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The Significance of Touristic Development in Exports Diversification - A case study of some Arab countries: Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Qatar-

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Abstract:

Tourism is a vital industry for integrated development in many countries, but Arab nations like Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar have not fully utilized their resources. Despite their potential and government strategies for sustainable development, they have relied heavily on other income sources, particularly oil.

This study aims to highlight the importance of tourism development in diversifying exports and examine the policies adopted by these countries to achieve economic diversification. These developing nations aspire to make tourism a key driver of economic growth, and greater attention must be directed towards this sector to accelerate economic development.

Keywords: tourism development, export diversification, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, tourism…

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Many countries around the world possess significant natural resources, which often serve as the primary economic and social sectors. These resources have generated substantial financial returns, enabling numerous nations to fund and complete a variety of investment projects. However, some countries have relied almost entirely on these resources and their financial yields, allocating a large portion of the income to current expenditures at the expense of investment. As a result, they have become classified as "**rentier economy**."

These characteristics are applicable to many Arab countries, where their economic and social development is significantly tied to natural resources. Often, there is a neglect of productive sectors such as manufacturing and tourism. This reliance on limited resources, such as energy sources (gas, coal, oil) and minerals (copper, iron), poses several negative impacts, especially since these resources may deplete in the near to medium term.

Additionally, their prices can fluctuate dramatically, creating risks during sharp declines, and external demand may experience significant downturns or volatility. To mitigate these potential shocks, it is essential for these nations to diversify their production base, invest in various sectors, and promote economic diversification in general, with a particular focus on expanding their export capabilities.

The tourism sector is recognized as one of the most significant industries capable of driving economic growth. Unlike oil and other natural resources, the tourism industry serves as a vital source of revenue, capable of generating numerous positive impacts by highlighting cultural, archaeological, and historical aspects. It is considered a key contributor to national income, prompting many countries to prioritize this sector as a strategic alternative to reliance on traditional resource-based wealth. Algeria, like other oil-rich Arab nations such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, possesses abundant tourism attractions; however, it has not received the necessary attention due to ongoing challenges in developing its tourism sector.

The previous discussion highlights the necessity of activating this vital sector and striving for the success of the adopted strategies to achieve that goal. This underscores the significance of the topic, as transforming the tourism sector into a crucial alternative could significantly contribute to the national income growth of Algeria and other countries.

Furthermore, enhancing this sector is essential for diversifying exports. Tourism is recognized as the largest industry globally, providing employment opportunities, reducing unemployment, and fostering economic development. Based on this, we can pose the following problematic: What is the impact of the tourism industry on economic growth, and can the tourism sector serve as a strategic pillar for diversifying exports in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar?

To address the posed issue, the study is divided into two main sections: **The first section** focuses on the theoretical foundation of tourism development as a means of diversifying exports. **The second** section examines the strategies that support the potential of tourism development as an economic alternative in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.

1. Theoretical Frameworks for Tourism Advancement as a Means of Diversifying Exports:

Tourism development is regarded as one of the most recent forms of development, deeply intertwined with various elements of overall development, as an impetus for economic growth, agriculture, and energy development and poverty alleviation (Asif Khan et al, 2020). It closely aligns with comprehensive development, as all the components that contribute to holistic development are also essential for tourism development.

The issue of tourism development is considered a contemporary concern for many countries around the world due to its significant role in enhancing real per capita income, making it a vital contributor to national income. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism encompasses "the activities undertaken by individuals during their

travels and stays in places outside their usual environment for a consecutive period not exceeding one year, for leisure, business, or other purposes" (Pierre, 2002, p.14).

1.1 Tourism development and its connection to export diversification:

1.1.1 Definition of tourism development:

Tourism development can be defined as the continuous and balanced enhancement of tourism resources through the optimal utilization of productive tourism assets (Djalila, 2006, p.9).

According to the European Environment Agency and National Parks in 1993 (Anfield et al., 1993, pp.87-94) , sustainable tourism development is defined as an activity that preserves the environment while achieving economic and social integration and enhancing the architectural landscape. It is also described as development that meets the needs of current tourists and host communities, ensuring benefits for future generations.

This type of development manages resources in a way that provides economic, social, and aesthetic advantages while maintaining cultural unity, ecological continuity, biodiversity, and essential life components (Arafi & Atallah, 1991, p.4).

Tourism development is recognized as the enhancement and expansion of tourism services and their requirements. It necessitates the involvement of tourism planning, which serves as a scientific approach aimed at achieving the highest possible rate of tourism growth with minimal costs and in the shortest time frame. Consequently, effective tourism planning is essential for sustainable tourism development, enabling stakeholders to compete successfully in the international tourism market (Majdoub, 2022, p.142)..

1.1.2 Export diversification and its objectives:

The risks associated with countries' reliance on certain natural resources pose significant economic and social challenges (Sanjeet Singh etbal., 2024). Diversification is considered a crucial solution to reduce dependence on these natural assets. This developmental process aims to diversify the production structure and generate multiple income sources by establishing new sectors that offer higher added value, thereby creating job opportunities and enhancing productivity levels.

Diversification is generally defined as the process of reducing reliance on a single supplier and advancing towards the enhancement of industrial and agricultural foundations, thereby establishing a productive base. This approach signifies the development of a robust national economy aimed at achieving self-sufficiency across multiple sectors (Ziane et al., 2022, p.69).

The concept is recognized as the desire to steer the economy towards diverse productive goods (Omid et al., 2023) or service sectors, or to explore new markets. It also reflects the intention to reduce economic risks and mitigate the impact of external crises and shocks on the local economy, while strengthening the interconnections among various sectors.

Does tourism development spur export product diversification?

Diversification is a key strategy for managing financial risks, which involves spreading invested funds across various investment vehicles such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, cash, metals, and commodities. In essence, it embodies the principle of "not putting all your eggs in one basket."

Relying on a single source or a limited number of sources can expose an economy to the risks associated with those sources. This is evident in several countries today, where their production, exports, and financial revenues heavily depend on raw materials (Lazaar, 2017, p.9).

Economic diversification is defined as a process aimed at broadening the production structure and establishing new income-generating sectors, thereby reducing overall reliance on revenues from the primary sector of the economy. This process is expected to create new areas with higher added value, which can provide more productive job opportunities for the

national workforce, ultimately leading to increased long-term growth rates (Ziane etbal., 2022, p.70).

Additionally, economic diversification can achieve several key objectives (Lazaar, 2017, p.10):

- ✓ Mitigate the risks and impacts of external economic shocks, such as fluctuations in commodity prices like oil and climate-related events (floods, droughts) for agricultural nations, as well as the decline in economic activity in global markets, particularly in trading partner countries.
- ✓ Achieve high long-term growth rates and ensure their sustainability by promoting investment across various sectors and increasing their contribution to the gross domestic product.
- ✓ Enhance self-sufficiency, boost exports (Adnan et al., 2023, pp.213-226), reduce reliance on imports, create job opportunities, and improve the living standards of individuals.
- ✓ Generate new sources of income and foreign currency, strengthen public budget resources, and empower the private sector to play a significant role in the economy while keeping pace with rapid technological advancements.

1.1.3 Export diversification and its objectives:

Tourism is regarded as a significant historical and cultural heritage globally, and it has increasingly become a vital factor in economic, social, and cultural development. It contributes to diversifying revenue sources in numerous countries, both developed and developing. Statistical evidence, economic indicators, and historical analysis suggest that tourism will be one of the fundamental pillars of service economies in this century (Ruwan Ranasinghe et al., 2021).

Three industries are set to drive the service economies, namely wireless communications, information technology, and travel. According to statistics from the World Travel and Tourism Council, the tourism sector contributes both directly and indirectly over 10% to the global GDP (Younsi, 2021, p.223). This significant contribution is largely due to the revenue generated from tourism, particularly in countries known for their tourist attractions.

Tourism plays a significant role in providing a variety of final goods and services, including hotels and restaurants, as well as companies involved in the tourism sector, such as transportation services and tour operators. Furthermore, tourism is crucial for strengthening and enhancing the local economy on a broader scale, as it engages in diverse developmental roles and offers numerous benefits across economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions (Boudjemaa, 2021, p.600).

The sector ranks first among others in global trade, playing a crucial role in generating foreign currency essential for implementing development plans. This is particularly significant as many developing countries face a shortage of hard currency reserves outside the hydrocarbons sector.

Additionally, it contributes to improving the balance of payments by attracting foreign capital for investment in tourism projects (Çelik, 2013, pp.86-90). This has motivated numerous countries lacking a natural tourism environment to establish artificial tourism projects as a means to attract investment and tourists.

1.2 Tourism indicators in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar:

The Arab world is a region rich in significant cultural landmarks and attracts tourists from all over the globe, thanks to its vast expanse, diverse landscapes, climate, and various tourist activities. It generally possesses essential tourism assets such as historical sites, religious locations, sunny coastlines, and mountainous areas.

These assets necessitate a concerted effort from both governments and the private sector to focus on Arab tourism, enabling it to compete effectively and contribute to national income

improvement while creating genuine job opportunities. Additionally, it plays a vital role in fostering high-quality communication and interaction among the cultures of Arab nations.

The tourism sector in the Arab world is significantly influenced by the prevailing political developments in the region. Consequently, the recent period has been challenging for the tourism industry, leading to a slowdown in global economic growth due to terrorist attacks and conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and other areas. This situation has resulted in a decline in tourism, with travelers opting for shorter stays and seeking safer and more affordable destinations (Akram, 2018, p.136).

It is essential to leverage the unique attributes of Arab countries, as the Arab world is home to numerous historical, cultural, religious, and therapeutic tourist destinations. We will specifically highlight the following:

1.2.1 Key tourist attractions in Algeria:

Algeria boasts significant potential in the tourism sector, positioning it as an attractive destination for travelers from around the globe. This potential enables the country to develop a diverse range of tourism offerings, including coastal, desert, mountainous, cultural, and wellness tourism, among others. Some of these key attractions (Carnicelli et al., 2022, pp.1-17) include:

Natural resources: Algeria is endowed with various natural resources, the most significant of which include:

Tourist Areas: Algeria is a country with diverse natural resources, divided into six main tourist areas. The coastal region, northern plains, and northern Atlas plateaus are known for their extensive beaches and archaeological sites. The Atlantic chain, including the highest peak, "Lalla Khadija," and the Aurès Mountains offer significant tourism potential. The high plateaus, characterized by their continental climate, artisanal industries, and historical sites, attract tourists. The Saharan Atlas region, between the high plateaus and the Sahara Desert, attracts tourists from abroad. The northern desert oases offer diverse attractions like palm groves and water lakes (Kouache, 2004, p.222).

The Sahara Desert region, encompassing the Hoggar and Tassili areas, spans a vast expanse and serves as a significant source of winter tourism. Algeria boasts several national parks that play a crucial role in promoting tourism development, including the El Kala National Park in the north, the Djurdjura Park in the Tell Atlas, the Cedar Forest Park, the Tassili Park, the Hoggar Park, the Thénia El-Had National Park in Tissemsilt, and the Chréa National Park.

Civilizational and historical elements: Algeria is a nation rich in historical and cultural heritage, with its roots extending deep into the past. Among its most significant historical and cultural sites are Tassili, the Kasbah district, which stands as a remarkable architectural landmark in the Mediterranean region, the M'zab Valley in Ghardaïa, Timgad, the Beni Hammad Fort in M'sila, and the ancient Roman city of Timgad in Setif. Additionally, Algeria boasts a variety of traditional crafts and artisanal industries that enhance the vibrancy of cultural tourism (Azzouzi & Belablia, 2021, p.85).

Material and service features: Algeria has placed significant emphasis on transportation, reflected in the developments of its road networks, airports, and ports. The transportation infrastructure includes roadways, railways, air transport, and maritime transport. Additionally, the country has liberalized the telecommunications sector, resulting in a communications revolution. The hospitality sector also showcases the country's potential and capacity to accommodate tourists, highlighting its commitment to tourism development (Mhidi, 2018, p.184).

1.2.2 Key tourist attractions in Saudi Arabia:

Saudi Arabia possesses numerous factors that bolster its tourism sector, the most significant of which include:

Diversity of tourist sites: The diversity of tourist attractions is significant, encompassing a wide range of sites (Erdogan et al., 2013). This includes religious landmarks such as the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, as well as environmental sites like natural reserves and the beaches of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. Additionally, there are therapeutic locations, including specialized medical hospitals focused on oncology, spinal cord transplants, and cosmetic surgeries.

Shopping tourism is also noteworthy, with statistics indicating that it accounts for 75% of spending on recreational activities. Furthermore, business tourism has garnered considerable attention from top tourism authorities, contributing to the development of the Kingdom, particularly in the economic and political spheres.

Political stability: is a key feature of the Kingdom, along with the overall security that enables tourists to visit the country (El-chamri, 2018, p.637).

Natural diversity: is characterized by a variety of landscapes and climates, featuring high mountain ranges, flat plains, warm beaches, and vast deserts. The climate ranges from hot to warm and temperate, which plays a significant role in attracting tourists throughout the year.

The development of infrastructure: in the Kingdom is significant, as it spans a vast area of the Arabian Peninsula, making it a focal point for numerous ancient and modern eras. This extensive history has enriched its cultural and intellectual heritage. Additionally, the warm hospitality of the Saudi people towards both citizens and tourists, characterized by generosity and respect, serves as a key attraction for visitors to the region.

The Kingdom is home to numerous museums, having established five regional museums in Dammam, Al-Baha, Abha, Jeddah, and Tabuk. Additionally, it has enhanced six existing museums and repurposed 15 historical buildings into museum spaces following their restoration. Modern technology has been employed to support the preservation of national heritage, and a national heritage register was created in 1432, which includes approximately 730 archaeological sites (Abu Al-Ata, 2013, p. 25).

1.2.3 Key tourist attractions in Qatar:

In recent years, Qatar has emerged as an ideal tourist destination, boasting a wide array of attractions that cater to diverse cultures (Scharfenort, 2017). The country features natural reserves, historic castles, a range of luxury resorts and international hotels, as well as public parks, recreational areas, traditional markets, and major shopping complexes.

Additionally, it is recognized as one of the safest tourist destinations globally. Visitors have the opportunity to experience the warmth of hospitality and the authenticity that characterize Qatari culture. To summarize these attractions, one can highlight:

Natural features: Qatar Peninsula features are noteworthy, as it is strategically located in the Arabian Gulf, extending like a tongue into the sea. This region boasts a coastline that spans at least 600 kilometers, offering high-quality sandy beach areas that serve as popular tourist destinations. Additionally, the landscape is characterized by extensive sand dunes, which can be either elongated or crescent-shaped, reaching heights of over 50 meters, particularly in the southeastern part of the peninsula known as the Al Udaid region.

Despite Qatar's location in a tourist-friendly region, its tourism climate is categorized into three distinct seasons: cold, warm, and hot. The management of Qatar Hotels Company has identified a single tourism season that encompasses both the cold and hot periods, running from October to May (National Tourism and Hotels Company, 1995, p.3).

The vegetation serves as a vital natural feature that covers much of the peninsula's surface during the tourist season. This area is characterized by a significant population of Arabian oryx and other species. Additionally, the surrounding islands, such as Palm Island and El-Saflia, contribute uniquely to the region's tourism appeal….

When considering the classification of geomorphological features that attract natural tourism in Qatar, we can identify the following categories:

- ✓ Diverse desert landscapes include attractive desert plateaus (mushrooms), hills, and depressions such as Dhal Al-Masfar and Dhal Al-Hamam, along with yardangs, which are geomorphological features shaped by wind erosion, sandy formations (dunes), and seasonal wetlands that support grass growth.
- ✓ Captivating coastal features consist of cliffs, beach terraces, sea caves, marine arches, obelisks, bays, lagoons, inlets, and beach islands, as well as fringing reefs (coral formations extending along the Qatari coastline) (Morsi, 2018, p.405).
- ✓ Man-made attractions play a crucial role in boosting tourism, showcasing a blend of Qatari heritage and museums, traditional crafts, the proliferation of parks and recreational areas, luxury resorts, advanced hotel services, government support for tourism, and the overall safety and security of the nation (El-Khouzami, 1997, p.268).

One of the most notable tourist attractions in Qatar includes the Msheireb Museums, Film City, the Museum of Islamic Art, Souq Al-Suqoor, Angry Birds Park, and the Inland Sea Reserve (El-Hadj, 2022).

1.3 Tourism indicators in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar:

Tourism has numerous impacts that span various sectors, which can be summarized as follows:

Economically : Tourism development plays a significant role in the global gross national product by boosting income in foreign currencies (Thanh & Ho Chi, 2022) through the sale of tourism services. It contributes to economic activity by increasing the income of households and individuals linked to tourism. Additionally, it helps to activate areas that have not been previously utilized for tourism, often those that are underdeveloped. Overall, the most important outcomes of leveraging these resources include:

The economic boom: is achieved through the influx of funds into the tourism sector, which circulates within the national economy. Investment in this area not only boosts employment, providing salaries that enhance purchasing power, but also generates tax revenues and fees from imported goods and services.

Additionally, the income derived from reselling tourism products to consumers and business owners creates new cycles of purchasing and spending, effectively multiplying the income generated from tourism.

Marketing certain goods through tourist purchases acts as an export of national products.

Development of essential facilities and infrastructure.

Boosting both domestic and foreign investment, as tourism encompasses various investment opportunities such as hotel construction, restaurants, and tourist villages, leading to increased investments in this sector.

Enhancing the balance of payments: This occurs through the influx of foreign capital for investment in tourism projects and the effective utilization of natural resources, as well as the economic benefits tourism generates through its relationships with other sectors, contributing to an increase in national output (Akram, 2018, pp.132-133).

Increasing GDP: Studies indicate that the tourism sector contributes approximately 10% to global GDP, making it the largest sector in non-oil countries. In 2019, tourism's contribution to the GDP of the Kingdom rose by 34% (Younes & Nacir, 2018, p.29).

Socially: Tourism development plays a significant economic role, but it also has important social implications (Weng et al., 2023) by generating employment opportunities and addressing unemployment issues. The rate of job creation within the tourism industry is 1.5% higher than that of other sectors.

Enhancing individuals' living standards and improving their life conditions to achieve overall well-being.

Environmentally: Contributes to the protection and preservation of natural environments and cultural heritage.

Mitigating anticipated negative environmental impacts, particularly during peak seasons in mountainous resorts and tourist areas (El-Chamri, 2018, p.743).

2. Strategies supporting the potential of tourism development as an economic alternative in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar:

Many Arab countries have embraced the concept of tourism as an alternative economic strategy to oil revenue. They have intensified their efforts to develop this sector by implementing visions and strategies that align with the unique resources and attributes of each nation.

Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, like many other nations, have adopted policies aimed at enhancing their tourism sectors. This initiative is driven by the desire to position tourism as a key engine for economic growth and to attract a larger influx of visitors. Such efforts are part of a broader strategy to diversify their economies, reducing reliance on the energy sector, which has long been the primary driver of growth.

2.1 The strategy implemented in Algeria:

The government programs aimed at supporting tourism in Algeria have evolved over different time periods. Since 2000, there was a program from 2001 to 2004 that focused on promoting investment and partnerships in the tourism sector.

In 2007, the emphasis shifted to sustainable tourism, which considered environmental factors, with the goal of positioning Algeria as a competitive destination for both international and regional tourism by enhancing the quality of tourism offerings.

Following this, the program from 2008 to 2015 was integrated into the national regional development plan, serving as a strategic framework for tourism in Algeria.

The most recent initiative is the tourism development plan for 2030, which outlines a strategy to enhance and promote Algerian tourism, aiming to integrate it into international networks and bolster Algeria's status as a tourist destination by leveraging its potential through investment and improved service quality (Habes, 2018, pp.651-652).

Introduction to the 2030 tourism development plan:

The 2030 guiding plan reflects the government's commitment to enhancing the tourism sector and is the result of extensive research, investigations, reports, and investments. It was established under Law 01-02 dated December 12th, 2001, and serves as the strategic reference framework for tourism development.

The comprehensive report consists of six key strategies: an assessment of the current tourism situation in Algeria, identification of premier tourist hubs and resorts, prioritization of tourism action programs, implementation of the tourism development plan, prioritization of tourism projects, and a general summary of the plan (Djabran and Ghanou, 2018, p.26).

Objectives:

This plan aims to rapidly boost tourism in Algeria and is based on a business strategy that outlines specific financial and material objectives to achieve this goal. It seeks to meet the international demand, which is projected to exceed 11 million tourists by 2015.

Key objectives include enhancing overall economic balances such as employment, the financial trade balance, and investment. The initiative aims to position tourism as a key driver of economic growth, serving as an alternative to hydrocarbons by harmonizing tourism promotion with environmental considerations. Additionally, it focuses on improving Algeria's image domestically and fostering internal tourism by developing a coastal tourism infrastructure that meets the needs of visitors.

The strategies implemented to enhance tourism activities according to this plan:

The Algerian authorities have implemented several strategies to revitalize the tourism sector and achieve sustainable development, including:

- ✓ Establishing tourism hubs of excellence, where each hub consists of a collection of resort villages within a specific geographic area equipped with accommodation facilities. Each hub comprises multiple integrated complexes that cater to tourists' expectations. Consequently, Algeria has been divided into seven (07) tourism hubs (Boutabba, 2013, p.10).
- ✓ Enhancing the appeal of the Algerian destination to boost its attractiveness and competitiveness. This includes the introduction of a tourism quality plan aimed at improving the excellence of national tourism offerings through professional development, education, and embracing information and communication technology, alongside a partnership framework between the public and private sectors and a tourism financing plan (Kaouech, 2004).

The new government policy:

One of the key decisions made during the government council meeting on August 4, 2021, regarding the revitalization of the tourism sector was the proposal to implement urgent measures to address the challenges faced by the industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has significantly impacted global tourism, leading to a substantial decline in the revenue of hospitality businesses through:

- ✓ Implementing financial support measures for businesses and tourism operators, facilitate access to tourism properties, and encourage investments and funding for tourism projects.
- ✓ Promoting Algeria as a tourist destination by leveraging new technologies and enhancing media promotion on social networks, while also supporting traditional industries (Ziane et al., 2022, p.26).
- ✓ Assigning the Minister of Tourism to reactivate the Tourism Council to ensure better coordination among stakeholders in the tourism sector, and address the status of tourism properties by reclaiming unused land in tourist expansion areas, while prioritizing the training of tourism sector employees and redirecting travel agency activities towards the development of domestic tourism.

The government has placed a strong emphasis on revitalizing domestic tourism, particularly in desert and regional areas, through its current program. Comprehensive measures have been implemented, including the establishment of a joint committee with the Ministry of Commerce to reassess hotel service prices and work towards capping them.

2.2 The strategy implemented in Saudi Arabia:

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the tourism sector and the development of tourism in Saudi Arabia, focusing on leveraging the available resources in the kingdom. In response to this interest, the Saudi Commission for Tourism was established in 2000, with one of its primary responsibilities being the assessment of the kingdom's tourism potential and the activation of these resources.

This involves conducting research and studies that highlight the sector's current contributions and future growth prospects, given the positive impacts across various areas previously mentioned. The Commission has also developed a comprehensive plan for sustainable tourism development, which includes a series of strategic steps:

- ✓ Enhancing the tourism sector through a structured and economically viable approach.
- ✓ Clarifying the responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in tourism development.
- ✓ Assessing the role of the private sector in driving tourism growth and its readiness for development.
- ✓ Reviewing local regulations and procedures related to the sector and evaluate the qualifications of the workforce.

- ✓ Collaboration with national institutions, media, and citizens to foster a comprehensive understanding of tourism, service evaluation, and security measures.

The first five-year tourism executive plan (2000-2005) included an independent report highlighting the crucial role in organizing the diverse aspects of the tourism industry to support the marketing of tourism products in the Kingdom. Key elements of this plan included:

- ✓ Developing a comprehensive action plan and timeline for transferring organizational functions from other government entities to the High Commission for Tourism, which includes responsibilities such as registration, licensing, classification, and level determination, focusing on key sectors like hotels, furnished units, accommodation institutions, travel agencies, and attractions.
- ✓ Providing indicators to assist in establishing the proposed regulatory framework within the High Commission.
- ✓ Creation of a strategy to implement proposed consumer protection measures by enhancing regulatory practices.
- ✓ Designing a plan to improve the legal framework for quality assurance systems and specifications (High Commission for Tourism, 2022, p.1423).

The strategic plan for tourism development in the Kingdom emphasizes the necessity of establishing a unified system that encompasses all tourism operations. This system would grant the Secretary-General of the high authority the autonomy to issue the necessary decisions and executive regulations aimed at enhancing tourism activities. It would cover all relevant topics, authorities, and procedures associated with the advancement of the tourism industry (El-Chamri, 2018, pp.733-734).

The General Authority for Tourism publishes reports that allow for an assessment of the current state of the sector and its role in economic diversification. For instance, according to its report, the tourism sector contributed 20.6% compared to 13 million in 2010, encompassing various forms of tourism, including religious tourism. Additionally, the hospitality sector in the Kingdom has experienced significant growth, as highlighted in the "***Advantages Holding***" report.

Tourism revenues in the Kingdom account for approximately 3.6% of the gross domestic product. The Kingdom continues to emphasize the development of tourism and diversifying its sources, moving away from reliance on oil. Additionally, significant efforts have been made to enhance infrastructure, such as airports, to promote religious, environmental, and business tourism. Over $500 million has been invested in expanding airport facilities (Akram, 2018, p.138).

As the Kingdom experiences a phase of rapid economic diversification and advances in its Vision 2030 plan for social and economic development, the tourism sector's contribution to the GDP in 2019 increased by 3.9% compared to 2018, reaching 52.7 billion riyals. This sector achieved a significant contribution to the overall GDP, accounting for 10.4%, according to data from the World Travel and Tourism Council.

The tourism sector ranks third in the components of the Gross Domestic Product, following the oil and manufacturing industries. It played a significant role in revitalizing the economy of the Kingdom in the wake of the global economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic (Abourifaa, 2023, p.326). In 2021, tourism experienced a remarkable growth of 18.5%, followed by an increase of 7.6% in 2022.

Saudi Vision to 2030:

It outlines key pillars that serve as a vital foundation for future development aimed at creating a robust and prosperous economic community in an ambitious nation (National Company for Tourism and Hotels, 1995). One of these pillars is tourism, which the Kingdom recognizes as a rapidly growing industry. To enhance the competitiveness of the Saudi

economy, efforts are being made to improve the tourism sector's infrastructure and to establish advanced activities and events designed to attract investment. The goal is to welcome 150 million tourists annually by the year 2030.

This is achieved by creating an attractive and supportive investment environment for tourism projects, along with providing continuous incentives and government support for both foreign and local investors. Such measures aim to facilitate the influx of foreign capital, enhance technology, improve the quality of tourism services, and diversify income sources. These economic impacts are among the key objectives the state aims to achieve in order to boost tourism revenues, thereby reducing the kingdom's reliance on oil as a primary source of income and making the economy more resilient.

The growth of tourism can enhance cultural exchange and aid in the preservation of cultural and historical heritage by promoting historical and archaeological sites as key tourist destinations.

Vision 2030 represents a crucial strategic initiative aimed at transforming the Kingdom into a global destination through significant investments in infrastructure and major projects. The plan seeks to increase the tourism sector's contribution to the GDP from 3% to 10% by 2023, create additional job opportunities to reach a total of 1.6 million jobs by 2030, and attract 100 million visits annually, both international and domestic.

Development Strategy: There are three key policies; the first focuses on employment, emphasizing the training of qualified youth from low-income families and guiding them towards available jobs in the tourism sector. The second pertains to policies for small businesses and micro-producers, as this sector plays a vital role in improving living standards in developing countries. The third involves investment policies aimed at low-income groups, promoting investments that benefit the poor and encouraging small savings among them to be invested in tourism projects that serve their interests (Habib & Naouaf, 2023, p.4).

2.3 The strategy implemented in Qatar:

Following the successful implementation of its natural gas resource development strategy, Qatar has shifted its focus towards an economic diversification strategy. This involves launching a comprehensive public investment program aimed at enhancing economic diversification and preparing for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

The program includes investing oil and gas revenues into key infrastructure projects, manufacturing industries, and the development of financial and governmental services such as tourism, all intended to boost the contribution of non-oil sectors to Qatar's economic growth (Qatar Ministry of Commerce, 2024, pp.1-2).

Qatar has experienced several positive developments as a result of the government's economic diversification policy, particularly in the tourism sector. For instance, the Qatar Tourism Authority released a report indicating that the country welcomed over 2.8 million visitors in 2014, reflecting a growth rate of 8.2% compared to 2013. Since 2009, the number of travelers from around the globe to Qatar has surged by 91%, with an average annual growth rate of 13.8%.

Although the tourism sector is still in its early stages of development, it directly contributed 13.6 billion Qatari riyals (approximately 1 billion US dollars) to Qatar's GDP in 2013, accounting for 1.4% of the non-oil national economy.

The tourism sector significantly impacts the local job market, directly providing 61,000 supportive jobs. The report highlighted that hotels in Qatar demonstrated strong performance in 2014, achieving several milestones. Among these was the historic advancement of the tourism industry in Qatar, marked by the launch of the National Tourism Strategy for 2030, designed as a roadmap for the development of the tourism industry in the coming decades (El-Chamri, 2018, p.139).

2030 Qatar Vision:

It was launched in 2008 as part of a comprehensive national development strategy that spanned from 2011 to 2016. The Qatari government aimed to address a two-decade timeframe, from 2008 to 2030, through these initiatives. This vision emphasizes achieving a balance between the oil-dependent economy and a knowledge-based economy. Qatar is committed to diversifying its economic resources and ensuring a stable and sustainable business environment, which is essential for effective economic management and enhancing competitiveness by attracting more investments and fostering growth.

Qatar's tourism strategy:

The Qatari government has made significant efforts to invest in and enhance the tourism sector, aiming to establish it as a key driver of economic growth while reducing reliance on the energy sector. With its abundant tourism potential, Qatar is well-positioned to become a distinctive travel destination.

To this end, the country launched the National Tourism Strategy 2030, inspired by the Vision 2030 and the 2011-2016 strategy. This initiative was developed through a national consultation process led by the Qatar Tourism Authority, involving various public and private sector institutions, civil society organizations, and industry experts. The strategy aims to attract 7 million tourists to Qatar by 2030 and was officially initiated in 2014. Among the objectives of this strategy are the following:

- ✓ Fostering economic growth by increasing the number of small and medium-sized enterprises and promoting entrepreneurship.
- ✓ Boosting the influx of incoming tourists.
- ✓ Strengthening Qatar's regional and international standing as a premier destination offering visitors unique and authentic experiences, while fully leveraging Qatar's tourism assets to realize the aspirations of its people for the country's future and assist in diversifying the economy to reduce reliance on energy resources.

The strategy outlines several programs and projects that are expected to have long-term objectives for Qatar and its citizens, in addition to medium- and short-term goals. Internally, Qatar's approaches to enhancing tourism are becoming more diverse and robust, supported by significant investments from both the public and private sectors. It is anticipated that these investments will reach between 40 to 45 billion dollars by around the year 2030.

This is done alongside the annual organization of numerous festivals, exhibitions, and activities aimed at showcasing the country's modern infrastructure and attractions that position it as a leading tourist destination. In addition to various exhibitions, including those focused on cars, jewelry, and international festivals, Qatar plans to increase the number of hotels and serviced apartments from 107 to 187. Notably, five-star hotels have taken the lead in room availability, providing a total of 7,748 rooms across 33 hotels in 2022 (Younes & Nacir, 2018, pp.6-70).

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the current focus is on sensitive sectors, particularly tourism, which has the potential to serve as an alternative for diversifying exports. The tourism sector presents a significant challenge in revitalizing the tourism image of several Arab countries, including Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. By positioning themselves as prominent tourist destinations, these nations can enhance their standing both locally and internationally, contributing to development that is independent of economic dependency on hydrocarbons.

Tourism in certain countries holds a significant position due to the foreign currency it generates. While the development of tourism in the countries under study is still in its early stages, achieving the desired goals is not impossible if efforts are combined and sustained.

Results:

- ✓ Tourism is a significant economic activity that can drive economic development beyond the oil sector when tourism potential is effectively harnessed.
- ✓ Recognizing the vast opportunities within the tourism sector in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar will enhance economic growth.
- ✓ The tourism industry impacts various economic factors, including foreign currency, the tourism balance, gross domestic product, employment levels, and both domestic and foreign investment. The countries under study aim to implement strategies that promote sustainable tourism development, leading to positive outcomes such as increased GDP, job creation, improved balance of payments, and enhanced living standards.
- ✓ The substantial impact of tourism and its economic development role in the Arab region has become evident in recent years, although its growth has been affected by current conditions, and the returns do not yet align with the region's inherent strengths.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop a strategy to diversify sectors beyond hydrocarbons, with tourism as a key objective, focusing on economic and social benefits while being rooted in local realities and open to global tourism cultures to achieve this goal.
- ✓ Use of media channels to promote the diverse tourism treasures found in these countries.
- ✓ Support specialized tourism institutes that facilitate knowledge exchange, research, and studies among nations, fostering a tourism culture among stakeholders in various facilities and the general public to ensure sustainable efforts, achieve objectives with lower costs, and maximize economic returns.

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