

“The United Kingdom Muslims' Perspectives Toward Tourism in Saudi Arabia After Hajj or Umrah”

By:

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Abstract:

In order to carry out the Islamic rites of "Hajj and Umrah," millions of people visit Saudi Arabia annually. By reviewing the literature on Saudi Arabian tourism and public relations, this study intends to investigate whether or not British pilgrims are open to participating in tourism activities following Hajj or Umrah. To gauge general sentiment, we administered a survey; to delve more into specific opinions, we convened focus groups. After collecting data from 109 Muslims in the UK, the majority of participants were open to participating in tourism-related activities. Almost 25% of people who took part in the study said that combining tourism with Hajj or Umrah causes them moral or religious difficulties. While they are mostly concerned with the hot heat and financial costs, their primary interests in Saudi Arabian tourism are to visit Islamic landmarks and local food. Because Saudi Arabia is a land of Islamic holy sites and little else, the public's perception of the country is one of religious pilgrimage. The vast majority of British pilgrims get what little knowledge they do have about Saudi Arabia's tourist attractions from social media. In order to improve the Saudi tourism industry's reputation, dispel myths, inform the public about exciting opportunities, and foster understanding among key audiences, public relations is an essential tool. To accomplish this, it is necessary to apply a Change Model, take pilgrims into account as the primary stakeholders, and use the Two-Way Symmetrical Model for communication. This study summarizes the views of Muslims in the United Kingdom on the Saudi tourist industry and delves into the function of public relations in marketing Saudi Arabia as a desirable vacation spot. Those working in public relations for Saudi Arabia's tourist industry might use the findings of this study to their advantage.

Keywords: Public Relations, Stakeholders, Religious Tourism, Hajj, Umrah, United Kingdom.

المخلص:

يزور ملايين الحجاج المملكة العربية السعودية سنويًا لأداء واجباتهم الدينية مثل "الحج والعمرة". يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف مدى استعداد حجاج المملكة المتحدة للانخراط في الأنشطة السياحية بعد الحج أو العمرة من خلال دراسة الأدبيات المتعلقة بالسياحة والعلاقات العامة في المملكة العربية السعودية. تم استخدام المسح لقياس المواقف، في حين تم استخدام مجموعات التركيز لاستكشاف هذه المواقف بعمق أكبر. تم جمع البيانات من 109 مشاركين مسلمين في المملكة المتحدة، وأشارت النتائج إلى أن معظمهم كانوا على استعداد لاحقًا للانخراط في الأنشطة السياحية. وأعرب ما يقرب من ربع المشاركين عن وجود صراع أخلاقي أو ديني عند خلط الحج أو العمرة بالسياحة. اهتماماتهم الرئيسية فيما يتعلق بالسياحة في المملكة العربية السعودية هي زيارة المعالم الإسلامية والمأكولات المحلية، في حين أن اهتماماتهم الرئيسية هي الطقس الحار والتكاليف المالية. والصورة التي يحملونها عن السياحة في السعودية مرتبطة بالدين، فهي الدولة التي تحتوي على مقدسات إسلامية ولا تقدم أي شيء آخر. يفتر غالبية حجاج المملكة المتحدة إلى الوعي بالفرص السياحية في المملكة العربية السعودية، ويتلقون المعلومات التي يحصلون عليها من وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. يمكن أن تلعب العلاقات العامة دورًا حاسمًا في تعزيز صورة قطاع السياحة السعودي، ومعالجة المفاهيم الخاطئة، وزيادة الوعي بالفرص السياحية المتاحة، وتطوير التفاهم المتبادل مع الجماهير المستهدفة. ويمكن تحقيق ذلك من خلال اعتبار الحجاج أصحاب المصلحة الرئيسيين، واعتماد النموذج المتمثل ثنائي الاتجاه كإطار للتواصل، وتطبيق نموذج التغيير. يقدم هذا البحث لمحة عامة عن وجهات نظر مسلمي المملكة المتحدة تجاه قطاع السياحة السعودي ويناقش دور العلاقات العامة في الترويج للمملكة العربية السعودية كوجهة جذابة. ويهدف البحث إلى مساعدة ممارسي العلاقات العامة في قطاع السياحة السعودي على جذب المزيد من السياح.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العلاقات العامة، أصحاب المصلحة، السياحة الدينية، الحج، العمرة، المملكة المتحدة.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Many governments and organizations are exploring sustainable ways to conserve the biosphere and offer a better future for future generations as human activity threatens our existence. Most countries agree that reducing oil dependence and moving to green energy sources are crucial to preventing environmental disaster. This transition will benefit the environment but endanger oil-dependent economies.

Since Saudi Arabia (KSA) is the second-largest oil exporter after the US, this change is particularly impactful (Statista, 2022). Vision 2030, a long-term strategic plan, was created by Saudi Arabia to transition to a sustainable energy economy. This 15-year vision outlines a complete economic, social, and cultural reform to reduce oil reliance, diversify the economy, and create a lively and thriving community. To meet global policy trends and ensure economic sustainability and prosperity without oil revenues, the vision was created. Tourism can help Saudi Arabia realize its ambition and transition to a sustainable economy (Visit-Saudi-Arabia, 2023). The World Tourism Organization (WTO) reports that tourism sales exceeded \$1.8 trillion globally in 2019 and are predicted to rise (UNWTO, 2022). PR connects places to their target audience, making it vital to tourism. Building positive interactions, regulating views, promoting destination awareness, and enhancing destination image are its duties. Many experts believe PR is the key to good stakeholder-organization relations based on shared understanding (Griffin 2014; Moloney and McGrath, 2019; CIPR, 2022). PR is necessary for organizations and nations' reputation management (L'Etang, 2008). PR is therefore a key component of any strategy to develop the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia and enhance the country's image as an attractive destination.

Saudi Arabia banned entry visas to Muslim pilgrims, workers, business travelers, and diplomats for years (Abuhjeeleh, 2019; Al-Awsat, 2019). Even pilgrims' permits were limited to a month (BOE, 2015). Saudi Arabia created these tough restrictions to curb illegal immigration because some pilgrims did not return to their countries after the Hajj or Umrah, which increased crime and burdened the government (Al-Masoudi, 2012). The new vision 2030, Saudi Arabia's achievement in curbing illegal immigration, and its transformation to a sustainable economy also affect tourism plans. These factors encouraged Saudi Arabia to encourage foreign travelers and modify Hajj and Umrah visa restrictions. Saudi Arabia welcomed foreign tourists for the first time in 2019, changing the latter. Tourist visas might be obtained online in 30 minutes or at Saudi airports due to eased visa requirements. In 2022, Hajj and Umrah visa holders could stay for three months after regulation revisions (BBC, 2019). The new Saudi Vision 2030 promotes tourism with these major policy measures (Vision2030, 2023).

Statistics show that 11 million foreign pilgrims perform Hajj or Umrah in Saudi Arabia each year (Ministry of Tourism, 2019; McLoughlin, 2019). This may explain the loosening of Hajj and Umrah visa requirements in 2022, as luring more pilgrims to tourism will boost the Saudi economy. However, recruiting pilgrims to tourist activities is complicated and depends on their interests, perceptions of the country, and promotional initiatives. Millions of Muslim pilgrims visit Saudi Arabia each year from nations with extremely varied cultures, thus their interests, worries, and attitudes toward tourism prospects are likely to differ. Focusing on pilgrims from one country may assist understand these aspects and enable more specific attempts to attract them. British Muslim pilgrims, the largest group in Western countries, number 100,000 annually, making them a good target audience for this study (McLoughlin, 2019).

This study hypothesizes that with the new visa rules, most UK Muslim pilgrims will continue touring after Hajj or Umrah. It examines if tourism and Hajj or Umrah contradict religiously or morally. It also examines UK pilgrims' Saudi Arabia tourist worries. We conclude with PR's role in marketing Saudi Arabia as a tourist destination and drawing more visitors.

1.2 Research Problem

The key study challenge is that easing Hajj and Umrah visa rules may not be enough to entice pilgrims to travel afterward due to other variables. First, religious travel like Hajj and Umrah differs from leisure tourism. Mixing religious and non-religious tourism may bring pilgrims moral or religious discomfort. Second, UK Muslims' anxieties of Saudi Arabian tourism may influence their decision to travel after Hajj or Umrah. For instance, a pilgrim may be willing to participate in tourism and have no religious or moral conflicts, but the place is not appealing. Third, pilgrims' perception of the destination and promotional efforts may impact their travel choices. Finally, public relations may help promote Saudi Arabia as a tourism destination, develop meaningful relationships with target audiences, and improve the country's image, attracting more tourists. This study explores all of these elements to provide an overview of UK Muslim views on Saudi tourism, which may assist Saudi tourism PR practitioners better understand their target audience and attract more travelers.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To estimate whether a majority of UK pilgrims will spend additional time engaged in tourism in Saudi Arabia after Hajj or Umrah.
- To exploring whether mixing Hajj or Umrah with tourism causes any religious or moral conflict.
- Explore the interests and concerns of UK pilgrims in regard to tourism in Saudi Arabia.

- Discussing the role that public relations can play in attracting more pilgrims to tourism activities after Hajj or Umrah.

Qualitative and quantitative primary data are needed to achieve these goals. Quantitative data will come from questionnaires and qualitative from focus groups. The questionnaire will assess UK pilgrims' tourist sentiments in Saudi Arabia, while the focus groups will examine their causes. Combining these two methodologies may help comprehend UK Muslim pilgrims' views on Saudi Arabian tourism.

1.4 Research Questions and Hypothesis

H1: After the new visa regulations in Saudi Arabia, the majority of UK Muslims pilgrims are willing to spend further time as tourists after Hajj or Umrah.

RQ1: Do UK Muslim have any religious or moral conflict mixing Hajj or Umrah with tourism?

RQ2: What are UK Muslims' interests and concerns regarding tourism in Saudi Arabia?

RQ3: What image do UK Muslims have of Saudi tourism and how many promotional activities have they been exposed to in the past year?

2. Literature Review

This chapter discusses Saudi Arabia's tourism sector, tourists' motivations and concerns, and PR's role in promoting KSA as a tourism destination. It connects research concerns to theoretical results and analyzes appropriate models. The Saudi tourism industry and its evolution are then discussed. It also describes how Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 policy invests in tourism to move the economy away from oil dependence and toward sustainability (Vision2030, 2019). Examining past studies in these areas is necessary to fully comprehend the research issue.

2.1 Tourism in Saudi Arabia

Makkah and Al-Medina are the most sacred cities in the Islamic world and the reason religious tourism constitutes such a large part of the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia. The country also invests significantly in non-religious tourism. This section examines religious and non-religious tourism in KSA.

2.1.1 Religious Tourism

Muslims travel to Makkah for Hajj and Umrah to seek Allah's blessings. The five pillars of Islam require every financially and physically able Muslim to perform hajj at least once. Muslims from over the world visit Mecca on certain days of Dhu al-Hijjah to undertake religious rituals like standing at Arafat and strolling around the Holy Kaaba (Zamzam, 2021). Umrah, a shorter and simpler pilgrimage to Makkah's sacred mosque, can be done year-round, unlike Hajj.

Hajj began with Prophet Abraham, several thousand years before the mission of the Prophet Muhammad (Ibn-Kathir, 1343; Islamicity.org, 2017). The Qur'an states that God told Abraham to build the Kaaba (Holy Mosque in Makkah) and urge pilgrims to visit it for blessings (Isamicity.org, 2017). Islam says believers continued their go to Mecca after paganism flourished in Makkah and the Arabian Peninsula (Ibn-Kathir, 1343). In 610 A.D., Prophet Muhammad was sent to Makkah to convert them to Islam and worship one God, but they pressured him until he was forced to move to Yathrib (now Al-Medina) in 620. The inhabitants of Yathrib helped him spread the message until he conquered Makkah in 629-30 AD, cleaned the Kaaba of idols, and restored Ibrahim's monotheism (Macaulay, 2015).

Makkah and Al-Medina's religious prominence gave their rulers religious and political power in Islam. In Islam, caring for holy cities and welcoming pilgrims is a tremendous honor. Through Islamic history, several Islamic countries sought to acquire Makkah and Al-Medina due to its religious and political importance for Muslims (Al-Samarrai, 2010), therefore Saudi Arabia's current position in the Islamic world. The Saudi government emphasizes its duty as custodian of Makkah and Al-Medina and says it does not stop pilgrims from any country from entering the country, despite substantial political disputes (BBC, 2018).

Kenway (2019) examines the economic impact of Hajj and Umrah on Saudi Arabia from 1990 to 2017. After 1990, the number of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims expanded, putting strain on the Saudi government to provide security, administrative, and health services for the high number of people in small spaces. The survey also found that the Saudi authorities face both challenges and opportunities from pilgrimage growth. The study sought to improve research methods on pilgrimage attractions such as Islamic historical monuments, local food, nature adventures, and shopping.

2.1.2 Non-Religious Tourism

Historical sites and a rich heritage are Saudi Arabia's top non-religious tourism attractions. Al-Shamaa (2019) mentions Al-Ula as a remarkable historical city with tourism potential. Madain Saleh, an outdoor history museum in Al-Ula, features rock-cut tombs from the 7th and 6th millennia BCE (UNESCO, 2023). Al-Shamaa (2019) notes that the city has huge tourism potential but few tourism alternatives due to poor amenities. Tourism officials must address hot weather and insufficient accessibility to attract more tourists, according to the author. Hoque et al. (2023) also emphasize the relevance of historical landmarks for Saudi tourism. Their study focuses on Asir's 1,300-year-old heritage village of Rijal Alma'a, which has seven levels of architectural treasures and was recently placed to the UNESCO Tentative List. The report suggests greater promotion, improved accessibility and transportation, and a variety of tourism options at different price points to attract tourists of all incomes to resuscitate tourism in Rijal Al-Ma'a village. Both studies focused on historical locations with high tourism potential but underdeveloped. These studies targeted local or general international tourists, while this research targets pilgrims' interests and concerns. As well as improving current attractions, Saudi Arabia has established new tourism initiatives like NEOM City, the premium Red Sea Resorts, and Qiddiya entertainment city. The Kingdom also hosts important athletic events like the Formula One Championships and Clubs World Cup to boost sport tourism (Ministry of Sports, 2023).

2.2 Tourists' Motivations and Concerns

Many research show that tourists' worries influence tourism decisions (Decrop, 2006; March & Woodside, 2005; Lin et al., 2023). Thus, this study examines pilgrims' tourist interests and concerns in Saudi Arabia to see what non-religious activities might appeal to them.

2.2.1 Religious Tourism Motivations

Kenway (2019) cited several explanations for the rise in pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. Population growth in Islamic countries, standard of living, per capita income of many Muslims, transportation and communications technology, and Muslim religious knowledge of Hajj's importance have all increased. According to Scott & Jafari (2010), religious tourism is the most popular type of tourism in Islam, but leisure tourism is growing. Many travel firms now offer Umrah Plus packages to Muslim pilgrims, which combine Umrah in Saudi Arabia with a vacation in Egypt or the UAE. According to Oumoudden & Al-Zahrani (2021), pilgrim patrons have recently moved from austerity and simplicity to concern with facilities and services at their destination. This study examines whether Muslim pilgrims will participate in Saudi tourism after Hajj and Umrah, given this shift in their behavior and the tourism revolution in Saudi Arabia.

Rashid (2018) reviewed religious tourism literature and discovered that some people may be there for cultural or secular reasons. In a larger research of religious tourism's causality, Rosak-Szyrocka et al. (2023) surveyed 1009 Polish pilgrims and used the Ishikawa diagram to identify causation. Prayer or purification were the main motivations for 63% of pilgrims, while 19% wanted to see fascinating locations. The rest were social, accompanying relatives or friends.

2.2.2 Non-Religious Tourism Motivations

Some studies say there isn't enough research on Saudi tourists' interests and concerns. Abuhjeeleh (2019) notes that few studies have examined tourists' reasons for visiting KSA. The late start of tourism investment may explain this shortage. However, understanding what motivates or discourages visitors from visiting other nations and comparing that to Saudi Arabia's capabilities should assist determine what elements influence non-religious tourism decisions. Cyprus marketing to US tourists was researched by Yiannakis et al. (2012). The study found that American tourists are drawn to the English language, sunny weather, reasonable rates, accessibility, excellent security, good restaurants and hotels, and a rich history and legacy. Its rich history as the cradle of Islam and a meeting ground for many distinct pilgrims and civilizations make Saudi Arabia appealing.

2.2.3 Tourists' Concerns

Addressing tourists' concerns and promoting their interests may help Saudi Arabia attract more tourists and raise its revenues from this sector. Some previous studies indicate that the main concerns of tourists coming to Saudi Arabia are:

Hot Weather

The hot weather during the summer is one of the challenges facing the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia (Mansour & Mumuni, 2019; Abuhjeeleh, 2019). Al-Shamaa (2019) states that the high temperatures are a major obstacle for promoting Saudi Arabia as a tourist destination and recommends using passive ventilation to help ameliorate this.

Accessibility

Tourists in Saudi Arabia may worry about attraction accessibility. The Saudi legacy hamlet Rijal Al-Ma'a and the Abu Dhabi history village Bayut are compared by Hoque et al. (2023). Investment in heritage villages worked in Bayut. The study indicated that Rijal Al-Ma'a village had more potential than Bayut village but less visitors. This discrepancy

is caused by geography and accessibility, among other variables. Bayut village is 38 miles from Abu Dhabi, making it simpler to reach. Ali (2018) emphasizes accessibility and says that expanding transportation services, especially trains, is vital to Saudi tourism earnings. This study will examine if UK pilgrims considering Saudi Arabia worry about accessibility.

Rules of Conduct

Some research demonstrates that Saudi Arabia's severe modest dress, alcohol, and homosexuality laws worry tourists. Abuhjeeleh (2019) notes that Saudi Arabia is one of the easiest countries to visit due to its new tourism policy, but some travelers find its drug, alcohol, and homosexuality laws excessively stringent. More importantly, he suggests that Saudi Arabia may struggle to modify these regulations.

2.3 Public Relations' Role in Promoting Saudi Arabia as a Tourism Destination

This research will examine the role of pilgrims in Saudi tourism, the best communication model for creating connections with pilgrims, and UK Muslim pilgrims' perceptions of Saudi tourism.

2.3.1 The Importance of Pilgrims as Major Stakeholders in the Tourism Sector

Any business or organization needs good stakeholder interactions to succeed. Public relations professionals identify stakeholders and create, maintain, and improve connections with them (Ledingham, 2003). Organizational stakeholders are "any individual or group who can affect or is affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals of the organizations" (Freeman, 2010, p.46). Figure 1 shows that numerous internal and external stakeholders may be involved.

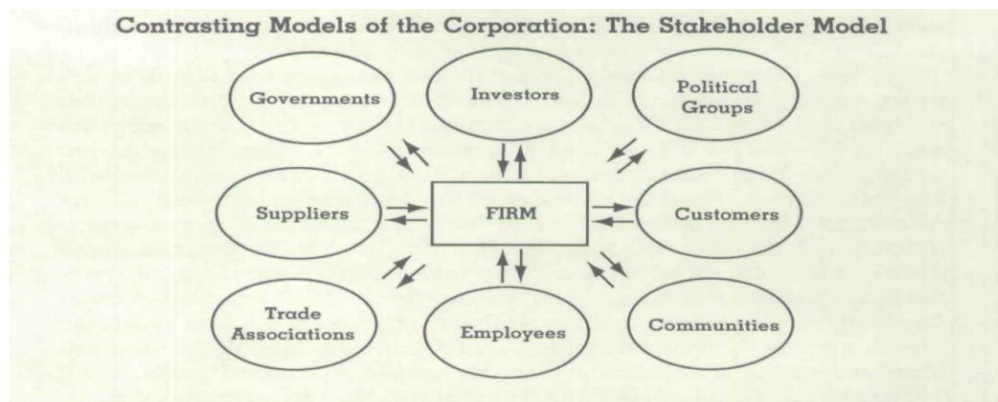


Figure 1 The Stakeholder Model (Source: Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p.69)

PR professionals can use Mitchell et al. (1997)'s salience theory to prioritize stakeholders. The importance of stakeholders can be determined by three important features in this approach. First, stakeholder power is their ability to influence outcomes or assert interests. Second, legitimacy entails determining if stakeholders' statements or

STAKEHOLDER SALIENCE FRAMEWORK (MITCHELL ET AL., 1997)

Class of Stakeholder		Attribute(s)	Level of Salience
Definitive Stakeholders	Definitive	Power, legitimacy and urgency	High
	Expectant Stakeholders		
	Dependent	Legitimacy and urgency	Moderate
	Dangerous	Power and urgency	Moderate
	Dominant	Power and legitimacy	Moderate
Latent Stakeholders	Demanding	Urgency	Low
	Discretionary	Legitimacy	Low
	Dormant	Power	Low

behaviors match the organization's social norms, values, and beliefs. Finally, urgency determines if a stakeholder's relationship or claim requires immediate attention or is vital. On these criteria, Mitchell et al. (1997) categorizes the stakeholders' class and level of salience depending on these attributes (Figure 2).

Figure 2 The Stakeholder Saliency Framework (Source: Mitchell et al., 1997, p.869)

This model classifies stakeholders from an economic perspective and within an institutional framework, but it fails to offer a comprehensive categorization scheme. The pilgrims have religious, political, and economic importance for the Saudi government, all of which must be considered. Applying this theory to stakeholders in the Saudi tourism sector would identify the pilgrims as a dominant stakeholder, as they have the power and legitimacy. Their power stems from their great influence on the tourism sector, and their status as the most important group of visitors economically (The Economist, 2022; Kenway, 2019; Ministry of Tourism, 2019).

2.3.2 Models of Communication

Effective communication is needed to reach stakeholder understanding. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 22) developed a theory of organizational PR. Figure 3 shows four communication models based on the aim and organization-audience connection.

Characteristic	Model			
	Press Agency/ Publicity	Public Information	Two-Way Asymmetric	Two-Way Symmetric
Purpose	Propaganda	Dissemination of information	Scientific persuasion	Mutual understanding
Nature of Communication	One-way; complete truth not essential	One-way; truth important	Two-way; imbalanced effects	Two-way; balanced effects
Communication Model	Source → Rec.	Source → Rec.	Source ↔ Rec. Feedback	Group ↔ Group
Nature of Research	Little; "counting house"	Little; readability, readership	Formative; evaluative of attitudes	Formative; evaluative of understanding
Leading Historical Figures	P. T. Barnum	Ivy Lee	Edward L. Bernays	Bernays, educators, professional leaders
Where Practiced Today	Sports, theatre, product promotion	Government, nonprofit associations, business	Competitive business; agencies	Regulated business; agencies
Estimated Percentage of Organizations Practicing Today	15%	50%	20%	15%

Figure 3 Models of Communication (Source: Grunig & Hunt 1984, p. 22)

The first is one-way communication that focuses on drawing attention or publicity to the organization regardless of its accuracy. The second model is also a one-way communication but where accuracy is critical, such as in news. The third model is an asymmetrical two-way communication model where the importance of two-way communication is recognized but the focus is on using persuasive tactics to influence public opinion and shift their attitudes. Finally, the fourth model is two-way symmetrical communication model, which is considered the ideal model by Grunig. It emphasizes balanced and beneficial organization-audience communication.

PR professionals still utilize these communication models to create goals-based communication strategies and techniques. However, several investigations have found that this model does not always achieve symmetry. Abdelhay (2014) compares communication approaches in the UAE and Saudi Arabia and finds that Saudi PR practitioners employ the personal influence model most and the symmetrical two-way model least. The two-way, symmetrical communication paradigm may also be problematic for Saudi PR practitioners due to their limited abilities.

3. Research Methodology

The main objective of this research is to examine the Muslim pilgrims' willingness to engage in non-religious tourism after Hajj or Umrah - especially since they previously used to visit Saudi Arabia for religious reasons only. To achieve this objective a mixed-methods approach was adopted, as the research required both quantitative and qualitative data to gain comprehensive insights into the perspectives of UK Muslims towards tourism in Saudi Arabia. Surveys were used to discover broad trends and patterns, while focus groups were used to gather qualitative data that give in-depth justifications and an understanding of the context of the survey results.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Interpretivist philosophy was used to investigate humans and their social worlds, unlike positivism philosophy in the natural sciences (Saunders et al., 2016). Interpretivism holds that human perceptions and meanings shape and perceive

society, while positivism uses scientific empirical methods to obtain correct data and facts without bias. Language, culture, and history can also affect how we perceive and engage with social and organizational systems, according to Crotty (1998). Interpretivist philosophy fits this research's major goal of studying a group's perceptions of a novel circumstance and its influencing elements.

3.2 Research Approach

Inductive research uses data to investigate a phenomenon, identify trends and patterns, and create a conceptual framework, according to Saunders et al. (2016). This research uses an inductive technique to examine Muslim pilgrims' views about Saudi Arabia's tourism after the new rules were enacted. The research seeks detailed insights into UK Muslim pilgrims' perceptions, not generalizations.

3.3 Methodological Choice

This study used mixed methods for complementarity. Surveys provided quantifiable data to discover trends and patterns. Next, focus groups were used to gather qualitative data to explain and contextualize survey results. The complementarity of these methodologies should help comprehend UK Muslims' views on Saudi Arabian tourism.

3.4 Research Strategy

The case study strategy offers the opportunity to understand a topic in real life and in depth (Yin, 2014, cited in Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, this research adopted survey and case study strategies.

3.5 Time Course

This study is a cross-sectional study as it was conducted during the period from March 2023 to August 2023.

3.6 Target Audience and Sample

This survey addresses British citizens, immigrants, and residents who are Muslims. The UK has 3.9 million Muslims (Mohdin, 2022; McLaughlin, 2019). UK Muslim pilgrims are the largest Western group to visit Saudi Arabia, with 100,000 arriving annually (McLoughlin, 2019). Several UK Islamic centers received questionnaires and focus group invites for the study. Also, they were shared on social media. The sample should represent the population (Fink 1995, Hansen and Machin, 2019). All UK Muslims over 18 were eligible for the survey. The study has 109 participants.

3.7 Techniques and Procedures

SurveyMonkey questions collected quantitative data, while Zoom focus groups acquired qualitative data. Fink (2017, cited in Hansen and Machin, 2019, p.201) defines surveys as data gathering methods that can characterize, compare, or explain individual and social knowledge, feelings, beliefs, preferences, and behavior. Focus groups are talks with the researcher present and interested in group interaction (Kitzinger and Barbour 1999, referenced in Barbour, 2018). On the first page of the digital questionnaire, the research topic and purpose were displayed so participants could understand the research before answering. All except the last of the 15 questionnaire questions were closed. The poll uses closed questions since open questions demand more effort and may lower participation (Denscombe, 2017). The questionnaire began with demographic questions and then basic questions to encourage completion. The survey included multiple-choice, ranking, and rating-scale questions. The Likert scale was utilized to accurately measure each component related to participants' interests and concerns about Saudi Arabian tourism.

As it is easier to gather simple data, the poll examined the target audience's views on Saudi Arabian tourism (Denscombe, 2017). Based on the questionnaire responses, focus group themes were chosen to better understand these perspectives and attitudes. Four themes were identified for discussion in the focus group:

1. UK Pilgrim willingness to engage in non-religious tourism
2. The possibility of having a religious or moral conflict when mixing religious with non-religious tourism
3. The main interests and concerns that UK pilgrims have regarding tourism in Saudi Arabia
4. The promotional activities and the image of tourism in Saudi Arabia held by UK pilgrims

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize survey participants' views on Saudi Arabian tourism. Participants were asked about their tourist problems in Saudi Arabia using a Likert scale, and the weighted average revealed the most pressing issues. Tables and graphs were employed to compare data since Saunders et al. (2016, p.496) say they help interpret, describe, and analyze quantitative data. Thematic analysis was used to examine focus group qualitative data. Based on questionnaire answers, the data was separated into four categories with focus group and survey data to interpret.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Cardiff University Ethics Committee gave ethical approval on 6/6/2023. All participants were informed about the research aims, that their participation was optional, and that their comments would be confidential, per Denscombe

(2017). All participants gave informed consent, and pseudonyms were employed to analyze data anonymously. Participants were told they could leave focus groups at any time without penalty.

3.9 Methodological Limitations

Since questionnaire results determined focus group themes, time was a major issue. Focus group scheduling was limited by the time it took to collect enough questionnaires. Despite offering a fee to encourage focus group participation, turnout was low. The goal was 10 focus group participants, divided into two groups to enable everyone time to debate and share their viewpoint, however only 7 registered, and only 4 attended.

4. Findings and Discussion

The quantitative data from the questionnaires gave an overview of UK pilgrims' opinions about Saudi Arabia tourism, while the qualitative data from the focus group explained them. This section analyses all data to determine UK Muslim pilgrims' tourist intentions following Hajj or Umrah. The chapter covers five focus group themes: demographic data, UK pilgrims' willingness to engage in tourism after Hajj or Umrah, religious or moral conflict, tourism interests, concerns, and Saudi Arabia's tourism image and promotional activities.

4.1 Demographics

The study's 105 respondents are 51.4% female and 48.6% male. Nearly 73% of research participants were under 34. According to the data on approximate average household income, 32.4% of respondents earned less than £15,000, 26.7% between £15,000 and £30,000, 17.1% between £30,000 and £60,000, 7.6% between £60,000 and £100,000, and 4.8% more than £100,000. 11.4% of respondents chose not to report income.

4.2 UK Pilgrims' Willingness to Engage in Tourism after Hajj or Umrah

The study projected that most UK Muslims pilgrims would spend more time in tourism after Hajj or Umrah due to Saudi Arabia's new visa rules. **Table 6** shows the Likert scores from 1 (not likely) to 5 (very likely).

On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to spend extra time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after completing Hajj and Umrah?						
The scale	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Participants' number	9	12	27	20	37	105
Participants' percentage	8.57%	11.42%	25.71%	19.01%	35.23%	100%

Table 6 Likelihood ratings for UK pilgrims spending additional time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after Hajj or Umrah

After Hajj or Umrah, 80% of interviewees were willing to visit Saudi Arabia, scoring 3 or higher on the Likert scale. To clarify questionnaire responses, the high willingness group was labeled group A and the low willingness group group B. Figure 7 shows that group A's average readiness to participate in tourism following Hajj or Umrah was 4.1 on a Likert scale, while group B's was 1.6. The average was 3.6, indicating that the targeted demographic was moderately willing to participate in such tourism activities.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to spend extra time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after completing Hajj and Umrah?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 0



On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to spend extra time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after completing Hajj and Umrah?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

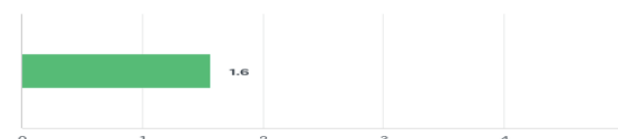


Figure 7 Comparison between the likelihood of groups A and B spending extra time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after Hajj or Umrah.

How long would you be willing to extend your stay in Saudi Arabia after Hajj or Umrah for tourism?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 44

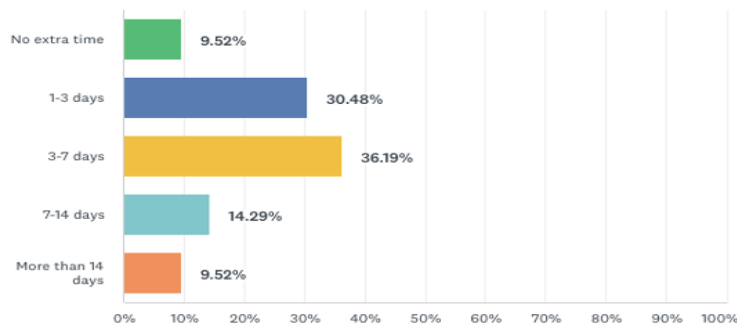


Figure 8 How long UK pilgrims would be willing to extend their stay in Saudi Arabia for tourism after Hajj or Umrah

The graph shows that 36.2% of participants were willing to remain for 3–7 days to visit Madain Saleh or Rijal Al-Ma'a hamlet. The second largest group (30.5%) was willing to stay 1–3 days for tourism, limiting their destinations to nearby areas. Groups spending a week or more after Hajj or Umrah are unlikely to be affected by distance. Participants saw pilgrims' readiness to spend more time on tourism following Hajj or Umrah. The focus group believed pilgrims avoided tourism after Hajj and Umrah due to cost.

P2: *"I don't mind tourism after Hajj. But considering I have enough money, because you have to get a package for Hajj. Already, this package is pricey."*

P4: *"Yeah, I, agree with what P2 said, nowadays, the prices are gotten even higher. So, to go for a tourism, besides doing Hajj or Umrah, that would cost us even more so it's might be difficult for people who cannot afford that."*

P3: *"So, everybody mentioned the financial aspect, it's getting worse, especially because of the cost-of-living crisis. In the UK, a lot of people cannot afford to even go there."*

In addition, P1 indicated that Hajj and Umrah require a lot of physical effort, and therefore physical exhaustion and lack of time may prevent pilgrims from engaging in tourism activities after Hajj and Umrah.

P1: *"Hajj and Umrah itself is a very spiritual experience, but it also exhausts you physically because there's a lot of going back and forth and praying five times, especially when you're coming from far country. so that does not leave us with enough energy and time to go to other places or to other cities."*

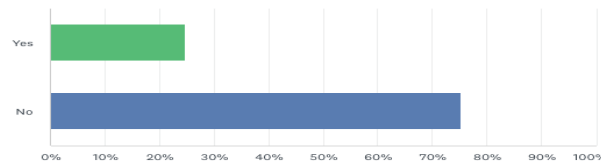
The findings support the idea that the new Hajj and Umrah requirements encourage most UK Muslim pilgrims to travel following their religious pilgrimages. This high willingness also confirms Oumoudden & Al-Zahrani (2021)'s thesis that pilgrims have recently switched from austerity and simplicity to paying more attention to amenities and facilities. Such significant willingness to participate in tourism could assist Saudi Arabia's tourism economy if appropriately leveraged.

4.3 Having Religious or Moral Conflict

As shown in Figure 9, the questionnaire item "Presuming that Hajj or Umrah is the main purpose of travelling to Saudi Arabia, do you have any religious or moral conflict with regard to spending extra time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after Hajj or Umrah?" shows that 75.2% of respondents have no religious or moral difficulties. However, 24.8% of respondents had a religious or moral difficulty with merging the two types of tourism in one trip, which may limit their tourism activities following Hajj or Umrah.

Presuming that Hajj or Umrah is the main purpose of traveling to Saudi Arabia, do you have any religious or moral conflict with regard to spending extra time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after Hajj or Umrah?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	24.76%	26
No	75.24%	79
TOTAL		105

Figure 9 Having religious or moral conflict regarding mixing Hajj or Umrah with tourism

Group B (42.9%) had more conflict than group A (20.2%), suggesting a link between conflict and tourism following Hajj or Umrah (Table 10).

Having a religious or moral conflict with mixing tourism with Hajj or Umrah		
The participants answer	Yes	No
Group A	20.24%	79.76%
Group B	42.86%	57.14%
Total	24.8%	75.2%

Table 10 Comparison between the conflict in Group A and Group B

P1: "I think I am kind of old fashion Muslim, it's basically, when you're going for a certain purpose, I would like to stick to it. So, when you say that there is a spiritual or the religious or moral conflict Yes, it is there because you're there for a reason you're there for spiritual healing. You want to be after you know performing harder to be a better Muslim and stop engaging in these extra activities of you know, impulsive shopping and, buying extravagant things and luxury tourism and all of that, because at the end of the day, you know, the concept of Islam is simplicity."

P3: "if you go to the marketplace, for example, there's a lot of things that, you can be you can be distracted. So, if you go to a place where your leisure takes away from the spiritual aspect of why you've gone there in the first place, all of it might be permissible, but it's about your own moral compass."

P2: "I have no problem going to places after hajj or umrah, I would definitely want to go to Riyadh, it's the capital city, right. So, I would love to go there. But I don't know, if I might be a different person after doing that. ... it is like a reward when you do something good."

Rosak-Szyrocka et al. (2023) note that most Christian pilgrims to Poland are religious. This study examines if mixing religious and non-religious tourism promotes conflict, not Muslim pilgrims' objectives. Results show that most participants have no conflicts. Some pilgrims use tourism after Hajj or Umrah as a reward or celebration for completing a religious duty every capable Muslim should accomplish once. These findings support Scott & Jafari (2010)'s claim that Islamic countries are accepting leisure tourism. It would be suitable to market tourism activities after Hajj and Umrah as a celebration, reward, or gift to the pilgrim following a significant religious achievement.

However, about 25% of participants find problems when combining Hajj or Umrah with tourism. Some focus group participants suggested that mixing distracts from the trip's principal aim, while others believe it contradicts Islam's simplicity and piety. This may diminish pilgrims' willingness to participate in non-religious tourism, especially when the evidence suggests that those less ready to participate see more conflicts.

4.4 The UK Muslims' interests regarding tourism in Saudi Arabia

UK Muslims' favorite tourism activities were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5. Viewing Islamic historical landmarks and museums was the most interesting tourism activity, with a weighted average of 4.16 (Figure 11 and Table 12). Since religious pilgrims are the intended audience, this effect is expected. Local cuisines were the second most popular tourism activity with a weighted average 4. The last conclusion is noteworthy since no previous surveys

listed Saudi cuisine as a tourist attraction. Other tourism attractions like nature, outdoor activities, and shopping followed.

In contrast, attending sport events is the least attractive tourism activity for UK Muslims' with weighted average 2.7, which is unexpected given Saudi Arabia's heavy investment in sports. The UK has a large football league and hosts several major athletic events, which may explain that.

On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent would you be interested in the following tourist attractions? (1 Not interested at all - 5 Very interested)

Answered: 105 Skipped: 44

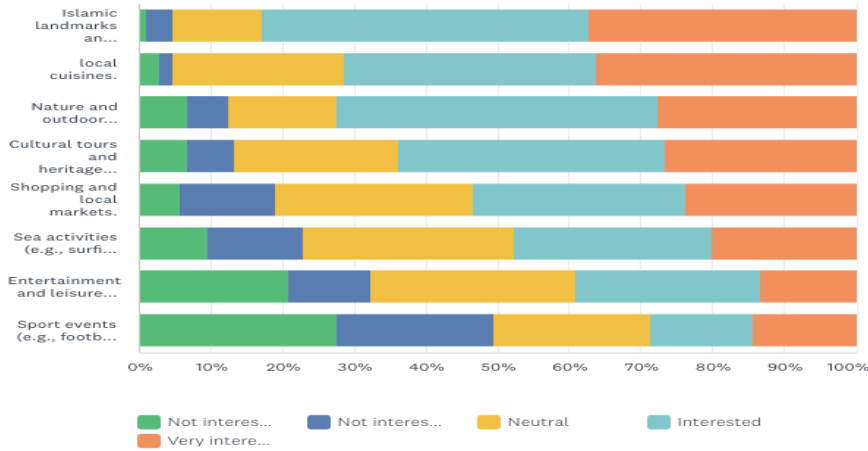


Figure 11 UK Muslims' interests regarding tourism in Saudi Arabia

	NOT INTERESTED AT ALL	NOT INTERESTED	NEUTRAL	INTERESTED	VERY INTERESTED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Islamic landmarks and museums.	0.95% 1	3.81% 4	12.38% 13	45.71% 48	37.14% 39	105	4.14
local cuisines.	2.86% 3	1.90% 2	23.81% 25	35.24% 37	36.19% 38	105	4.00
Nature and outdoor activities (e.g., hiking, wildlife, desert exploration and camel riding)	6.67% 7	5.71% 6	15.24% 16	44.76% 47	27.62% 29	105	3.81
Cultural tours and heritage sites.	6.67% 7	6.67% 7	22.86% 24	37.14% 39	26.67% 28	105	3.70
Shopping and local markets.	5.71% 6	13.33% 14	27.62% 29	29.52% 31	23.81% 25	105	3.52
Sea activities (e.g., surfing, diving)	9.52% 10	13.33% 14	29.52% 31	27.62% 29	20.00% 21	105	3.35
Entertainment and leisure (e.g., theme parks, festivals)	20.95% 22	11.43% 12	28.57% 30	25.71% 27	13.33% 14	105	2.99
Sport events (e.g., football matches, Formula 1)	27.62% 29	21.90% 23	21.90% 23	14.29% 15	14.29% 15	105	2.66

Table 12 UK Muslims' interests regarding tourism in Saudi Arabia

The focus group almost agreed that museums and Islamic monuments are their favorite. This was done to maintain a religious theme during the trip, avoid distractions, and learn more about Islam and its roots. Considering they would only visit Saudi Arabia once, some participants were more willing to try new activities.

P4: "I'm interested in the Islamic landmarks as it's like an opportunity to strengthen my Islamic knowledge as well. Yeah. Because you go there to strengthen your soul. So, at the same time you'd add some extra knowledge about Islam as well."

P3: "I think it's about protecting your own religious experience there and thinking I don't want to do anything that's going to distract me. So, an interest for a pilgrim would definitely be on historical Islamic artifacts. I don't know people talk about the Hijra journey. You know, there's a really fantastic Museum in Medina where you could where you could look at what Medina looked like, years and years ago."

P2: "I agree with P3. I will be much more interested in things like the Islamic landmarks, like, where Adam and Eve met, you know, I'm not that religious, but it's like a chance for me to actually learn about my roots and beliefs. I would definitely go for Camel riding yeah, I'm so sorry but I've never been there before and I've never seen it. So, I'm going too hard, I will go there once, you know I might not go then. So, I would love to try it."

Based on these findings, Kenway (2019) offers pilgrimage tourism packages that include Islamic landmarks and museums. The suggestion was sensible but not supported by polls. The current research supports this suggestion, as UK pilgrims favored visiting Islamic sites and museums. The focus groups also showed that pilgrims choose this activity to maintain the trip's Islamic spirit and learn about Islam's roots. Highlighting the religious part of Hajj and Umrah could alleviate the religious or moral dilemma for 25% of pilgrims who mix the two visits, as they would still be considered Islamic activities.

4.5 The UK Muslims' Concerns Regarding Tourism in Saudi Arabia

1 was 'not bothered at all' and 5 'very concerned' on a Likert scale for UK Muslims' tourist worries in Saudi Arabia. As seen in Figure 13 and Table 14, pilgrims were most concerned about temperature (2.60), followed by prices (2.46). Inflation and the UK economic crisis may be to blame. Accessibility and language are the third concern with equal weighted averages 2.03. This may be owing to Saudi Arabia's poor public transit compared to the UK, and the focus group revealed that their communication concerns derive from past experiences. Pilgrims were least concerned about eating, averaging 1.59. As an Islamic nation, Saudi Arabia offers halal food, which may appeal to Muslims. Safety and security were the second least worry, possibly because Saudi Arabia has low crime rates.

On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent would you be concerned about the following aspects of tourism in Saudi Arabia? (1 Not concerned at all / 5 Very concerned)

Answered: 105 Skipped: 44

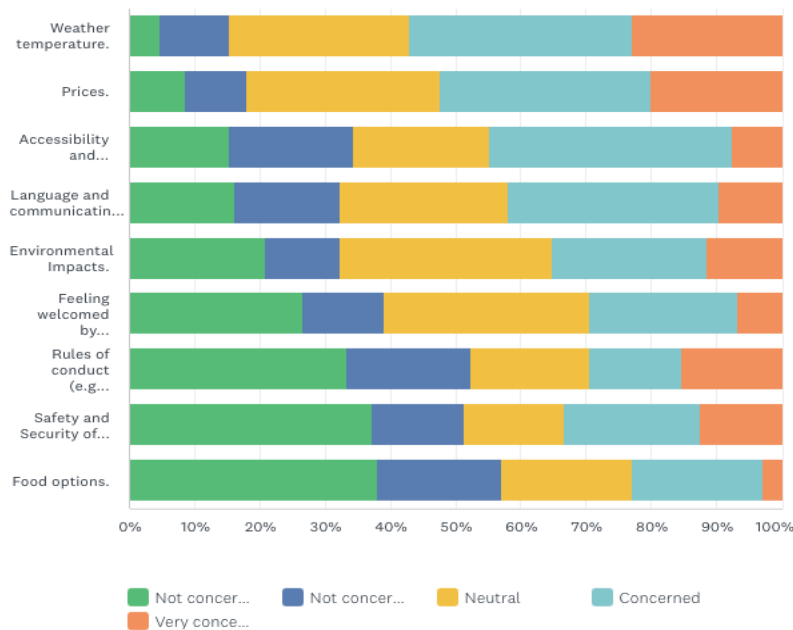


Figure 13 UK Muslims' concerns regarding tourism in Saudi Arabia

	NOT CONCERNED AT ALL	NOT CONCERNED	NEUTRAL	CONCERNED	VERY CONCERNED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Weather temperature.	4.76% 5	10.48% 11	27.62% 29	34.29% 36	22.86% 24	105	2.60
Prices.	8.57% 9	9.52% 10	29.52% 31	32.38% 34	20.00% 21	105	2.46
Accessibility and Transportation.	15.24% 16	19.05% 20	20.95% 22	37.14% 39	7.62% 8	105	2.03
Language and communicating with locals.	16.19% 17	16.19% 17	25.71% 27	32.38% 34	9.52% 10	105	2.03
Environmental Impacts.	20.95% 22	11.43% 12	32.38% 34	23.81% 25	11.43% 12	105	1.93
Feeling welcomed by locals.	26.67% 28	12.38% 13	31.43% 33	22.86% 24	6.67% 7	105	1.70
Rules of conduct (e.g., modest dressing, forbidden drugs and alcohol).	33.33% 35	19.05% 20	18.10% 19	14.29% 15	15.24% 16	105	1.59
Safety and Security of Tourists.	37.14% 39	14.29% 15	15.24% 16	20.95% 22	12.38% 13	105	1.57
Food options.	38.10% 40	19.05% 20	20.00% 21	20.00% 21	2.86% 3	105	1.30

Figure 14 UK Muslims' concerns regarding tourism in Saudi Arabia

The focus groups discussed the issues from many angles. While quantitative data shows that hot weather was their biggest concern, focus groups also mentioned physical exhaustion after Hajj or Umrah, communication issues with locals, and financial affordability as their main concerns about visiting Saudi Arabia as tourists.

P1: *“The biggest concern for me after performing Hajj or Umrah is the physical exhaustion, I've seen a lot of people falling sick because of physical exhaustion and all of that. So, you have to give yourself and your body a little bit of break.”*

P4: *“I think the concern that I can mention here is the prices and the personal financial affordability Yeah. But accessibility and transportation are not an issue for us, because we usually go with groups. So, we already have buses. Also, I've been to Umrah before and to be honest, I think there might be some difficulties, umm, when you go to the shops. I think it's hard to find someone speaks English, Or maybe because of the accents. It's a bit difficult to understand maybe?”*

P3: *“So, I think they're very friendly. And I've seen changes just in the last five years there. So, the main concern for a pilgrim or for me personally, I think it's money. it's just affordability and everything else can be worked around like language communication, or it's very hard you know, even just to go to the seaside but if you go to Jeddah you know, there's lots of nice places you can enjoy yourself, but I think money is the biggest concern.”*

P2: *“Yeah. Actually? Yes. My number one concern is money not the hot weather.”*

Studies show that Saudi Arabia's hot weather is one of its biggest tourist issues (Mansour & Mumuni, 2019; Abuhjeeleh, 2019; Al-Shamaa, 2019). UK pilgrims' biggest fear was it. travel executives in Saudi Arabia know about this impediment and use it to promote winter travel. GEA (2022) scheduled the Riyadh Tourism Season from October 2022 to March 2023. The weather is usually pleasant and temperatures don't surpass 30 degrees Celsius.

Affordability is the second biggest concern of UK pilgrims, which is understandable given high inflation and economic downturns in most nations. Cost is a priority for potential tourists, according to recent studies (Hoque et al., 2023; Yiannakis, 2012).

Ibrahim et al. (2021) and Hoque et al. (2023) found accessibility a serious difficulty for Hail and Rijal Al-Ma'a villages as tourism destinations, and UK pilgrims' third major concern was accessibility. Both communities are far from big cities and their services. If pilgrims' non-religious tourism begins in Makkah, Rijal Al-Ma'a hamlet is 580 miles away and Hail is 870 km away. Thus, Rijal Al-Ma'a and Ha'il are worth visiting, but their remoteness may deter pilgrims, especially those who don't plan to spend much time doing so.

4.6 UK Muslims' Image of Saudi Arabia and its promotion as a Tourist Destination

This data provides respondents' first impressions of Saudi tourism. Figure 15 shows that 67.6% of respondents thought of "Historical Islamic sites" when asked about Saudi Arabia tourism. Desert experiences and camel riding (12.4%) was the second most popular association, stressing the country's desert vistas and tourism adventures. Other participants discussed various Kingdom topics.

The high willingness group and the less willingness group both had very similar perceptions of tourism in Saudi Arabia.

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when tourism in Saudi Arabia is mentioned?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 44

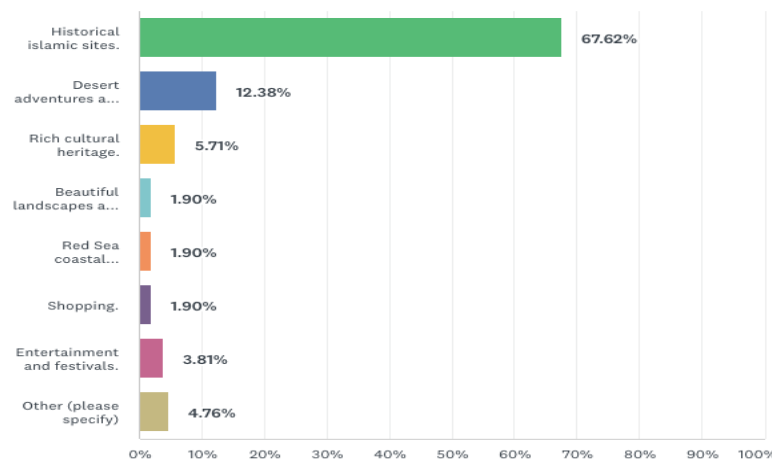


Figure 15 The image that UK Muslims held toward tourism in Saudi Arabia

UK Muslims' perception of Saudi Arabia as a hallowed destination and its desert environment and scorching temperature were congruent with the quantitative results.

P1: "Saudi itself is a very holy place for us, you know, however, we conceive Saudi is basically it's the Mecca or the Medina. So, you know, though the perceptions are being changed recently, but I think it is going to take some time."

P2: "Yeah. When I think of Saudi Arabia, it's mostly holy mosques and desert and camel riding and also hot."

P4: "For Muslims, Saudi Arabia is known for pilgrimage. So, they may promote something or activities that are related to the religion itself, instead of those luxury activities or places."

P3: "I think in terms of pilgrims from the UK, specifically, is that we don't think of Saudi Arabia as offering anything else other than a religious experience, but it seems to be really multifaceted. Saudi Arabia has many faces like because initially if you've never been there, it's all about Makkah and Medina, but when you just scratch the surface, it's so much like if you it's all about the shopping malls, you know, really luxury luxurious experience and just walking through a mall sometimes it's very much like Dubai Mall."

Participants' exposure to promotional material about tourism in Saudi Arabia is shown in Figure 16. As can be seen most (44.8%) participants had experienced a few (1 – 5) items promoting the kingdom as a destination over the last 12 months, 20.0% none at all, and 8.6% more than 20.

In the last year, how often have you been exposed to promotional activities that promote tourism in Saudi Arabia?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 44

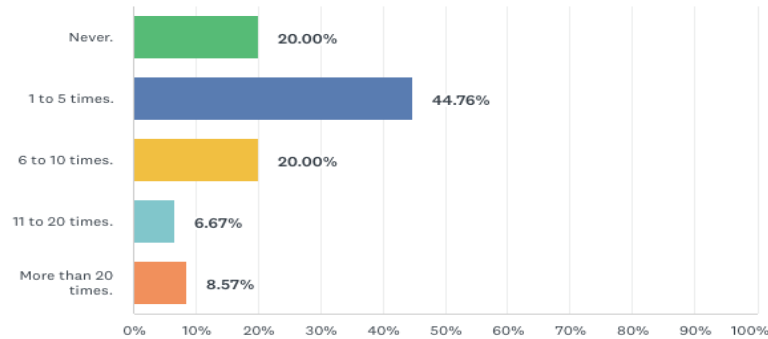
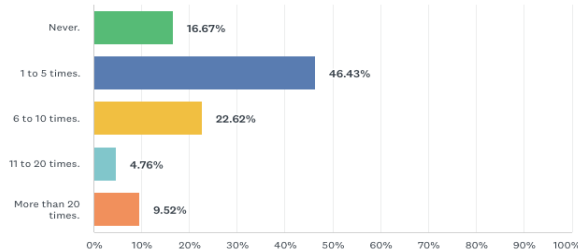


Figure 16 Participants' exposure to promotional activities over the last 12 months

Comparing the high and low willingness groups' answers (Figure 17), it is clear that the percentage of those not exposed to any promotional activities in group B (33.3%) is more than double that of group A (16.7%). This suggests that absence of promotional activity may diminish tourism participation.

In the last year, how often have you been exposed to promotional acti...

Answered: 84 Skipped: 0



In the last year, how often have you been exposed to promotional acti...

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

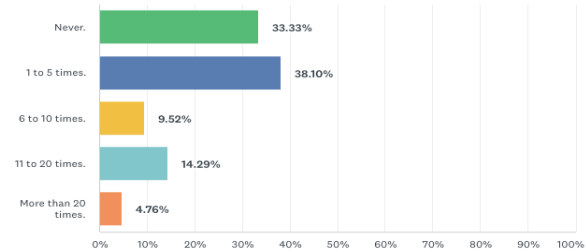


Figure 17 Exposure to promotional material in Group A and Group B

Figure 18 shows how the participants learned about the tourist opportunities in Saudi Arabia. People were most likely to see such advertisements on social media, next on travel websites, and finally through personal recommendations.

How did you hear about tourism opportunities in Saudi Arabia?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 44

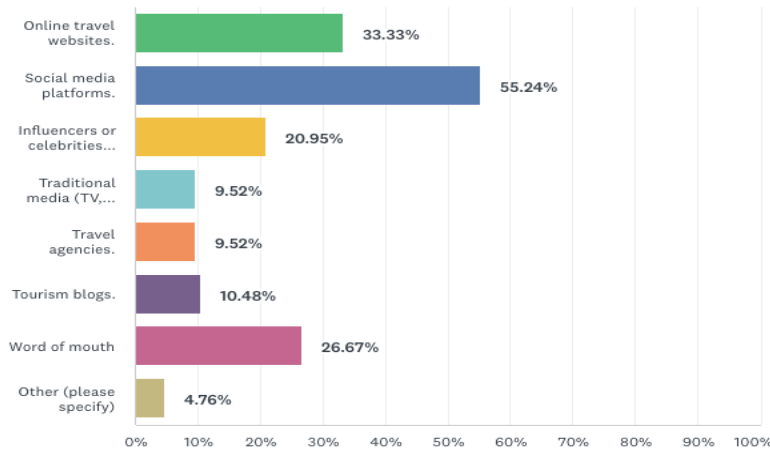


Figure 18 How participants heard about tourism opportunities in Saudi Arabia

What stood out from the focus group was the lack of exposure to material promoting tourism in the Kingdom. Some participants reported not seeing any marketing, while others reported seeing Line ads and Ronaldo's social media posts on Saudi Arabia but not tourism. Some focus group members agreed that social media was the main source of Saudi Arabia promotions.

P3: *"I don't think I've heard anything word of mouth. Personally, I don't think these things are promoted like that. Or maybe I haven't been exposed to that. But I think social media definitely has lot of promotional activities, as many things happening in Saudi Arabia that possibly were not happening a few years ago."*

P1: *"I haven't come across anything that promotes tourism in Saudi Arabia, the only thing that I have seen is the giant block that they're building. That is also through social media. But that's that nothing on tourism, or promoting tourism in Saudi Arabia.... I think Saudi itself is not famous for football."*

P4: *"that (promotional activities) would attract the younger generation instead of the older generation. I think the older generation wants to focus on the spiritual engagement in Saudi Arabia. Yeah."*

P2: *"Yeah, I have not seen much tourism activities that are unique in Saudi Arabia..... Only it's not even a tourism activity, but it's just like a mega project that Saudi Arabia is doing, which really caught my eye. I watched the whole video also, I watched this. Ronaldo was speaking about how Saudi Arabia is so nice. And he's actually living in Saudi Arabia. Yeah, that's another thing I saw on social media. So yeah, that's one thing. I've seen, oh, no, he's living in Saudi Arabia. It must be like, wow."*

From Al-Madani (2021), Saudi Arabia was projected to be linked with desert and heat. According to the questionnaire and focus group, most pilgrims link Saudi Arabia with religion and think it has little to offer tourists. The country's religious tourist image limits its potential and may weaken its tourism investment. Thus, changing these impressions and promoting Saudi Arabia as a tourism destination with numerous appealing options may attract more visitors.

The KAB transformation approach can help tourist PR practitioners improve pilgrims' perceptions and even get some to blend tourism with Hajj or Umrah. This model starts with awareness, which may change attitudes and behavior. The KAB paradigm involves changing knowledge, attitude, and behavior (Donovan & Henley, 2012). Raising UK Muslims' understanding of Saudi Arabia and its tourism potential is the first step to changing their view of Saudi tourism. Heath (2009) highlights that information changes public opinion. Thus, pilgrims' knowledge may influence their opinions.

Adopting the two-way symmetrical model could help the Saudi tourism sector understand target audiences' concerns and interests and adjust to them using a continuous and balanced communication model. Communication platforms and research methods like focus groups, surveys, and public opinion polls can provide valuable audience feedback. This insight could assist tourism PR professionals create appealing marketing initiatives that can be evaluated. In

today's information overload and social media domination, this paradigm would allow tourism actors directly communicate with their audience. PR specialists may quickly respond to feedback on social media and online content to build tourist trust and loyalty. Focus groups and questionnaires show that participants get their Saudi Arabia tourism information via social media, proving the usefulness of such tactics. To conclude, targeting pilgrims as a major participant in Saudi tourism may help attract more tourists, especially since they are willing to travel after Hajj or Umrah.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary and Conclusion

Saudi Arabia implemented Vision 2030 to build the nation, diversify the economy, minimize oil dependence, and create a dynamic and prosperous community. Tourism is a key part of this development, which will change the country's image, economics, and culture. The Saudi tourism sector is undergoing considerable reforms, including Hajj and Umrah visa adjustments. In 2022, Hajj and Umrah visas were extended to three months in Saudi Arabia to increase tourism. This study suggested that these adjustments might encourage UK Muslim pilgrims to pursue tourism after Hajj or Umrah. It also examined UK pilgrims' tourist intentions following Hajj or Umrah. We investigated whether such activities might contradict with pilgrims' religious or moral beliefs and their worries about non-religious tourism in Saudi Arabia. The pilgrims' perception of Saudi Arabia and how public relations may revitalize the tourism sector were also examined.

A questionnaire was utilized to collect general attitudes, and focus groups were employed to evaluate them to test the research hypothesis. A total of 109 UK Muslims provided data. Most UK Muslim pilgrims were encouraged to travel after Hajj and Umrah due to the new visa amendments. After religious observance, 80% of participants were willing to participate in tourism. This might boost Saudi tourism income. The majority of participants (36.2%) planned to stay for 3–7 days after Hajj or Umrah and do some sightseeing, while 30% planned to stay for 1–3 days. Thus, UK pilgrims who plan to stay for a short time may prefer tourism places and activities around Makkah or Al-Medina, 'the expected pilgrims' beginning point'. Some participants saw tourism after Hajj or Umrah as a reward for their holy travel.

Nearly 25% of interviewees said coupling Hajj or Umrah with other tourism activities would cause moral or religious conflict. Such predicted conflict was stronger in pilgrims less ready to engage in tourism following Hajj or Umrah, which may explain their unwillingness. Participants' top tourism interests in Saudi Arabia were to visit Islamic sites and sample the country's cuisine, while athletic events were their least favorite. They worried most about the hot temperature and the cost of visiting KSA, but least about food and security.

Rethinking the Saudi tourism business to include pilgrims as a major stakeholder could boost tourism. Public relations could potentially improve the Saudi tourism sector's image by correcting target audiences' misconceptions and raising knowledge of tourism opportunities. The KAB change model and two-way symmetry model would help PR practitioners implement all of the following methods and help the tourism sector communicate with target consumers. This study examined UK Muslims' views on Saudi tourism after the new regulations. It also wants to offer insights and advice to Saudi tourism PR professionals to attract more tourists.

5.2 Recommendations

Earlier studies showed that pilgrims are shifting from asceticism and simplicity to a focus on service and facility quality. Most study participants were willing to participate in tourism activities after Hajj or Umrah, hence this research recommends targeting pilgrims with promotional marketing. Since they're already in Saudi Arabia, attracting them to tourism may be easy. Statistics show that they are the most frequent tourists to Saudi Arabia, making their involvement in tourism one of the best methods to resuscitate the sector. Increasing income from this industry would boost the Saudi economy and help accomplish Vision 2030 by diversifying income and lowering oil dependence. Future research should examine the relationship between tourism promotions and tourism decision-making, since the results showed that participants less willing to engage in tourism activities after Hajj or Umrah were exposed to fewer promotional activities than those in the high willingness group.

5.3 Limitations

- Time constraints: Being a master's dissertation, the investigation had to adhere to strict time limits. The two research methodologies were interdependent, and it took a lot of effort to organize the design, distribution, and analysis of the questionnaire before we could determine the themes from the focus groups. Like most research, this one may have benefited from extra time to recruit more people, which would have increased the reliability and applicability of the findings.
- Participant participation was low: We used social media and emailed several Islamic institutes in the UK to disseminate the questionnaire and invite people to focus groups so that our sample would be representative of

Muslims in the UK. The sample size was modest, and few people showed up to the focus groups, even though they were promised £20 to do so. Because of this, even fewer people were able to take part.

- Research timing: The Hajj and Umrah visas were revised in the latter half of 2022, and the data was gathered from June to August 2023. It may have been premature to assess the exposure of UK Muslims to tourism promotional activities, as these campaigns may require time to develop and reach their intended audiences.

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6.1 The Questionnaire.

UK Muslims' Perspectives Towards Tourism in Saudi Arabia After Hajj or Umrah

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

[6/6/2023] version [1]

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish.

1. What is the purpose of this research project?

The research project is part of a master's dissertation for a student at Cardiff University which aims to investigate Muslim pilgrims' perspectives towards tourism in Saudi Arabia.

2. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited since you are a Muslim who lives in the UK and is over 18.

3. Do I have to take part?

No, your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary, and it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part.

4. What will taking part involve?

You will answer some questions about your willingness, interests and concerns regarding tourism in Saudi Arabia which will not take more than 6 minutes to complete.

5. Will I be paid for taking part?

No

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There will be no direct advantages or benefits to you from taking part, but your contribution will help us understand the British Muslims' perspective toward tourism in Saudi Arabia.

7. What are the possible risks of taking part?

There are no potential risks to taking part in this research.

8. Will my taking part in this research project be kept confidential?

All information collected from (or about) you during the research project will be kept confidential and any personal information you provide will be managed in accordance with data protection legislation. Please see 'What will happen to my Personal Data?' (below) for further information.

9. What will happen to my Personal Data?

The personal data that you **may** share during this research are gender, age, income and current marital status. They will only be used for research purposes as Cardiff University is the Data Controller and is committed to respecting and protecting your personal data in accordance with your expectations and Data Protection legislation.

Further information about Data Protection, including:

- your rights
- the legal basis under which Cardiff University processes your personal data for research
- Cardiff University's Data Protection Policy
- how to contact the Cardiff University Data Protection Officer
- how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office

Can be found on [Cardiff University's website](#)

10. What happens to the data at the end of the research project?

All the data will be deleted after one year.

11. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the research project are likely to be published by 2024. It is our intention to publish the results of this research project in academic journals and present findings at conferences. In addition, there is an intention to use verbatim quotes from participants. Participants will not be identified in any report, publication or presentation.

12. What if there is a problem?

If you wish to complain or have grounds for concerns about any aspect of the manner in which you have been approached or treated during the course of this research, please contact (Zuher Alshamrani) via AlshamraniZ@cardiff.ac.uk. If your complaint is not managed to your satisfaction, please contact Chair of JOMEC's Research Ethics Committee) (Dr Damian Carney) via CarneyD@cardiff.ac.uk. If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for it.

13. Who is organising and funding this research project?

The research is organised by the student researcher Zuher Alshamrani under the supervision of Nicola Hooper from School of Journalism, Media and Culture at Cardiff University.

The research is not funded by any organization.

14. Who has reviewed this research project?

This research project has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the JOMEC Research Ethics Committee.

15. Further information and contact details

Should you have any questions relating to this research project, you may contact us during normal working hours:

Zuher Alshamrani via AlshamraniZ@cardiff.ac.uk.

UK Muslims' Perspectives Towards Tourism in Saudi Arabia After Hajj or Umrah

In 2022, the government of Saudi Arabia amended the policies of Hajj and Umrah visas so that its holders are now allowed to spend three months in the country in order to revitalize the tourism sector.

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* 2. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

* 3. What is your age?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 or older

* 4. What is your current marital status?

- Single, never married
 - Married
 - Divorced
 - Widowed
 - Separated
 - Prefer not to answer
-

* 5. What is your approximate average household income?

- Less than £15,000
- £15,000 to £30,000
- £30,000 to £60,000
- £60,000 to £100,000
- More than £100,000
- Prefer not to answer

* 6. Have you visited Saudi Arabia for Hajj or Umrah?

- Yes
- No

* 7. Do you intend to visit Saudi Arabia for Hajj or Umrah in the future?

- Yes
- No

8. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when tourism in Saudi Arabia is mentioned?

- Historical islamic sites.
- Desert adventures and camel riding.
- Rich cultural heritage.
- Beautiful landscapes and natural attractions.
- Red Sea coastal attractions and marine activities.
- Local cuisines.
- Shopping.
- Entertainment and festivals.
- Other (please specify)

* 9. On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to spend extra time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after completing Hajj and Umrah?

Very unlikely Very likely

* 10. How long would you be willing to extend your stay in Saudi Arabia after Hajj or Umrah for non-religious tourism?

- No extra time
 1-3 days
 3-7 days
 7-14 days
 More than 14 days

* 11. Presuming that Hajj or Umrah is the main purpose of traveling to Saudi Arabia, do you have any religious or moral conflict with regard to spending extra time on tourism in Saudi Arabia after Hajj or Umrah?

- Yes
 No

* 12. On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent would you be interested in the following tourist attractions? (1 Not interested at all - 5 Very interested)

	Not interested at all	Not interested	Neutral	Interested	Very Interested
Islamic landmarks and museums.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural tours and heritage sites.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nature and outdoor activities (e.g., hiking, wildlife, desert exploration and camel riding)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sea activities (e.g., surfing, diving)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entertainment and leisure (e.g., theme parks, festivals)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shopping and local markets.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
local cuisines.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport events (e.g., football matches, Formula 1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

* 13. How did you hear about tourism opportunities in Saudi Arabia?

- Online travel websites.
- Social media platforms.
- Influencers or celebrities (e.g., Messi and Ronaldo)
- Traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers)
- Travel agencies.
- Tourism blogs.
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify)

* 14. In the last year, how often have you been exposed to promotional activities that promote tourism in Saudi Arabia?

- Never.
- 1 to 5 times.
- 6 to 10 times.
- 11 to 20 times.
- More than 20 times.

* 15. On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent would you be concerned about the following aspects of tourism in Saudi Arabia? (1 = Not concerned at all / 5 = Very concerned)

	Not concerned at all	Not concerned	Neutral	Concerned	Very concerned
Environmental Impacts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety and Security of Tourists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessibility and Infrastructure for Tourists (e.g., Accommodation, Transportation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weather temperature.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling welcomed by locals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

* 14. In the last year, how often have you been exposed to promotional activities that promote tourism in Saudi Arabia?

- Never.
- 1 to 5 times.
- 6 to 10 times.
- 11 to 20 times.
- More than 20 times.

* 15. On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent would you be concerned about the following aspects of tourism in Saudi Arabia? (1 = Not concerned at all / 5 = Very concerned)

	Not concerned at all	Not concerned	Neutral	Concerned	Very concerned
Environmental Impacts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety and Security of Tourists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessibility and Infrastructure for Tourists (e.g., Accommodation, Transportation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weather temperature.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling welcomed by locals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language and communicating with locals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pricing and Affordability of Tourism services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rules of conduct (e.g., modest dressing, forbidden drugs and alcohol).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

16. If you have any additional comments or suggestions related to tourism in Saudi Arabia, please share them below.

Submission page

Thank you for your valuable input! Your responses will contribute to the development of tailored tourism options in Saudi Arabia for British Muslim pilgrims.

* 17. I have read the above Privacy Statement and understand the purposes of the research, the information that will be collected and how my personal data will be used and stored.

I agree that my answers to this survey can be used for the purposes of this research.

I no longer wish to take part in this survey, and therefore instruct you not to use my answers.

Prev

Submit