

MADE IN KSA AND TOURISM: TWIN PILLARS OF SAUDI ARABIA'S "NATION BRAND"

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the ways in which "Tourism" and "Made in KSA" are important pillars of Saudi Arabia's National Branding aligned with Vision 2030. The Kingdom is changing its image internationally by promoting local goods of the highest caliber and cultivating a flourishing tourism industry. While tourism showcases the nation's rich history and contemporary attractiveness, the "Made in KSA" logo represents innovation and pride in Saudi industries. When combined, they strengthen Saudi Arabia's economic development, cross-cultural interactions, and global standing, forging a single, distinctive brand of excellence that establishes the Kingdom as a vibrant, competitive player on the global scene.

Keywords: Tourism, Made in KSA, Nation Branding, Logo and Vibrant.

INTRODUCTION

Hydrocarbons have played a major role in Saudi Arabia's economy for many years. However, a structural change has become necessary due to changes in the world economy and the price of oil. In order to guide the Kingdom toward a more sustainable and diverse economy, Vision 2030 was introduced as a strategic plan. Among the several initiatives that fall under this vision, "Made in KSA" and the growing travel and tourism sector have become two of the main forces behind change. These industries have the ability to support one another through coordinated national development plans in addition to making separate contributions to economic progress. Khan, A. A., & Khan, M. (2010).

An increasingly interconnected world has made a country's image and reputation strategic assets that have a big impact on international investment, tourism, diplomatic ties, and worldwide attitudes. Nation branding is the term used to describe the deliberate use of marketing strategies to enhance a nation's reputation among both domestic and foreign consumers. Alam, A.

et al (2015). Nation branding, which has its roots in soft power and public diplomacy, has developed into a complete strategy to change how people view countries and is frequently in line with national development objectives. (Alam, A. et. al, 2016).

Under its ambitious Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia, which has long been linked to oil wealth and conservative customs, has started a transformative path. Launched in 2016, this national development roadmap aims to boost cultural interaction, diversify the economy, encourage tourism, and raise the Kingdom's profile internationally. Ahmed, M., et al. (2014). In order to reposition the nation's image on the world scene, Saudi Arabia has started a number of massive projects as part of this transition, including NEOM, Riyadh Season, the Red Sea Project, and the hosting of international events like Formula E and World Expo 2030.

By examining the tactics, communication resources, and symbolic narratives employed to create a new national identity, this paper investigates Saudi Arabia's country branding

initiatives. It also looks into how these branding initiatives affect tourism, foreign investment, and global perception Alam, A., et al. (2013). In today's competitive and globalized world, a country's image is crucial in determining its economic potential, cultural relevance, and geopolitical influence. A key instrument for demonstrating soft power, drawing in foreign investment, encouraging exports, and increasing tourism is nation branding, which is the strategic process of controlling and enhancing a nation's image. This idea goes beyond conventional public relations and incorporates a multifaceted strategy that harmonizes national identity with international perception. Alam, A., Almotairi, M., & Gaadar, K. (2012).

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With its Vision 2030 framework, Saudi Arabia—a nation long recognized for its oil exports and conservative Islamic heritage—is experiencing a significant shift. Diversifying the economy and lowering reliance on oil through investments in industries like manufacturing, entertainment, culture, sports, and tourism is one of Vision 2030's main objectives. As part of this transition, Saudi Arabia has started a number of large-scale nation branding projects aimed at changing its reputation abroad and projecting an image of a contemporary, vibrant, and investment-friendly nation. Malik, O. M. (2013).

The growing tourism industry and the "Made in Saudi" campaign is two of the most important pillars of Saudi Arabia's nation branding strategy. The goal of the 2021-launched "Made in Saudi" initiative is to boost the Kingdom's industrial identity both at home and abroad by promoting local goods. It seeks to promote industrial innovation, boost non-oil exports, and raise customer confidence in Saudi-made goods. In addition to being economically driven, this effort serves as a symbol of Saudi Arabia's capacity for

sustainable development, high-quality manufacturing, and international competitiveness. The Kingdom hopes to boost national pride and establish a unified image of development and independence by incorporating the "Made in Saudi" brand into its larger identity. Mubasher, A., et al. (2020).

At the same time, the tourist industry has emerged as a focal point of Saudi Arabia's image-building and soft power initiatives. The country is now open to millions of foreign tourists for the first time thanks to the creation of the Saudi Tourism Authority, the implementation of the e-visa system, and the start of initiatives like "Saudi Welcome to Arabia" and "Riyadh Season." In addition to promoting tourism, iconic projects like NEOM, AlUla, The Red Sea Project, and Diriyah Gate serve as storytelling tools that showcase Saudi Arabia's rich history, stunning natural surroundings, and progressive outlook. The nation's reputation as a burgeoning cultural and economic center is further enhanced by hosting major international athletic and entertainment events including Formula E, WWE, the Dakar Rally, and Expo 2030.

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Nation Branding: Theoretical Foundations

According to Anholt (2007), nation branding is the deliberate use of marketing concepts to manage and enhance a nation's reputation and image. In order to draw tourists, investors, and international recognition, it goes beyond conventional public diplomacy by coordinating a nation's identity with its political, economic, and cultural resources (Dinnie, 2008). According to Nye (2004), nation branding can assist nations in

enhancing their soft power the capacity to influence people by appeal rather than coercion—and competitive posture in the global economy. One of the most often used frameworks in this field is Anholt's Nation Brand Hexagon. It lists six factors government, exports, tourism, immigration and investment, culture and heritage, and people that affect a nation's reputation (Anholt, 2007). These aspects highlight the fact that nation branding entails identity development and internal transformation in addition to external advertising.

Nation Branding in the Context of Saudi Arabia

Since the introduction of Vision 2030, which seeks to reposition the Kingdom as a global center of culture and investment, Saudi Arabia's approach to nation branding has experienced a significant change (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). Historically, the nation's religious significance and oil wealth have greatly influenced its image. Nonetheless, new initiatives aim to portray Saudi Arabia as a progressive, open, and inventive country. According to scholars, the interaction between political narratives and socioeconomic development is crucial to the success of nation branding in the Middle East (Kaneva, 2011; Fan, 2010).

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Nation branding and economic diversification tactics are closely related in the Saudi context. Govers and Go (2009) assert that genuine and consistent narratives are the foundation of strong nation brands. A new national narrative centered on global integration, cultural renewal, youth empowerment, and economic change is now being promoted by Saudi Arabia.

Tourism as a Nation Branding Tool for KSA

National identity and global perception are significantly shaped by tourism. It enables nations to exhibit their hospitality, cultural legacy, and scenic beauty (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). With the goal of raising foreign visitor numbers from 20 million in 2019 to 100 million by 2030, tourism growth has been a major tenet of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 (Saudi Tourism Authority, 2021).

The goal of the e-visa system, marketing campaigns like "Welcome to Arabia" and "Riyadh Season," and the creation of megaprojects like NEOM, AlUla, and The Red Sea Project is to draw tourists and investors while changing the nation's reputation abroad (Kozak, 2021). These programs communicate themes of modernization, innovation, and hospitality while simultaneously advancing economic objectives and acting as potent tools for nation branding (AlGhamdi & Alqaralleh, 2022).

The "Made in Saudi" Initiative and Economic Identity

The "Made in Saudi" initiative is another essential component of Saudi Arabia's nation branding initiatives. This program, which was started in 2021 by the Saudi Export Development Authority, aims to boost customer confidence, assist regional producers, and advertise domestic goods internationally (Saudi Exports, 2021). It promotes Saudi Arabia as a manufacturer of competitive, high-quality items, boosting both domestic pride and worldwide reputation.

Research on place-based product branding contends that consumer perception and purchase behavior are significantly influenced by national origin (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). The "Made in Saudi" campaign adds to a cohesive and integrated brand narrative by coordinating industrial identity with national branding. Additionally, it supports the larger objective of export promotion and economic diversification, enhancing Saudi Arabia's reputation as an independent and progressive country (Alshehri, 2023).

Challenges for Kingdom Saudi Arabia

Even if Saudi Arabia's nation branding plan has accelerated, there are still obstacles to overcome. According to critics, in order for branding

campaigns to be credible worldwide, they need to be backed by structural changes, openness, and transparency (Fan, 2010; Kaneva, 2011). Furthermore, striking a balance between tradition and modernity is still a challenging undertaking. According to research, genuine nation brands are not only top-down tales but rather represent the lived reality of their constituents (Dinnie, 2008; Govers & Go, 2009). All things considered, Saudi Arabia's tourist and industrial marketing initiatives show a calculated and comprehensive approach to nation branding. To evaluate the long-term effects of these activities on public participation, global views, and economic outcomes, more research is required.

Future Directions

Potential for agricultural growth through the use of cutting-edge technology including water-efficient irrigation systems, hydroponics, and vertical farming. Through innovative thinking and strategic investment, Saudi Arabia can turn its unused land into productive land that can supply more than 20% of the world's food needs. This helps the kingdom meet the agricultural needs of the GCC region while also enhancing food security for the country. Saudi Arabia can create a robust food supply chain, lessen its reliance on imports, and improve its standing as a progressive, food-secure country internationally by making sustainable agriculture a top priority in its Vision 2030. This change would diversify the economy and position Saudi Arabia as a leader in the area that is self-sufficient and environmentally friendly.

As Saudi Arabia pursues economic diversification through Vision 2030, emphasizing manufacturing presents a significant opportunity for enhancing the country's brand. The Kingdom is fortunate to have abundant petrochemical and natural resource reserves, making it a potential regional center for industrial development. To leverage this advantage, Saudi Arabia should encourage international companies to set up local production and assembly facilities, which would help decrease reliance on imports and increase domestic value creation. Promoting growth in industries such as automotive, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and construction materials will contribute to a strong "Made in KSA" brand. This strategic transition will not only boost exports

and create jobs but also improve Saudi Arabia's international reputation as a competitive and self-sufficient industrial leader. Focusing on manufacturing in the nation's branding initiatives will showcase innovation, economic strength, and global connectivity.

Conclusion

The "Made in KSA" and tourist industries are more than just business endeavors; they are revolutionary forces that are changing Saudi Arabia's position in the international economy and national identity. They can support one another, advance sustainable development, and guarantee Vision 2030's long-term success when undertaken in tandem. These two industries must develop in tandem as the Kingdom continues to diversify, based on creativity, cultural authenticity, and strategic vision. There is enormous potential for growth through the adoption of contemporary farming methods if the Saudi government gives the agriculture industry more attention. Innovations like drip irrigation, climate-controlled greenhouses, hydroponics, and precision agriculture using AI and drones can greatly increase the kingdom's agricultural output's quantity and quality. In dry areas like Al-Qassim or Hail, for example, employing intelligent irrigation systems can increase crop yields while conserving water. In a similar vein, encouraging vertical farming might boost regional food production and lessen dependency on imports in cities like Riyadh and Jeddah. Saudi Arabia can guarantee food security, generate jobs, and advance its Vision 2030 objectives of sustainability and economic diversification by funding agricultural technology, training initiatives, and research.

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