



<http://doi.org/10.22133/ijtcs.2025.505128.1202>

## Developing Future Scenarios for Investment in Religious Tourism in Saudi Arabia Using a Structural Approach

Abolfazl Dehghani Firoozabadi<sup>\*1</sup>, Samaneh Raeesi Nafchi<sup>2</sup>, Vajiheh Andalib Ardakani<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Finance and Accounting, Meybod University, Meybod, Iran

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor of Industrial Management, Shiraz University of Technology-Lamerd Higher Education Center, Fars, Iran

<sup>3</sup> PhD Candidate in Business Administration - Marketing, Islamic Azad University, Yazd Branch, Iran

### Article Info

#### Received:

2025-02-08

#### Accepted:

2025-03-12

#### Keywords:

Religious tourism

Saudi Arabia

Vision 2030

Scenario analysis

Strategic geographic location

### Abstract

The primary objective of this research is to develop future scenarios for investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia. Given the growing importance of religious tourism in the country's economy and its role in attracting pilgrims from around the world, this study aims to simulate and explore various future scenarios for this industry. The research employs a structural approach and scenario analysis method. Initially, key drivers affecting the future of religious tourism are identified, and based on two main variables—"Strategic Geographic Location" and "Government Policy & Vision 2030"—four scenarios for future investment in this sector are formulated. The findings of this study indicate that Saudi Arabia's strategic geographic location and the government's development policies under Vision 2030 are pivotal factors that could significantly influence the future of religious tourism in the country. The scenarios presented in this research include "The Phoenix's Ascent" (success in implementing policies and leveraging geographic advantages), "Icarus' Fall" (challenges due to poor management and ineffective policy execution), "The Labyrinth of Daedalus" (external challenges and competition from emerging religious tourism destinations), and "Pandora's Box" (weak infrastructure and declining geopolitical influence). These scenarios represent potential futures for the industry, considering both internal and external developments in the country. The main innovation of this research lies in using the scenario analysis method as a tool for simulating the future and combining two critical drivers—geographical and political factors to provide insights that could significantly assist strategic decision-making in this field. Additionally, the research recommends that policymakers and investors focus on strengthening infrastructure, implementing secure and efficient policies, and enhancing international partnerships to maintain and improve their position in religious tourism.

### \*Corresponding author

E-mail: [a.dehghani@meybod.ac.ir](mailto:a.dehghani@meybod.ac.ir)

**How to Cite:** Dehghani Firoozabadi, A., Raeesi Nafchi, S., & Andalib Ardakani, V. (2024). Developing Future Scenarios for Investment in Religious Tourism in Saudi Arabia Using a Structural Approach. *International Journal of Tourism, Culture and Spirituality*, 7(2), 207-231.

## Introduction

Religious tourism, a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing pilgrimages, visits to sacred sites, and participation in religious events, represents a significant and dynamically evolving sector within the global tourism industry (Muamar et al., 2024). Motivations for engaging in religious tourism are diverse and complex, ranging from deeply personal spiritual quests and the fulfillment of religious obligations (such as the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages) to cultural exploration, social interaction, and even commercial activities (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024). Research consistently highlights the multi-dimensional nature of religious tourist motivations, identifying factors such as religious experience, belief experience, escape from daily routines, touristic experience (sightseeing and exploration), and shopping as key drivers (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024). These motivations often intersect and influence each other, shaping the overall experience and satisfaction levels of religious tourists.

The economic impact of religious tourism is substantial, particularly in countries with significant religious sites. Religious tourism generates substantial revenue through accommodation, transportation, food and beverage services, retail sales, and other related activities (Muamar et al., 2024). It creates employment opportunities across various sectors, contributing to local economic development and poverty reduction (Muamar et al., 2024). However, the rapid growth of religious tourism also presents significant challenges. Sustainable management practices are crucial to protect sacred sites from environmental degradation and overcrowding, preserve cultural authenticity, and ensure equitable distribution of benefits among local communities (Prastiwi & Wardhana, 2024). The potential for negative environmental and social impacts, including pollution, resource depletion, and cultural commodification, necessitates careful planning and regulation (Tabash et al., 2023).

Futures studies provide a crucial framework for navigating the complexities and uncertainties inherent in the future of religious tourism (Postma et al., 2024). By employing scenario planning, forecasting techniques, and other foresight methodologies, futures studies enable stakeholders to anticipate potential future trends, assess their implications, and develop proactive strategies to address emerging challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Postma et al., 2024). This proactive approach is particularly vital in the context of rapidly changing global dynamics, including technological advancements, climate change, geopolitical shifts, and evolving societal values (Buitrago-Esquinas et al., 2024).

The importance of exploring the future of religious tourism in Saudi Arabia is underscored by several factors. Saudi Arabia is the epicenter of Islamic religious tourism, hosting millions of pilgrims annually for the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages (Bokhari, 2021). These pilgrimages generate significant economic activity and have profound social and cultural implications for the Kingdom (Bokhari, 2021). The Kingdom's Vision 2030, an ambitious national development plan aimed at diversifying the economy

and modernizing the country, explicitly recognizes the potential of tourism, including religious tourism, as a key driver of economic growth and social transformation (Tambo, 2017). However, the successful integration of religious tourism into Vision 2030 requires careful consideration of potential challenges, including managing the environmental impact of large-scale pilgrimages, balancing economic development with the preservation of religious and cultural heritage, and ensuring the safety and well-being of pilgrims (Tabash et al., 2023). Furthermore, the impact of global events, such as pandemics (as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption of religious tourism) highlights the need for robust contingency planning and adaptable strategies (Raifu et al., 2024).

This paper will therefore focus on developing Scenarios in Religious Tourism, utilizing a futures studies approach to analyze the potential future scenarios for religious tourism in Saudi Arabia and to offer recommendations for sustainable and equitable development. By examining the interplay between religious practice, economic development, technological advancements, and environmental sustainability, this paper aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the future of religious tourism in Saudi Arabia and to inform policy and practice in this vital sector.

The following research questions are preset:

Q1. What are the drivers affecting the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia?

Q2. What are the plausible scenarios for the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia?

## Literature Review

Numerous research papers highlight the significant economic contribution of religious tourism globally and specifically within Saudi Arabia. Studies such as those by Tabash et al. (2023) and Ncube and Chikuta (2020) directly address the economic impact, emphasizing revenue generation, employment creation, and foreign exchange earnings. However, Tabash et al. (2023) also caution about the potential negative environmental consequences associated with the rapid growth of religious tourism in Saudi Arabia, particularly concerning energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Other research papers, such as those by I'zzah (2022), Sadeghi et al. (2022), Bacha (2024), and Kurniawan et al. (2023), examine the economic impacts of religious tourism in various contexts, demonstrating its importance for local communities and national economies. These studies provide a foundation for understanding the economic drivers and potential challenges related to investment in Saudi Arabia's religious tourism sector.

Saudi Vision 2030 plays a central role in shaping the future of tourism in the Kingdom. Research papers such as those by Pratiwi and Muslikhati (2024) and Albejaidi and Nair (2021) discuss the Vision's goals for tourism diversification and its implications for economic development. The Vision aims to reduce reliance on oil revenue and promote non-oil sectors, with tourism identified as a key driver of

growth. These studies highlight the government's commitment to investing in infrastructure, promoting cultural heritage, and attracting international tourists. However, challenges remain, including the need to balance economic development with environmental sustainability and cultural preservation, as noted by Mazzetto (2022). The integration of Vision 2030's objectives into future scenario planning for religious tourism investment is crucial.

The application of futures studies and scenario planning methodologies to the tourism sector is increasingly recognized as essential for proactive planning and risk management. Jahanian (2017) explores futures studies of tourism with a spirituality perspective, highlighting the importance of considering non-material aspects in tourism development. Taghvai and Hosseinekhah (2018) demonstrate the use of scenario planning for tourism development, emphasizing the identification of key drivers and potential future scenarios. Postma et al. (2024) provide a practical guide for scenario planning in tourism, offering valuable insights and methodologies for the proposed research. These studies provide a methodological framework for developing future scenarios for religious tourism investment in Saudi Arabia.

The concept of sustainable tourism is crucial for long-term viability and responsible investment. Several research papers address the importance of integrating environmental, social, and economic considerations into tourism development. Chan et al. (2021) emphasize the role of local community participation in responsible tourism practices. Studies such as those by Noer et al. (2024) and Guriță and Scortescu (2023) specifically address sustainability in religious tourism, highlighting the need for balanced development that protects cultural heritage and minimizes environmental impacts. The integration of sustainable development goals (SDGs) into investment strategies, as discussed by Miralles-Quiros et al. (2020), is also relevant to responsible investment in religious tourism.

While the research papers reviewed do not explicitly focus on structural approaches for scenario planning in religious tourism investment, several studies utilize quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze various aspects of the tourism sector. The use of statistical models, such as those employed by Tabash et al. (2023), can be adapted to analyze the relationships between investment, economic growth, and environmental impact. Ebrahimi and Fathi (2018) developed a model to evaluate Human Capital (HC) performance by integrating fuzzy DEMATEL and fuzzy Similarity methods. They first constructed and validated a framework for HC components using confirmatory factor analysis, then applied fuzzy DEMATEL to determine the relative importance of these components. The fuzzy Similarity method was introduced to rank organizations based on these components. The model's practicality was demonstrated by evaluating and ranking three Iranian companies in the electric power and energy sector, showcasing its applicability in HC performance assessment. Pahlevanzadeh et al. (2024) investigated the perspectives of the academic community on war tourism camps in Iran, utilizing

the Q method and clustering algorithms for categorization. Their findings identified three categories of views and five clusters, reflecting diverse perspectives on this subject. Torabi et al. (2023) employed structural analysis and scenario planning to propose four plausible scenarios for Iranian food tourism: the Golden Scenario, Limited Scenario, Neglected Scenario, and Chaotic Scenario. These scenarios were designed based on critical factors such as food festivals and international relations, highlighting the impact of varying conditions on the future of food tourism. Rajabpour et al. (2022) examined factors influencing the implementation of green human resource management (GHRM) in petrochemical companies in Bushehr City. Using a hybrid approach combining fuzzy AHP and type-2 fuzzy DEMATEL, they identified five key categories: recruitment and employment, training and development, performance appraisal, service compensation and reward, and green organizational culture management, along with 20 sub-criteria. Training and development emerged as the most critical factor for successful GHRM implementation, and the study provided prioritized green measures for industry managers to enhance environmental sustainability practices. Khosravi et al. (2023) conducted a study on the Kashan Rosewater Festival to explore the effects of nostalgia, experiential marketing, and experiential values on tourist satisfaction and behavior. Their findings revealed that nostalgia influences pull motivation, loyalty behavior, and future travel intentions, although pull motivation does not directly affect travel intentions. Fathi et al. (2024) utilized fuzzy cognitive mapping and fuzzy DEMATEL to pinpoint essential indicators for assessing the performance of sustainable food supply chains. Their analysis of 26 criteria revealed that "income distribution," "sustainable investment," and "average annual training time of employees" were the most impactful factors. These results underscore the significance of economic equity, sustainability investments, and employee development in enhancing supply chain performance. In a related study, Soltani et al. (2015) explored the causal relationships among dimensions and indicators of social capital using fuzzy DEMATEL. With input from 14 experts at the University of Tehran, they found that cognitive and structural indicators act as causative factors, while relational indicators fall into the effect group. This highlights the interconnectedness of social capital dimensions and their influence within a network of interactions. Jandaghi et al. (2019) published an article, "Identification of Tourism Scenarios in Turkey Based on Futures Study Approach." The research's drivers and essential elements were initially discovered through a review of the literature and interviews with Turkish tourism professionals. In order to construct feasible scenarios, two critical elements of government policy in the tourist industry and the value of the country currency were picked utilizing the cross-impact analysis technique. Based on these two uncertainties, four scenarios of luxury tourism, low-cost tourism, tourism deterioration, and unplanned tourism were identified. In a study, "Futures Studies of Spiritual Tourism based on Cross Impact Matrix and Soft Systems Methodology," Fathi et al. (2019) determined the variables impacting the future of spiritual tourism in Qom province. Then,

they put the data into the MICMAC software using the Cross Impact matrix technique. Facilitate vs. Rigor and Culture Policy were discovered to be critical factors among the eleven final influential variables. Fathi et al (2022) explored the future of Iranian apitourism by identifying key factors and developing scenarios using critical uncertainty and DEMATEL techniques. The study highlighted two primary drivers: "apitourism information system and promotional activities" and "organizing ecological infrastructure." Four scenarios were developed: Golden Beehive, Expectancy, Anonymous Bee, and Black Beehive. Among these, the Black Beehive scenario was deemed most likely, representing an isolated and vulnerable system, while the Golden Beehive scenario depicted the best-case scenario with robust infrastructure and effective promotional activities. This research provides actionable insights for stakeholders to create flexible strategies for sustainable apitourism development. Sobhani et al. (2023) investigated value co-creation in foreign language institutions in Tehran using a fuzzy DEMATEL ranking approach. This mixed-methods study began with thematic analysis to extract key themes, validated by 20 experts. A pairwise comparison matrix was then used with input from 12 career specialists to rank five main fields and 27 mechanisms of value co-creation. The findings highlight the importance of mutual engagement and satisfaction between institutions and customers, enhancing market performance in a competitive environment. These results provide a framework for foreign language institutions to strengthen co-creation mechanisms and improve stakeholder interactions. This literature review demonstrates the availability of substantial research on the individual components of the proposed study. However, a gap exists in the integrated application of structural approaches and futures studies methodologies to develop specific investment scenarios for religious tourism in Saudi Arabia, considering the unique context of Vision 2030 and the need for sustainable development. The proposed research aims to address this gap.

### Research Methodology

This research falls within the category of applied studies and, in terms of methodology, is based on a descriptive and case study approach. A mixed-methods strategy has been employed, consisting of two main stages. In the first stage, a qualitative approach was utilized, where in-depth interviews with experts were conducted to identify the key drivers influencing the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia. In the second stage, a quantitative approach was adopted, analyzing the collected data through questionnaires. The cross-impact analysis method was applied in this phase to develop various future scenarios for the industry and ultimately select the most optimal scenario.

The demographic profile of the sample in this study consisted of 15 experts and specialists in fields related to religious tourism, investment economics, development planning, and emerging technologies in the tourism industry, selected through purposive sampling based on their expertise, experience, and

deep understanding of investment issues in religious tourism. The sample comprised 70% males and 30% females, with an average age of 45 years (ranging from 35 to 60 years). In terms of education, 80% of participants held postgraduate degrees (Master's or PhD), while 20% held bachelor's degrees. The average professional experience of participants in relevant fields was 15 years, ranging from 10 to 25 years. The distribution of expertise among participants was as follows: 40% specialized in religious tourism, 30% in economics and investment, 20% in development planning, and 10% in emerging technologies in the tourism industry. These individuals include religious tourism experts, investment economists, development planners, futurists, and specialists in emerging technologies within the tourism industry. The selection of this group was based on their level of expertise, experience, and deep understanding of investment issues in the religious tourism sector. It is important to note that in expert-based research, sample size is not determined by conventional statistical formulas. Instead, participant selection is based on information sufficiency and theoretical saturation. Accordingly, 15 experts were considered an appropriate sample for this study.

### Analysis

In this section, key factors influencing the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia were first identified through a literature review and expert interviews, resulting in a total of ten factors. To validate these factors, a five-point Likert-scale expert assessment questionnaire was developed, featuring eight questions related to the future of investment in this sector. The questionnaire was then distributed among 15 selected experts, all of whom provided responses. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software, and based on statistical assumptions at a 0.05 significance level, eight key drivers were identified based on expert evaluations. The SPSS output is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Key Drivers Influencing the Future of Investment in Religious Tourism in Saudi Arabia**

No	Driver	Explanation	Source	Sig
1	Government Policy & Vision 2030	Saudi Vision 2030's emphasis on tourism diversification and economic growth beyond oil creates a favorable policy environment for investment in religious tourism infrastructure, services, and related sectors. Government initiatives and incentives attract both domestic and foreign investment.	(Qurtuby, 2024), (Osama & Adam, 2024), (Tambo, 2017), (Alshehri, 2019), (Euchi et al., 2018, p. 330), (Alshehri, 2024), Expert opinion	.000
2	High Demand for Hajj & Umrah Pilgrimages	The consistently high demand for Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages ensures a large and reliable market for religious tourism services, making it an attractive investment opportunity.	(Alanzi et al., 2023), (Singh & Alhamad, 2022), (Damanhour, 2016, pp. 153–162), (Bianchi, 2017, pp. 1–26)	.003



No	Driver	Explanation	Source	Sig
3	Strategic Geographic Location	Saudi Arabia's location as the center of Islamic pilgrimage makes it a naturally attractive destination, driving investment in infrastructure and services to accommodate the large influx of pilgrims.	(Alshehri, 2019), (Abu-Hussin et al., 2021, pp. 477–495)	.000
4	Infrastructure Development	Investments in infrastructure (transportation, accommodation, communication) are crucial for managing the large number of pilgrims and enhancing the overall tourist experience, attracting further investment in related services.	(Tambo, 2017), (Alshehri, 2019), (Alshehri, 2024), Expert opinion	.004
5	Technological Advancements & Digitalization	The adoption of technology (big data analytics, digital marketing, smart city initiatives) improves efficiency, enhances the pilgrim experience, and attracts investment in innovative tourism solutions.	(Sultan et al., 2024), (Imam, 2019), (Alshehri, 2024), (Begum et al., 2022), Expert opinion	.005
6	Cultural and Religious Significance	The deep cultural and religious significance of Saudi Arabia for Muslims worldwide creates a strong pull factor for religious tourism, driving investment in preserving and showcasing heritage sites and providing culturally sensitive services.	(Qurtuby, 2024), (Damanhour, 2016, pp. 153–162), (Madkhali et al., 2024, pp. 582–598), (Alkhanbshi & Al-Kandi, 2014), (Bianchi, 2017, pp. 1–26), (Abu-Hussin et al., 2021, pp. 477–495)	.000
7	Economic Diversification Initiatives	Government efforts to diversify the economy beyond oil create a more stable and attractive investment climate, encouraging investment in non-oil sectors like religious tourism.	(Rice, 2004, pp. 59–84), (Alshehri, 2019), (Euchi et al., 2018, p. 330), (Parker et al., 2008, p. 93), (Arefi et al., 2023)	.002
8	Improved Safety and Security Measures	Investments in safety and security measures are essential for attracting pilgrims and investors, ensuring a positive and secure experience.	(Alshehri, 2019), (Alsubaie, 2013), Expert opinion	.002

After identifying the key factors, these variables were analyzed to assess their interrelationships and prioritization within an influence matrix. At this stage, a standardized questionnaire was developed and distributed among experts to evaluate the degree of influence and dependency of each factor. Once the responses were collected, the average scores were calculated and structured into Table (2) for further analysis using Mic Mac software.



**Table 2. Cross-Impact Matrix of Key Drivers**

	1 : Government	2 : High Deman	3 : Strategic	4 : Infrastruc	5 : Technologi	6 : Cultural a	7 : Economic D	8 : Improved S
1 : Government	0	2	0	1	0	3	0	0
2 : High Deman	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
3 : Strategic	0	3	0	1	0	3	0	0
4 : Infrastruc	0	1	1	0	0	2	3	0
5 : Technologi	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
6 : Cultural a	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1
7 : Economic D	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0
8 : Improved S	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0

© LPSOR-EPTA-MICMAC

Once the questionnaire data was input into the software, the direct and indirect impacts of the key drivers on the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia were calculated. The direct and indirect influence matrices of these key drivers are displayed in Tables (3) and (4), with each driver's score shown in the corresponding rows and columns of the matrix. It should be noted that the calculations and figures are generated based on mathematical formulas within the software and are intended primarily for comparing the drivers relative to each other, rather than representing the actual values of the numbers.

**Table 3. Direct Impact Matrix of Key Drivers Influencing the Future of Investment in Religious Tourism**

N°	Variable	Total number of rows	Total number of columns
1	Government Policy & Vision 2030	6	4
2	High Demand for Hajj & Umrah Pilgrimages	4	8
3	Strategic Geographic Location	7	3
4	Infrastructure Development	7	7
5	Technological Advancements & Digitalization	5	2
6	Cultural and Religious Significance	4	11
7	Economic Diversification Initiatives	5	3
8	Improved Safety and Security Measures	5	5
Totals		43	43

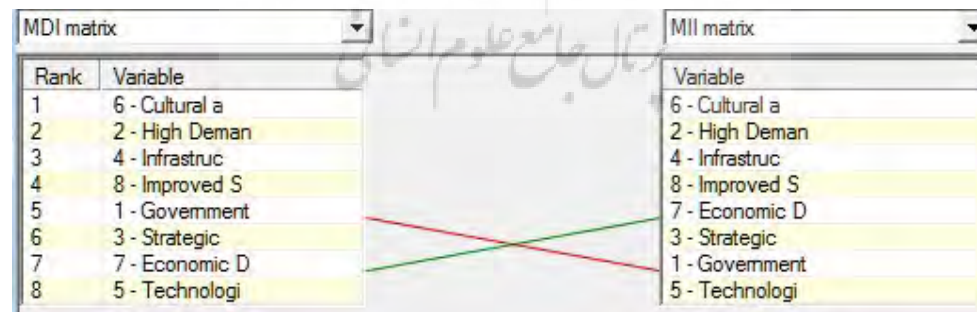
The software categorizes and ranks the drivers based on their direct and indirect influence, distinguishing between those that are drivers and those that are affected. The outcomes of this classification and ranking are presented in Figures (1) and (2).

**Table 4. Indirect Impact Matrix of Key Drivers Influencing the Future of Investment in Religious Tourism**

N°	Variable	Total number of rows	Total number of columns
1	Government Policy & Vision 2030	145	91
2	High Demand for Hajj & Umrah Pilgrimages	109	191
3	Strategic Geographic Location	166	100
4	Infrastructure Development	188	191
5	Technological Advancements & Digitalization	133	59
6	Cultural and Religious Significance	117	251
7	Economic Diversification Initiatives	149	114
8	Improved Safety and Security Measures	135	145
	Totals	43	43

**Figure 1. Classification of Drivers Based on Their Direct and Indirect Impact Levels**

As shown in Figure (1), based on the ranking of the "level of direct and indirect impact" of the variables, the key drivers *Strategic Geographic Location* and *Infrastructure Development* have both achieved the first and second positions, respectively, in the direct impact ranking.

**Figure 2. Classification of Drivers Based on Their Direct and Indirect Dependency Levels**

As shown in Figure (2), the key drivers *Cultural and Religious Significance* and *High Demand for Hajj & Umrah Pilgrimages* are ranked first and second, respectively, in terms of indirect dependency. In Table (5), the key drivers influencing the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia are ranked based on their direct and indirect impact and dependency.

**Table 5. Direct and Indirect Impact and Dependency Scores of Key Drivers**

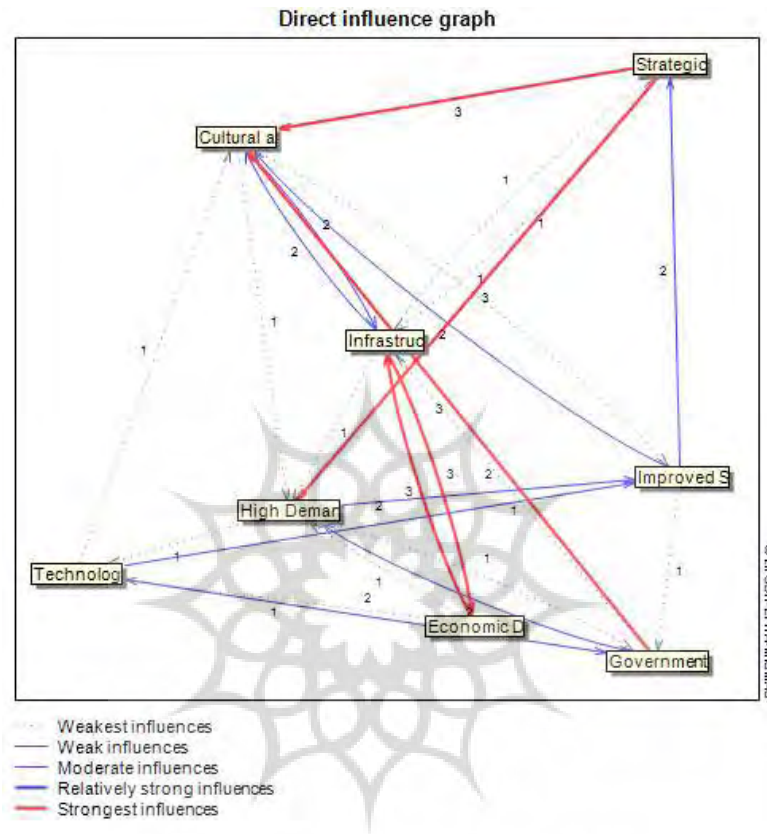
Rank	Label	Direct influence	Label	Direct dependence	Label	Indirect influence	Label	Indirect dependence
1	Strategic	1627	Cultural a	2558	Infrastruc	1646	Cultural a	2197
2	Infrastruc	1627	High Deman	1860	Strategic	1453	High Deman	1672
3	Government	1395	Infrastruc	1627	Economic D	1304	Infrastruc	1672
4	Technologi	1162	Improved S	1162	Government	1269	Improved S	1269
5	Economic D	1162	Government	930	Improved S	1182	Economic D	998
6	Improved S	1162	Strategic	697	Technologi	1164	Strategic	875
7	High Deman	930	Economic D	697	Cultural a	1024	Government	796
8	Cultural a	930	Technologi	465	High Deman	954	Technologi	516

As shown in Figure (3), the key drivers that will have the greatest impact on the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia are *Strategic Geographic Location* and *Government Policy & Vision 2030*. The factors identified in this category are regarded as input variables for the system. Since they exist outside the system, they cannot be controlled and act as stable indicators.



**Figure 3. Diagram of Key Drivers' Status in the Output of Mic Mac Software**

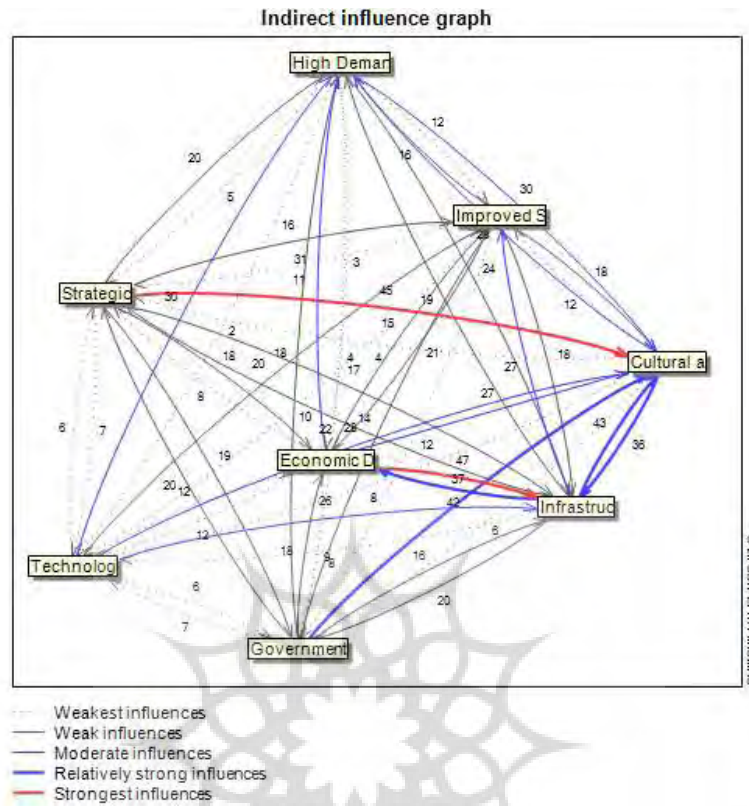
After identifying the status of the key drivers impacting the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia, their relationships were analyzed using Mic Mac software. The direct and indirect effects of these drivers are presented in Figures (4) and (5).



**Figure 4. Direct Impacts of Drivers (From Very Weak to Very Strong Impacts)**

Based on the influential drivers, *Strategic Geographic Location* and *Government Policy & Vision 2030* are utilized to develop the research scenarios. By combining the two possible states of each driver, four potential scenarios for the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia are formulated.

The *Strategic Geographic Location* driver presents two contrasting conditions: *Limited Regional Influence* versus *Strong Regional Influence*. Similarly, the *Government Policy & Vision 2030* driver consists of two opposing situations: *Weak Policy Implementation* versus *Comprehensive and Effective Policy Execution*. Figure (6) depicts the four scenarios along with their respective titles, each named based on the anticipated dynamics and developments within its framework.



**Figure 5. Indirect Impacts of Drivers (From Very Weak to Very Strong Impacts)**



**Figure 6. Plausible Future Scenarios for the Investment in Religious Tourism in Saudi Arabia**

### **Scenario 1: The Phoenix's Ascent**

In this idealized scenario, Saudi Arabia rises to become the unquestioned leader in global religious tourism, harnessing the full potential of its strategic geographic location and the implementation of its Vision 2030 reforms. The country's ability to successfully leverage both its historical significance and modern development initiatives positions it as the ultimate destination for millions of religious tourists annually. Saudi Arabia's geographic position at the heart of the Islamic world, with Mecca and Medina as the two most sacred cities in Islam, is a key factor in its ascension. The government capitalizes on this advantage by developing sophisticated transportation networks, including world-class airports, high-speed rail links between key pilgrimage sites, and cutting-edge infrastructure that streamlines the movement of millions of visitors. With these improvements, Saudi Arabia is able to accommodate growing numbers of religious tourists each year, surpassing previous records. The improved infrastructure also ensures a seamless travel experience, which attracts an increasing number of pilgrims from all over the globe. In this scenario, technology becomes a major driver of Saudi Arabia's success. Through smart tourism solutions, including mobile apps for pilgrimage planning and real-time communication systems, the Saudi government makes the pilgrimage experience more efficient, organized, and stress-free. Hajj and Umrah planning apps help pilgrims book accommodations, transportation, and other essential services, ensuring a smooth and well-organized journey. These digital innovations allow Saudi Arabia to position itself as a technologically advanced hub for religious tourism, modernizing the experience without compromising on the sacred nature of the pilgrimage. Additionally, the country incorporates smart services at pilgrimage sites, such as augmented reality to guide visitors through key rituals, and artificial intelligence for crowd management and safety. These initiatives not only enhance the experience for the millions of Muslims who visit every year, but also raise Saudi Arabia's reputation as a forward-thinking and innovative religious tourism destination. A significant aspect of this scenario is the sustainability of the tourism industry. Saudi Arabia invests heavily in sustainable tourism projects that balance the preservation of religious heritage with the modern needs of visitors. Green energy solutions are implemented across the infrastructure, such as in hotels, transportation, and pilgrimage sites. The development of eco-friendly accommodations, solar-powered transport, and waste management initiatives demonstrates Saudi Arabia's commitment to preserving both its environment and the sacredness of its religious sites. The success of these sustainable initiatives also increases Saudi Arabia's attractiveness as a destination for eco-conscious travelers, contributing to a broader global appeal beyond just religious visitors. The regional diplomatic efforts to create a religious tourism corridor within the Middle East play a crucial role in Saudi Arabia's rise. By fostering strong partnerships with neighboring countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE, Saudi Arabia helps establish a collaborative network that enhances the overall religious tourism experience. These

collaborations offer shared visa policies, cross-border travel packages, and even multi-destination pilgrimage options. This creates a synergistic tourism experience that not only benefits Saudi Arabia but also boosts the regional economy and strengthens the country's geopolitical influence within the Muslim world. By aligning itself as a central player in the religious tourism ecosystem, Saudi Arabia enhances its geopolitical power and secures deeper economic ties with its neighbors. The growth of religious tourism corridors creates a unified regional approach, elevating Saudi Arabia's status as the uncontested leader in this sector. With the successful integration of religious tourism into the country's economy, Saudi Arabia sees a shift away from oil dependence. Tourism revenue becomes a primary source of income, providing a much-needed boost to the nation's economy and reducing its reliance on fossil fuels. The country's diversified economy now thrives in part due to its pioneering efforts in religious tourism, attracting millions of international visitors who contribute significantly to the nation's GDP. This growth in tourism revenue also leads to job creation, particularly in the hospitality, transport, technology, and infrastructure sectors. As a result, Saudi Arabia not only becomes a global leader in religious tourism, but also a model of economic diversification for other countries in the Gulf and beyond. Despite these successes, the biggest challenge for Saudi Arabia remains the delicate balance between modernization and cultural preservation. As the country moves forward with its Vision 2030 agenda, it faces pressures to modernize and appeal to a younger, more tech-savvy generation of travelers, while still honoring the deeply traditional aspects of Islamic pilgrimage. The country's religious significance requires constant engagement with religious leaders to ensure that modernization efforts align with Islamic values. Saudi Arabia must work closely with Islamic scholars, religious authorities, and the international Muslim community to ensure that new technologies and modern services don't dilute or undermine the sacred nature of the Hajj and Umrah. The challenge is not only about offering cutting-edge services but also ensuring that the experience remains a spiritual journey rather than just a tourist attraction. This dialogue between religious authorities and the government is critical to maintaining Saudi Arabia's authenticity as the center of the Islamic world.

### **Scenario 2: Icarus' Fall**

In this scenario, Saudi Arabia continues to enjoy its strategic geographical position, remaining the primary hub for religious tourism, but fails to fully capitalize on its potential due to an ineffective implementation of Vision 2030. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, poor planning, and delays in infrastructure projects prevent the country from reaching its maximum potential in religious tourism. Despite ambitious plans for the development of religious tourism infrastructure, in practice, execution issues, corruption, and continuous changes in policies and regulations result in many of these projects either progressing very slowly or being poorly executed. For instance:



- Some projects, such as hotel developments and transportation networks, remain half-finished due to management problems and financial delays.
- Plans for modernizing and digitalizing the Hajj process fail because of poor coordination between government bodies and the private sector.
- The lack of sufficient oversight on service quality leads to disappointment among visitors, as accommodation, transportation, and urban facilities are unable to meet international standards.

As a result, mismanagement and financial opacity lead to investor distrust. Many both domestic and international companies decide to refrain from investing in religious tourism projects, as poor execution makes it unclear whether these projects will ever generate returns. One of the most significant issues in this scenario is the increase in pilgrimage costs. Due to the government's inability to regulate prices and manage inflation in accommodation and travel costs, the cost of performing Hajj rises significantly. This leads to criticism over the accessibility and affordability of pilgrimage, with many potential pilgrims from lower-income backgrounds being unable to afford the journey. The lack of a coherent tourism vision causes a lack of cohesive marketing for Saudi Arabia as a pilgrimage destination, which makes it difficult for the country to attract new visitors and maintain its leadership in the religious tourism sector. While Saudi Arabia remains the main religious tourism destination because of its geographical advantage, its global leadership is at risk as competitors, such as the UAE and Turkey, capitalize on offering better hospitality services, modern facilities, and more affordable options for pilgrims. As the government fails to execute large-scale infrastructure projects, many private investors become hesitant to commit to the religious tourism sector. This leads to a lack of innovation and slow development in the tourism industry. Potential investors who would have contributed to improving the quality of services and developing new tourist attractions are discouraged by the government's inability to offer a clear, stable vision and consistent regulatory environment. This also creates a situation where the tourism sector remains stagnant or even shrinks as other competing regions offer more attractive, well-managed, and innovative alternatives to pilgrims, which further damages Saudi Arabia's standing as the dominant player in the market. In this scenario, Saudi Arabia's economic benefits from religious tourism remain below their potential. While millions still visit for pilgrimage each year, the overall revenue from religious tourism does not reach its projected targets due to the slow growth, increased costs, and frustration among visitors. Despite being the primary religious tourism hub, the country faces mounting challenges in sustaining and growing its role in the global tourism industry.

### **Scenario 3: The Labyrinth of Daedalus**

In this scenario, Saudi Arabia successfully implements its Vision 2030 reforms, ensuring modernized infrastructure, improved regulatory frameworks, and a more efficient tourism ecosystem. The country streamlines visa processes, enhances pilgrimage logistics, and incorporates smart technology to elevate

the experience of religious tourists. Investments in transportation networks, accommodation facilities, and sustainable tourism initiatives significantly boost the nation's attractiveness as a pilgrimage destination. However, despite these advancements, external factors beyond Saudi Arabia's control create significant obstacles, preventing it from fully capitalizing on its strategic advantages. One of the primary barriers in this scenario is regional instability. Political conflicts in the Middle East, diplomatic tensions, and fluctuating alliances undermine the country's ability to maintain a steady influx of religious tourists. Restrictions on travel due to strained relations with certain nations reduce the number of incoming visitors, particularly from key Muslim-majority countries. Additionally, competition from emerging religious tourism destinations such as Turkey, Iran, and even parts of Africa and Southeast Asia poses a serious threat. Countries that historically lacked religious tourism infrastructure begin heavily investing in faith-based experiences, offering alternative pilgrimage routes, spiritual retreats, and historically significant Islamic sites. Some governments subsidize pilgrimage costs or provide exclusive benefits for their citizens, drawing attention away from Saudi Arabia's traditional dominance in this field. These factors contribute to a fragmentation of the global religious tourism industry, making it more challenging for Saudi Arabia to maintain its central position. Another major roadblock in this scenario is the tightening of visa regulations and heightened security concerns. While Saudi Arabia has taken steps to facilitate access for religious tourists, global security threats, terrorism risks, and concerns about crowd management during major pilgrimage seasons lead to more restrictive entry policies. These restrictions particularly impact visitors from politically unstable regions, limiting the overall diversity of pilgrims. Additionally, the government enforces stricter surveillance measures and background checks to prevent potential security risks. While these measures are meant to enhance safety, they create bureaucratic hurdles that discourage some travelers from embarking on their pilgrimage. Many potential visitors find the visa application process cumbersome and expensive, leading them to consider alternative religious experiences elsewhere. While digital pilgrimage does not replace the religious obligation of Hajj, it begins to shift cultural perceptions about the necessity of physical travel. Some Islamic scholars and institutions support hybrid pilgrimage experiences, allowing believers to supplement their religious journeys with virtual engagements. Saudi Arabia, despite recognizing this trend, struggles to integrate these digital experiences into its tourism model, leading to a gradual erosion of its monopoly on religious tourism.

#### **Scenario 4: Pandora's Box**

In this scenario, Saudi Arabia faces the worst-case outcome where its failure to capitalize on its religious tourism potential results in severe economic stagnation, loss of global influence, and a missed opportunity to secure its future as a leader in faith-based tourism. The crux of this scenario lies in weak governance, poor strategic decisions, and the country's inability to adapt to both internal challenges and

external competition. Saudi Arabia's governance in the tourism sector is unable to meet the challenges posed by an increasingly complex global tourism market. The lack of effective policy execution results in a situation where key reforms intended to modernize and improve the country's infrastructure and tourist services either fail to launch or suffer significant delays. Inconsistent regulations, bureaucratic red tape, and internal political struggles hinder the timely development of essential facilities and services required to enhance religious tourism experiences. This lack of efficient governance creates a gap between Saudi Arabia's aspirations and the actual execution of its policies, leading to a gradual decline in the quality of tourism. A critical component of religious tourism is infrastructure, which, in this scenario, remains underdeveloped. Poor infrastructure ranging from public transportation, accommodation, and healthcare services creates frustration among visitors who expect a modern and seamless experience when traveling to Saudi Arabia for religious purposes. Inefficient infrastructure planning leads to congestion at pilgrimage sites, overcrowding, and delays that make the pilgrimage experience less enjoyable. In addition, the lack of international partnerships and collaboration with neighboring countries and global tourism players exacerbates the problem. Saudi Arabia's inability to establish a comprehensive and collaborative regional strategy limits its ability to compete with emerging religious tourism destinations that work closely with other nations to offer joint packages and cross-border tourism initiatives. With global tourism becoming increasingly accessible, many Muslims look beyond Saudi Arabia for alternative ways to fulfill their spiritual journeys. Countries like Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia with established religious tourism offerings and modern infrastructure become more attractive alternatives. These destinations not only offer affordable pilgrimage experiences, but also cater to a younger, tech-savvy generation looking for innovative solutions in religious tourism. Moreover, alternative forms of pilgrimage—such as virtual pilgrimages and AI-powered religious guidance emerge as viable options for those unable or unwilling to travel to Saudi Arabia. Technological advancements such as virtual reality pilgrimages, AI-driven apps for spiritual guidance, and remote access to sacred sites provide a realistic alternative to physical pilgrimage, further eroding the traditional role of Saudi Arabia as the center of religious tourism. As global travel options expand, the cost of pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia rises. Without sufficient regulation of travel and accommodation prices, the financial burden on pilgrims increases. The growing costs and poorly managed services result in criticisms about the affordability of Hajj and Umrah, further pushing people toward alternative destinations that offer more affordable pilgrimage packages and better services. This rising cost, coupled with inconsistent visa policies, long waiting times, and inconvenient travel regulations, makes Saudi Arabia less accessible to many would-be pilgrims, particularly those from low-income and developing countries. Affordability and accessibility issues become the major points of frustration for both domestic and international visitors, leading to the country's decline as the primary destination for religious

tourism. Weak security policies, poor crowd control measures, and lack of investment in pilgrim safety increase the risk of incidents that tarnish the reputation of Saudi Arabia as a pilgrimage destination. With the growing global attention to issues like terrorism, natural disasters, and health crises, Saudi Arabia's ability to secure its pilgrimage sites becomes a significant concern. As international tensions rise and the security situation remains unstable, many potential visitors may choose safer, more stable alternatives. The decline in security measures further erodes global trust in the country's ability to safeguard the safety of its pilgrims, contributing to a decline in tourism numbers and economic stagnation. The country's reputation as a spiritual center is significantly weakened by the lack of confidence in its ability to provide a safe and welcoming environment for international pilgrims.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Religious tourism in Saudi Arabia is a key pillar of the country's economy and cultural identity. Given its unique position as the center of Islam and home to the holiest sites, investment in this sector is not only economically lucrative but also plays a crucial role in religious diplomacy and strengthening Saudi Arabia's international standing. This study identified "Strategic Geographic Location" and "Government Policy & Vision 2030" as the two most influential drivers shaping the future of investment in religious tourism. By combining two contrasting states for each driver, four plausible future scenarios were developed. The analysis of these scenarios highlights that Saudi Arabia's ability to become the undisputed leader in religious tourism largely depends on the effective implementation of economic and development policies. In the "Phoenix's Ascent" scenario, the country successfully implements reforms, leverages its strategic position, and invests in modern infrastructure, thereby establishing itself as the global leader in religious tourism. On the other hand, in the "Icarus' Fall" scenario, despite having a favorable geographic position, mismanagement, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and poor policy execution limit Saudi Arabia's potential, allowing competitors like the UAE and Turkey to attract more faith-based travelers. In the "Labyrinth of Daedalus" scenario, Saudi Arabia implements Vision 2030 reforms effectively, but external challenges such as regional instability, geopolitical tensions, and competition from emerging religious tourism destinations hinder its ability to dominate the sector. Additionally, the rise of digital pilgrimage experiences through VR and AI-driven religious guidance further reduces the need for physical travel. Conversely, the "Pandora's Box" scenario represents the worst-case outcome, where both ineffective governance and a declining strategic position lead to the deterioration of religious tourism. Poor infrastructure, lack of international partnerships, and the increasing cost of pilgrimage push visitors towards alternative faith-based tourism destinations, diminishing Saudi Arabia's global influence. The findings emphasize the necessity of sustainable policy-making, investment in technological advancements, and continuous infrastructure development to maintain Saudi Arabia's

position in religious tourism. The following recommendations are proposed to enhance and secure the future of investment in this sector:

1. Infrastructure development and digital transformation: Utilizing advanced technologies such as AI, big data analytics, and virtual reality to optimize Hajj and Umrah services and improve the pilgrim experience.
2. Simplifying travel regulations and visa policies: Establishing transparent and efficient visa procedures while reducing travel costs to make religious tourism more accessible for Muslims worldwide.
3. Strengthening religious diplomacy and regional cooperation: Developing religious tourism corridors with neighboring Islamic countries and offering integrated pilgrimage packages to attract more visitors.
4. Sustainable development and cultural heritage preservation: Investing in eco-friendly tourism initiatives that balance economic growth with environmental sustainability while protecting the country's cultural and religious identity.
5. Encouraging private and foreign investment: Providing financial incentives, tax benefits, and investment-friendly policies to attract both domestic and international investors in the religious tourism sector.

Despite offering a comprehensive outlook on the future of investment in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia, this study has several limitations. First, scenario planning inherently involves uncertainty, making it impossible to account for all unpredictable variables. Second, the identification of key drivers was based on multiple sources, which may lead to varying interpretations of their impact. Additionally, sudden shifts in government policies, global economic conditions, and geopolitical developments could significantly alter the projected future scenarios. For future research, it is recommended to complement scenario-based analysis with quantitative economic models to predict the financial implications of investment in religious tourism. Moreover, conducting interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, investors, and tourism experts, would provide deeper insights into the opportunities and challenges in this sector.

## References

- Abu-Hussin, M. F., Idris, A., Yaakop, M. R., & Salleh, M. A. (2021). Essential Factors Influencing Malaysia's Relations with the United Arab Emirates. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 8, 477–495. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23477989211031785>

- Albejaidi, F., & Nair, K. (2021). Nationalisation of Health Workforce in Saudi Arabia's Public and Private Sectors: A Review of Issues and Challenges. *Journal of Health Management*, 23(3), 482–497. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09720634211035204>
- Alshehri, F. A. D. (2019). *Is Saudi Arabia's Business Environment Conducive to Attracting Foreign Direct Investment in Non-Oil Sectors?*. Other Degree thesis, Victoria University. <https://vuir.vu.edu.au/id/eprint/40445>
- Alshehri, A. (2024). Social Media in Tourism: A Twitter (X) Social Graph Approach to #Alula. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 15(28), 253-267. <https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v15i28.715>
- Alanzi, E. M., Kulendran, N., & Nguyen, T.-H. (2023). Religious Tourism Demand and Country Prosperity: An Empirical Study of Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.21427/X9C7-K225>
- Alkhanbshi, A. S., & Al-Kandi, I. (2014). The Religious Values And Job Attitudes Among Female Saudi Bank Employees: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of WEI Business and Economics*, 3(1), 28-35. <https://www.westeastinstitute.com/journals/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/4Aisha-and-Ibrahim-JWEIBE.pdf>
- Alsubaie, S. A. (2013). *The impact of regional political developments on the evolution of transnational terrorism in Saudi Arabia*. Kansas State University.
- Arefi, A., Fathi, M. R., & Kohyari Haghighat, A. (2023). Investigating the Effect of Halal Brand Personality in the Packaging of Food Products on Attitudinal and Behavioral Loyalty of Consumers. *Packaging Science and Art*, 13(52), 21-31. [20.1001.1.22286675.1401.13.52.3.8](https://doi.org/10.1001.1.22286675.1401.13.52.3.8)
- Bacha, Dr. M. U. (2024). Religious Tourism and its Impact on Entrepreneurial Development at Kartarpur Corridor, Punjab-Pakistan. *Journal of Business & Tourism*, 9(02), 56-75. <https://doi.org/10.34260/jbt.v9i02.279>
- Begum, H., Abbas, K., Alam, A. F., Song, H., Chowdhury, M. T., & Ghani, A. B. A. (2022). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the environment and socioeconomic viability: a sustainable production chain alternative. *Foresight*, 24(3/4), 456-475. <https://doi.org/10.1108/FS-02-2021-0053>
- Bianchi, R. R. (2017). Reimagining the Hajj. *Social Sciences*, 6(2), 36. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci6020036>
- Bokhari, A. (2021). The Economics of Religious Tourism (Hajj and Umrah) in Saudi Arabia. In *Global Perspectives on Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* (pp. 159-184). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-3435-9.ch007>
- Buitrago-Esquinas, E. M., Yñiguez-Ovando, R., Puig-Cabrera, M., Santos, M., & Santos, J. A. C. (2024). Artificial Intelligence and Sustainable Tourism Planning: A Hetero-Intelligence

- Methodology Proposal. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 20(SI), 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.2024SI04>
- Carvache-Franco, M., Regalado-Pezúa, O., Carvache-Franco, O., & Carvache-Franco, W. (2024). Segmentation by motivations in religious tourism: A study of the Christ of Miracles Pilgrimage. *Peru. PLoS ONE*, 19(5), e0303762. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0303762>
- Chan, J., Marzuki, K. M., & Mohtar, T. (2021). Local Community Participation and Responsible Tourism Practices in Ecotourism Destination: A Case of Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah. *Sustainability*, 13(23), 13302. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132313302>
- Damanhour, A. (2016). Study of the Social and Cultural Aspects of Saudi Tourists and Evaluate the Services Provided to Tourist of Saudi - An Applied Study for the Tourism Sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *International Business Research*, 10, 153–162. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v10n1p153>
- Ebrahimi, E., & Fathi, M. R. (2018). Using fuzzy DEMATEL and fuzzy Similarity to develop a human capital evaluation model. *International Journal of Industrial Engineering: Theory, Applications and Practice*, 24(6). <https://doi.org/10.23055/ijietap.2017.24.6.2389>
- Euchi, J., Omri, A., & Al-Tit, A. A. (2018). The pillars of economic diversification in Saudi Arabia. *World Review of Science, Technology and Sustainable Development*, 14(4), 330-343. <https://doi.org/10.1504/WRSTSD.2018.095719>
- Fathi, M. R., Torabi, M., & Razi Moheb Saraj, S. (2022). The future of apitourism in Iran based on critical uncertainty approach and DEMATEL/COPRAS techniques. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, vol. ahead-of-print no. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-09-2021-0215>
- Fathi, M. R., Maleki, M. H., Koksai, C. D., Yuzbaşioğlu, N., & Ahmadi, V. (2019). Future study of spiritual tourism based on cross impact matrix and soft systems methodology. *International journal of Tourism, Culture & Spirituality*, 3(2), 19-41. <https://doi.org/10.22133/ijts.2019.172098.1026>
- Fathi, M. R., Khaleghverdi, N., Raeesi Nafchi, S., & Sobhani, S. M. (2024). Structuring the affecting indicators on the sustainable food supply chain performance based on fuzzy cognitive mapping and fuzzy DEMATEL. *Fuzzy Optimization and Modeling Journal (FOMJ)*, 5(3), 67–87. <https://oiccpres.com/fomj/article/view/8307>
- Guriță, D., & Scortescu, F. I. (2023). Religious Tourism and Sustainable Development of the Economy in the Context of Globalization in the Northeast Area of Romania. *Sustainability*, 15(16), 12128. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151612128>
- Imam, A. (2019). Urban Soundscape Quality Rating Using GIS Data and Remote Sensing: A Case Study of Al-Safa District, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In *Congreso Internacional Ciudad y Territorio Virtual (CTV)*.. <https://doi.org/10.5821/ctv.8450>



- I'zzah, H. (2022). The Economic Impact of the Community There is Religious Tourism to the Tomb of KH Abdul Hamid. *EKONIKA: Jurnal Ekonomi Universitas Kadiri*, 7(2), 250–261. <https://doi.org/10.30737/ekonika.v7i2.2558>
- Jahanian, M. (2017). Futures studies of Tourism with a Spirituality Perspective. *International journal of Tourism, Culture & Spirituality*, 2(1), 24-39. <https://doi.org/10.22133/ijts.2017.46880>
- Jandaghi, G., Fathi, M. R., Maleki, M. H., Faraji, O., & Yüzbaşıoğlu, N. (2019). Identification of tourism scenarios in Turkey based on futures study approach. *Almatourism-Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*, 10(20), 47-68. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2036-5195/9488>
- Khosravi, A., Fathi, M. R., Yazdani, F., Razi Moheb Seraj, S. and Younessi, A. (2023). The Effect of Nostalgia on the Pull Motivation of Tourist Destinations, Amazing Behavior and Loyalty Among Tourists (Case Study: Kashan Rosewater Cultural Festival, Iran). *International journal of Tourism, Culture & Spirituality*, 6(1), 111-129. <https://doi.org/10.22133/ijts.2023.172029>
- Kurniawan, O., Ariyono, Y., Irdiana, S., Darmawan, K., & Khairullah, M. N. (2023). The Role Of Tourists In Increasing Community Income In The Sunan Ampel Tourism Religious Tourism Area In Surabaya. *Jurnal Cakrawala Ilmiah*, 2(5), 1901–1910. <https://doi.org/10.53625/jcijurnalcakrawalailmiah.v2i5.4613>
- Madkhali, H., Lugosi, P., & Hawkins, R. (2024). Socio-cultural drivers of Saudi tourists' outbound destination decisions. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 30(3), 582–598. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667231152937>
- Mazzetto, S. (2022). Sustainable Heritage Preservation to Improve the Tourism Offer in Saudi Arabia. *Urban Planning*, 7(4), 195-207. <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v7i4.5777>
- Miralles-Quirós, J. L., Mar Miralles-Quirós, M., & Nogueira, J. M. (2020). Sustainable Development Goals and Investment Strategies: The Profitability of Using Five-Factor Fama-French Alphas. *Sustainability*, 12(5), 1842. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12051842>
- Muamar, A., Rijal, S., Faozi, Moh. M., Mahfudin, M., & Tohayudin, T. (2024). Family and Creative Economy in Sunan Gunung Djati Religious Tourism Area, Cirebon, Indonesia. *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga*, 7(1), 1-18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i1.21987>
- Ncube, F. N., & Chikuta, O. (2020). Perceived Economic Impact of Religious Tourism: The Case of Zimbabwe. *Hospitality & Tourism Review*, 1(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.38157/hospitality-tourism-review.v1i2>
- Noer, L. R., Ninglasari, S. Y., Prihananto, P., Rai, N. G. M., & Darmawan, W. (2024). Sustainability of Religious Tourism in Indonesia: A Bibliometric Review and Analysis. *KnE Social Sciences*, 9(32), 211–223. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v9i32.17437>

- Osama, A. J., & Adam, S. (2024). The Antecedents and Driving Factors of Social Entrepreneurial Behavior in Saudi Arabia. A Systematic Literature Review from the Last Decade. *SAGE Open*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241257487>
- Pahlevanzadeh, M., Mohtadi, M. M., Fathi, M. R., Saffarinia, A., & Sobhani, S. M. (2024). Identifying and Clustering the Main Points of View Towards War Tourism (Case Study: Rahian-e Noor Camps). *International journal of Tourism, Culture & Spirituality*, 7(1), 39-69. <https://doi.org/10.22133/ijts.2024.448028.1162>
- Parker, M., Parker, T., & Qayyum, A. (2008). AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF SELECTED MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES. *Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research*, 9, 93.
- Postma, A., Hartman, S., & Yeoman, I. (2024). *Scenario Planning and Tourism Futures: Theory building, methodologies and case studies* (Vol. 10). Channel View Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2025.2465382>
- Prastiwi, M. I., & Wardhana, I. J. K. (2024). Development of Inclusion Through Minority-Conscious Tourism in The Madura Religious Tourism Area. *Journal of Contemporary Sociological Issues*, 4(1), 64-83. <https://doi.org/10.19184/csi.v4i1.44993>
- Pratiwi, A., & Muslikhati, S. (2024). Implementation of Saudi Vision 2030 Towards Saudi Arabia's Internationally Open Tourism Industry. *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Sains*, 5(01), 85–102. <https://doi.org/10.59141/jiss.v5i1.983>
- Qurtuby, S. A. (2024). The Development and Innovation of Religious, Secular, and Archaeological Tourism in Saudi Arabia. *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies*, 10(1), 33-69. <https://doi.org/10.26351/JIMES/10-1/2>
- Raifu, I., Afolabi, J., & Salihu, A. A. (2024). Simulating the effect of counterfactual changes in religious tourism on economic growth in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, vol. ahead-of-print no. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-04-2024-0354>
- Rajabpour, E., Fathi, M.R. & Torabi, M. (2022). Analysis of factors affecting the implementation of green human resource management using a hybrid fuzzy AHP and type-2 fuzzy DEMATEL approach. *Environ Sci Pollut Res.*, 29, 48720–48735. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-022-19137-7>
- Rice, G. (2004). Doing business in Saudi Arabia. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 46(1), 59–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.10106>
- Sadeghi, A., Nazari, V., Gholami, M., & Amrollahi, M. A. (2022). Investigating Socio-Economic Impact of Religious Tourism on Spatial Development of Qom Province. *Social Studies in Tourism*, 10(1), 195-220. <https://doi.org/10.52547/journalitor.36277.10.19.195>

- Singh, H. P., & Alhamad, I. A. (2022). A Novel Categorization of Key Predictive Factors Impacting Hotels' Online Ratings: A Case of Makkah. *Sustainability*, 14(24), 16588. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142416588>.
- Sobhani S M, Soltani M, Fathi M R. (2023). Identifying the Fields and Mechanisms of Value Co-creation in Foreign Language Institutions Using Fuzzy DEMATEL Ranking Approach (Case Study: Tehran, Iran). *IJER.*, 2(4), 58-74. <https://doi.org/10.22034/2.4.58>
- Soltani, M., Ebrahimi, E., & Fathi, M. R. (2015). Analysis of the relationship between social capital index using fuzzy DEMATEL technique. *Social Capital Management*, 2(2), 199-220. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jscm.2015.54976>
- Sultan, W. A. M., Alsenosy, A., & Jaharadak, A. A. B. (2024). Examining the influence of various big data capabilities on tourism firms in saudi arabia. *International Journal of Professional Business Review: Int. J. Prof. Bus. Rev.*, 9(12), 1. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=9910760>
- Tabash, M., Farooq, U., Refae, G. E. E., Al-Faryan, M. A. S., & Athamena, B. (2023). Impact of religious tourism on the economic development, energy consumption and environmental degradation: evidence from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Tourist Review*, 78(3), 1004-1018. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-07-2022-0347>
- Taghvai, M., & Hosseinekhah, H. (2018). Tourism Development Planning Based on Futures Studies and Scenario Case Study: Yasouj. *Journal of Tourism Planning and Development*, 6(23), 8-30. <https://doi.org/10.22080/jtpd.2018.1762>
- Tambo, E. (2017). Smart Positioning Tourism and Hospitality Model for Economic Transformation in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15(1), 82-96. <https://johat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/6-1.pdf>
- Torabi, M., Fathi, M. R., Raeesi Nafchi, S., & Sabalani, S. (2023). Futures Studies of Food Tourism based on Structural Analysis. *International journal of Tourism, Culture & Spirituality*, 6(2), 19-44. <https://doi.org/10.22133/ijtes.2024.400672.1135>

---

#### COPYRIGHTS

©2023 by the authors. Published by University of Science and Culture. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

---

