negative tourism impacts and amplify its advantages. Officials struggle with consistent oversight, despite designing some regulatory structures for tourists to ensure their adherence to local customs. Multiple policy frameworks regarding ethical tourism, together with environmental sustainability and heritage protection, exist but face challenges in implementation and public understanding. Participant 8, who is a government tourism official, remarked, "We have developed policies that aim to improve our economic performance while respecting social and traditional norms. For instance, we regulate tourist behaviour and support local initiatives". She also added that, "We need more training programmes for locals entering the tourism industry and educational campaigns for visitors to understand and respect Saudi traditions".

To reinforce this argument, it is reported that Saudi Arabia allocated more than USD800 billion towards tourism and infrastructure as part of Vision 2030, which includes NEOM, AMAALA, and the Red Sea Development Project (Saudi Ministry of Investment 2024). The Saudi Tourism Development Strategy also details the plans to build 500,000 hotel rooms by 2030 as a national pledge to sustainable infrastructure growth (*Hotel Report* 2025). Nevertheless, the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) sustainability audit warns that such rapid growth needs firmer ecological and cultural protection. The participants' observations align with the factual evidence, emphasising the need to strike a balance between investment development and cultural protection.

Meanwhile, industry experts pointed out that while Saudi Arabia is investing in world-class tourism infrastructure with both long-term and short-term plans, the focus needs to shift towards sustainable tourism, which prioritises traditional integrity while maintaining positive profit

margins. Participant 11, while reflecting on tourism policies, highlighted the progress made in their implementation: “There is a strong emphasis on developing infrastructure, but there is also the need to ensure cultural preservation. This will provide Saudi Arabia a mixed identity that will encourage future growth in line with government vision”.

Expert 1 stated that:

Vision 2030 is ambitious, but without grassroots education and effective enforcement, policy frameworks will remain paper-based. Infrastructure should include cultural education tools, not just roads and hotels. Development must not only be about buildings and airports. Policies must be alive, monitored, and rooted in community involvement.

Likewise, Expert 2 added that:

There is policy direction, but implementation is often inconsistent. In Riyadh and Jeddah, we see stronger controls; in other regions, the enforcement is weak. Infrastructure investment is welcome, but there must be balance. A hotel near a cultural site must support cultural integrity, not just serve as a revenue generator.

Participants generally agreed that the government initiatives pursuant to Vision 2030 have enhanced tourism infrastructure and regulatory environments greatly. Nevertheless, they also highlighted policy implementation gaps, particularly outside major urban centres. Respondents observed that infrastructure projects like NEOM, AMAALA, and the Red Sea Project are indicators of ambitious national objectives, but effective policy implementation needs more community engagement, more definitive cultural directives in the eyes of visitors, and more uniform enforcement. This observation aligns with social exchange theory’s principle that the perceived balance between benefits and social costs drives local support. Expert respondents said that the speed of physical development has not been matched by similar investments in cultural education, heritage protection, or sustainable management. This raises questions about the long-term viability of cultural integrity. Overall, the findings show that, while tourism contributes to economic diversification and international visibility, its expansion also reshapes social behaviours, cultural practices, and community expectations. These patterns directly answer the central research question by illustrating how tourism development produces both positive and challenging social and cultural consequences for Saudi society.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the key findings of the interviews conducted with thirteen informants who have direct involvement in tourism and two experts at IMSIU, on their views, opinions, and concerns on socio-cultural values in terms of involvement in tourism. The interviews provided valuable insights into the underlying reservations, challenges, wishes, and hopes of the informants concerning their experience of tourism in terms of involvement in Saudi Arabia.

As demonstrated by Theme 1, economic growth and traditional preservation, it was revealed that tourism has diversified job opportunities and strengthened local businesses, especially in Mecca, Jeddah, and Al-Ula. However, some concerns were raised related to the influx of international visitors, which has quickened traditional change among younger Saudis, heightened exposure to western practices, and affected traditional food, attire, and daily interactions. This notion is consistent with the argument that Saudi Arabia stands at a pivotal cultural juncture because it harmonises its ancient customs with contemporary global developments. The upsurge in tourism activities increases encounters with foreign traditions, especially in major urban settlements, including Riyadh and Jeddah (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2024). Social engagement between international tourists and residents in these vital areas causes changes in social practices

together with modifications to business dynamics and lifestyle choices (Damanhoury 2017). However, the traditional ways of life prevail strongly in rural areas despite the ongoing social transition in Saudi Arabia. The result of this study further sheds light on the evolution of tourism in Saudi Arabia in contrast to its neighbours in the Gulf. The tourism model in Saudi Arabia takes a more culturally cautious approach compared to Dubai and Doha, which rely on entertainment and major international events to create a modern image (Bodolica et al. 2020; Song 2025). The participants focus on preserving traditional norms, religious beliefs, and gender aspects explains why the Saudi model focusses on social stability and cultural continuity in addition to economic development (Almakaty 2025). This balance differentiates the Vision 2030 framework of Saudi Arabia from the profit-based agenda of the neighbouring states and helps to reaffirm Saudi Arabia as a place where heritage and modernisation are intertwined and not in competition. Interview evidence also reinforces the notion that the tourism policies of Saudi Arabia are not just variations on those of the Gulf countries but are context-specific policies that mirror the religious, social, and moral environment.

Regarding Theme 2, social and behavioural shifts, this study observed changes in social behaviour, particularly in large urban centres. This portrays that liberalisation in tourism has led to easier dress codes, the expansion of entertainment opportunities, and the growing tolerance of mixed-gender spaces. Participants, especially those in the younger age bracket, indicated that they adopted a globalised fashion and lifestyle, with older participants showing angst over the loss of Saudi behaviour. These results are in line with the work, which argues that societal attitudes toward tourism demonstrate wide-ranging variations between different population segments. The younger demographic tends to embrace tourism fully because they view it as a tool for cultural interaction and economic benefit, while the older segment maintains a guarded stance regarding what the long-term impacts of these foreign influences are (Hothan and Butler 2025). The adverse societal consequences were manifested via the ongoing prevalence of theft and illegal commerce in heritage, as well as the indiscriminate emulation of tourist lives and behaviours by local inhabitants (Alamineh et al. 2023).

Rasoolimanesh et al. (2017) further elucidated the social and cultural ramifications of tourism as the mechanism through which it induces alterations in the value systems, individual behaviours, familial relationships, collective lifestyles, moral conduct, creative expressions, traditional ceremonies, and community organisations of destination communities. Tourism has been identified as a significant contributor to social conflicts because of its possible adverse effects on social structures and cultures. A significant rise in tourist numbers presents considerable obstacles to tourism planning. Dewi et al. (2021) concluded that the determinants of social and behavioural change include the acceptance of novel features, acculturation, migration, the embrace of shifts in lifestyle from traditional to semi-modern, respect for the labour of others, and an aspiration for advancement. Therefore, while Saudi Arabia has taken giant steps to expand its tourism industry, it is important to ensure the preservation of its core traditional heritage by implementing various policies that aim to balance the economic and social benefits of the Vision 2030 initiative.

Concerning Theme 3, challenges in social exchange, the result revealed that difficulties in social exchange were commonly based on a lack of cultural literacy among visitors and the absence of unified communication lines. Communication is vital to tourism. This is because tourism service providers must possess effective communication skills to enhance the tourism product and foster visitors' experiences. In the realm of tourism and hospitality, the importance of communication is amplified, since it transcends mere information exchange and holds profound value, particularly in the interactions between tourists and staff (Tankovic et al. 2023). This study also demonstrates the genuine social exchange that occurs between visiting guests and locals. Foreign travellers demonstrated strong desires to explore Saudi culture in depth, especially when buying items and participating in hospitality-related activities. Tourists arriving engage

in a transactional relationship, thereby sealing the bond of a genuine relationship for social integration. These findings concur with those of Qin et al. (2025), which suggest that residents are essential partners in tourism locations, significantly influencing their development. The locals' endorsement of tourist activities is essential for guaranteeing the ongoing profitability and lasting vitality of these areas. Therefore, in several ethnic tourism contexts, local inhabitants, serving as the "living carriers" of traditional cultural aspects, actively or passively participate in the growth of tourism by preserving and transmitting intangible cultural assets via their everyday activities and performances. Their customs, cultural practices, cordial hospitality, and daily interactions are significant attractions for travellers (Qin et al. 2025).

In this context, social exchange interactions provide a more precise comprehension of tourism transactions by correlating costs with gains. Exchanges involving space resources, sometimes limited in heritage towns and retail districts, are contingent upon people's desire to embrace tourists (González et al. 2023). These findings and discussion indicate that creating systematic social tour programmes, along with educational activities and multilingual tourism resources, is necessary to build bridges of social harmony and promote economic prosperity. Tourism initiatives developing guided social tours and bilingual resources would empower both visitors and local residents to learn Saudi traditions alongside meaningful heritage sharing. Mutual respect and appreciation between tourists and residents would also improve through increased social interactions, which would enhance the overall tourism experience.

As for Theme 4, policy and infrastructure improvements, this study highlighted policy implementation gaps, particularly outside major urban centres. It was further observed that, while infrastructure projects like NEOM, AMAALA, and the Red Sea Project are indicators of ambitious national objectives, effective policy implementation needs more community engagement, more definitive cultural directives in the eyes of visitors, and more uniform enforcement. These findings contradict the findings of Azizpour and Fathizadeh (2016), who reported that the primary factors impeding collaboration among tourism organisations in Mashhad city include the absence of a systematic approach, a deficient legal framework, inadequate planning, a lack of integrated tourism management, and weaknesses in the policy-making system. Therefore, the social and cultural development of Saudi tourism depends heavily on government policies. Proper execution of these policies guarantees that tourism growth will not clash with social elements. This means that public policies need to integrate two aspects for success: bringing in international visitors and protecting the social and traditional identity of local communities.

From the aforementioned, it becomes clear Saudi Arabia's tourism industry is situated at the intersection of cultural preservation and social transformation. Interpreted using social exchange theory, the findings reveal that residents view tourism in terms of a perceived equilibrium between the economic gains and the cultural or moral losses of tourism. Creation of jobs, urban development, and international exposure are definite advantages to many participants, and the perceived costs include concerns about behavioural change, the erosion of traditions, and value conflicts. The cultural commodification theory also contributes to understanding why participants worry that traditional festivals, heritage sites, and social practices are being altered more and more to attract international tourists, which undermines the notion of authenticity and cultural integrity. These theoretical interpretations directly address the main research question of the impact of tourism on Saudi society in a social and cultural context. The analysis indicates that the growth of tourism has altered social behaviour among youths, favouring new lifestyle interests and providing increased exposure to foreign cultures. Tourism has increased discussions on identity, morals, gender-based relations, and intergenerational issues. These results highlight that the social implications of tourism are not limited to economics but also extend to the daily lived experiences and norms that define Saudi social life.

The social transformation observed in the findings is significantly driven by the increased interactions between local inhabitants and diverse categories of travellers, which expose communities to new values, behaviours, and social activities. Younger participants reported taking up the global fashion, music, and communication styles due to increased exposure to international festivals, social media content posted by tourists, and the relaxed social settings that tourism events foster. On the other hand, older participants expressed that these new changes result in cultural dilution. This indicates that modernisation has expedited threats to Islamic and traditional values. These opposite responses underscore the fact that tourism operates as a driver of cultural negotiation, establishing new modes of social identity at the same time as forcing communities to protect existing moral and religious boundaries.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study on the impact of tourism on Saudi Arabian society revealed the shortcomings and challenges affecting social and cultural shifts due to modern development, as well as the importance of enabling the locals to acquire new social and cultural modern development through their participation in tourism opportunities. Therefore, the results indicate that the rapid growth of tourism brings with it social and cultural issues that require careful attention. How to preserve Saudi traditions and religious values without excluding modern development remains the central issue. Furthermore, the results highlighted concerns about changes in behaviour, identity, and values, particularly among younger citizens, which could ultimately threaten or diminish Saudi Arabia's social and cultural heritage in the future. However, the result further demonstrates that tourism has emerged as a significant source of development in different aspects, such as cultural and global identity, in Saudi Arabia to boost the ambitions of Vision 2030. Tourism significantly enhances cultural values, employment, and national income and promotes global interconnection. The results and discussions further affirm that Saudi Arabia has a chance to develop a tourism industry that empowers the economy without jeopardising its culture and values. The result means the government has achieved a lot in advancing tourism, but it requires greater efforts to preserve cultural authenticity and social balance. Therefore, these findings are important as they serve as a basis for increasing efforts to strengthen the country's tourism while maintaining its social and cultural values, which is in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

In conclusion, this study proposes several recommendations to government and policymakers. First, the policymakers through the Ministry of Tourism should implement mechanisms that seek to enhance the conditions for Saudi tourism. Specifically, the aim should be to provide a set of nationally applicable standards, rules, regulations, and duties that could be used in regulating tourism in Saudi Arabia. This would make Saudi Arabia's tourism industry more professional and beneficial for the community and the country as a whole. To achieve Vision 2030's target of creating successful tourism while maintaining the social and cultural heritage, the locals and visitors need to be fully aware of the morals, values, and ethics of Saudi culture. This means there is a need to provide cultural orientation programmes for international visitors to encourage understanding and observance of local practices. This can be achieved by providing orientation and mobilisation via social media (Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram), TV and radio stations, and tourism websites to educate the tourists and ensure they are well aware of Saudi culture. Bilingual and multilingual signs at airports, hotels, and heritage sites should also be offered by tourism agencies and self-employed operators to mitigate language barriers and enhance accessibility. Cultural awareness and heritage preservation should be incorporated in education and training programmes so that the tourism workers are equipped with knowledge of both modern tourism and Saudi values. Cultural education enables the country to present itself to the world as a nation that embraces progress while honouring its history. The government should

organise and carry out these orientations through the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. These initiatives have the potential to heighten tourists' understanding of the socio-cultural heritage and empower them to interact effectively with the local community.

As Saudi society grows and government policies are increasingly required at the grassroots level, there is an increasing demand from the Saudi locals to be directly involved in the tourism activities or sector. Therefore, government and policymakers need to adopt a keener interest in involving locals by initiating community-based tourism. This means that community-based tourism must also be promoted so that the locals, small business owners, and traditional craft workers can also enjoy the fruits of the industry. This community engagement can help in achieving the objectives of Vision 2030 because it will provide sustainable development. Lastly, the majority of the locals, especially those in the community, tend to be strongly influenced by their culture, and such influence can sometimes discourage them from participating in tourism opportunities. To counter this, proper solutions must be taken by the government to promote the value of engaging in tourism among the locals. For example, the government must establish a monitoring system in the community to periodically test the environmental and cultural effects of tourism projects so that growth does not undermine tradition or natural resources.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has a number of drawbacks despite its beneficial contributions. To investigate the experiences of a small sample of informants, which included both locals and visitors from Saudi Arabia's key tourist destinations, this study first used a qualitative case study methodology. This is because this study primarily focused on how tourism impacts society and had a small sample size, which may limit its applicability to other tourist contexts in Saudi Arabia. In future studies, adding more Saudi Arabian locals, foreign visitors, and tourism specialists can help overcome these limitations and provide a comprehensive understanding of how tourism affects the young generation, particularly females, in Saudi Arabia. Future studies could explore the benefits of Saudi Arabian tourism from the perspective of local residents who interact with foreign visitors in their daily lives.

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COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

The author affirms that this study strictly adhered to all ethical issues, including confidentiality and the right to participate or withdraw. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of IMSIU under code number 636924677734931501/20-12-2024.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that the study was carried out without any financial or commercial ties that might be interpreted as a potential conflict of interest.

NOTE

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