University of Mostaganem-Algeria
VOL: 13 / **N°:** 03 / **(2026)** , p. p. 367/373

International Journal of Social Communication
ISSN: 2437 – 1181
EISSN: 2710 – 8139

Digital Public Communication and Its Role in Destination Building and Tou-rism Product Marketing: A Study of the Saudi Experience within Vision 2030

Taieb Saoudi [1*]

University of Bejaia, (Algeria)¸ taieb.saoudi@univ-bejaia.dz

Received: 02/07/2026 Accepted: 24/09/2026 Published: 30/09/2026

Doi: 10.53284/2120-013-003-020

Abstract:
This study analyzes the digital landscape of the tourism sector to strengthen destination-building strategies, promote tourism products, and highlight opportunities in digital tourism. It reviews the experience of the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** as a leading Arab model. The research adopts the **PRISMA methodology** to ensure transparency and replicability in literature reviews. **Saudi Vision 2030** places tourism at the core of economic and social transformation. Tourism is framed not only as an economic sector but also as a means of reinforcing cultural identity and global openness. Digital transformation is a fundamental pillar of this vision. It is used to market destinations, manage public engagement, and enhance tourist experiences. The study emphasizes opportunities such as competitiveness, interactive content, and international outreach. Ultimately, it presents Saudi Arabia's model as a reference for advancing digital tourism strategies regionally and globally.

Keywords: Digital Tourism, Digital Communication, tourist destination, Tourism Product.

* Corresponding author

1. INTRODUCTION

The significance of Information Technology (IT) in the tourism sector is evident in its integration across the entire tourism process—from planning and contracting to booking, marketing, and promotion. Future trends in e-tourism suggest radical shifts, such as the increasing reliance on direct online bookings over traditional travel agencies and the promotion of tourism products via smartphones and interactive devices. Furthermore, online promotional films provide tourists with immersive experiences of their intended destinations.

Digital marketing for tourism services has become an urgent necessity, utilizing sophisticated tools and modern technology to execute marketing activities, particularly regarding information delivery and the completion of promotional transactions through various communication channels.

The cultural component of the "cyber" or "digital" concept, which emerged in the early 1990s with Web 2.0 and the evolution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), gave rise to "cyberculture" or "digital culture." As the scale and importance of digital culture grow, so do the internal and external threats to information security. Ensuring information security and managing the digital cultural heritage remain complex challenges.

Given that e-tourism is a modern concept closely linked to e-commerce, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made significant efforts to create a conducive environment for global developments through the "Saudi Vision 2030" project. Digital marketing has become an integral part of the tourism sector, revolutionizing how destinations attract and engage potential visitors. Digital strategies have largely replaced traditional methods, such as print ads and brochures, due to their broader reach and direct interaction with consumers. Among these strategies, social media marketing, electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), and online advertising have emerged as prominent tools (Alghanayem, 2023). Social media platforms enable destinations to share content, engage with users, and build global brand awareness, while also encouraging peer-to-peer interaction and recommendations, which enhance trust and influence decision-making (Bilgin, 2018).

I. Methodological Framework

I.1. Research Problem

In light of the aforementioned context, the following research questions are posed:

1 What are the pillars of the digital transformation model in the Saudi tourism sector?

2 To what extent does digital transformation, through digital tourism applications, contribute to revitalizing cultural tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

I.2. Research Objectives

The study aims to:

• Analyze the frameworks of the transition toward digital tourism.

• Analyze scientific literature and previous studies on digital transformation and public tourism communication, focusing on the Saudi experience under Vision 2030.

• Highlight the mechanisms of Saudi Arabia's transition to digital tourism within the Vision 2030 framework.

I.3. Research Significance

• The study examines digital public communication and its impact on various fields, particularly tourism, assessing its success in promoting tourism attractions.

• It addresses the communicative action for marketing cultural heritage, which has become a major stake in responsible tourism.

• It explores how interactive communication plays a fundamental role in marketing socio-cultural tourism products.

I.4. Methodology and Tools

This study employs the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology. This international standard ensures a transparent and replicable literature review process consisting of four main stages:

3 Identification: Collecting relevant studies from academic databases and official reports.

4 Screening: Removing duplicates and excluding irrelevant studies.

5 Eligibility: Reviewing full texts to ensure compliance with inclusion criteria.

6 Inclusion: Determining the final set of studies for analysis.

For this study, a large number of preliminary studies related to digital transformation and tourism communication were identified and filtered based on criteria including the time frame (2016–2025), relevance to digital transformation or public tourism communication, and the quality of the academic or institutional source. This methodological framework enhances transparency and credibility, highlighting the Saudi experience's position in the international landscape.

II. Theoretical Framework: The Tourism Industry and the Digital Transformation Revolution

I.1. The Relationship Between Modern Technology and the Tourism Industry

The tourism sector has successfully adapted to digital transformation over several years. Bookings, destination selection, and travel preparations are increasingly conducted independently. The market is constantly evolving, with new technologies significantly impacting e-tourism. For industry stakeholders, it is crucial to develop communication strategies based on online user journeys. M-tourism (Mobile Tourism) is also growing, as consumers appreciate the immediate solutions provided by mobile searches and bookings. A study by Booking.com indicates that 64% of travelers state that technology plays a role during their vacations. Therefore, the user experience must be optimized throughout the "tourism process" (before, during, and after).

Today, tourism cannot be discussed without mentioning "e-tourism." The distinction between "old tourism" and "e-tourism" is no longer practical, as the latter generates significant annual revenues and indirect business via the internet. Tourism companies must innovate and create new services to meet consumer demands. The digitalization of the industry, specifically the rise of social

networks and Web technologies, has revolutionized the sector. Tourists increasingly use devices for bookings and share their experiences on social media, which significantly impacts the reputation of destinations (Issani, 2014).

II.2. The Importance of Digital Tourism

Digital tourism offers immense benefits to both service providers and tourists, overcoming traditional barriers:

• Facilitating Information Delivery: Tourism services are information-heavy products whose quality is often only measurable through experience. The internet allows consumers to access

comprehensive data (flights, hotels, car rentals, etc.), enabling comparisons and personalized itinerary planning.

• Cost Reduction: E-tourism reduces marketing, production, and distribution costs. It facilitates direct communication between producers and intermediaries, reducing labor requirements and allowing for electronic ticketing and vouchers (Al-Banna, 2009).

• Product Development: Opinion polls and data analytics allow for the identification of new tourism trends and the development of services tailored to different segments (Takrourt, 2009).

• Enhanced Competitiveness: Increased sales and revenues contribute to the sector's value-added in the GDP.

• Technological Indicator: The prevalence of e-tourism serves as evidence of a country's advanced technological infrastructure, boosting foreign investment and institutional credibility.

III. Presentation and Analysis of the Saudi Experience in Digital Tourism

III.1. Performance of the Saudi Tourism Sector (2023–2025)

Tourism is a primary pillar of Saudi Vision 2030, with the strategic goal of becoming a global destination through mega-projects like the Red Sea Project and AlUla. Currently, the sector contributes approximately 4% to the non-oil GDP, with a target of 10% by 2030. Notably, Saudi Arabia surpassed its 2030 target of 100 million visitors six years early, leading to a revised goal of 150 million annual visits by 2030.

Table 1. Summary of Tourism Indicators (2023–2025)

Year	Total Tourists (Million)	International Tourists (Million)	Tourism Spending (Billion SAR)	Growth Rate
2023	~104	~27.8	283.8	+11%
2024	116	30	282	+5%
2025	122	30	300	+6%

Source: Saudi Ministry of Tourism (2025)

III.2. Saudi Tourism Vision 2030

The Kingdom aims to be among the world's top tourism destinations, planning investments worth $810 billion in cultural and entertainment projects. Megaprojects announced between 2016 and 2020, such as NEOM, the Red Sea Project, Qiddiya, Diriyah, and Amaala, aim to retain domestic tourists while attracting international visitors.

• Targets: 150 million annual visits by 2030, including 55 million international and 45 million domestic visits (based on initial 100M target metrics), creating one million jobs.

• Infrastructure: Over $100 billion investment in aviation, including two major airports in Riyadh and Jeddah, aiming for 330 million passengers by 2030.

IV. Study Results

IV.1. PRISMA Methodology Flowchart

The literature review followed a rigorous scientific process:

Identification: 128 studies from academic databases (Scopus, WoS, Google Scholar, etc.) + 23 official reports = 151 total.

Screening: 87 studies remained after removing duplicates; 42 excluded as irrelevant = 45 studies.

Eligibility: 45 full-text reviews; 27 excluded for not directly addressing public tourism **communication** = 18 studies.

Inclusion: 18 final studies analyzed.

Table 2. Literature Review Stages (PRISMA)

Stage	Details	Count
Identification	Academic databases (128) + Official reports (23)	151
Screening	After duplicate removal (87) - Irrelevant (42)	45
Eligibility	Full-text review (45) - Indirectly related (27)	18
Inclusion	Final studies for analysis	18

Table 3. Analysis of Key Included Studies (Sample)

No.	Reference	Study Title	Key Findings
1	Alghamdi (2024)	Digital Tourism Platforms in KSA	Enhanced tourist experience and information access.

2	Alzahrani & Khan (2023)	E-Gov and Tourism Promotion	Gov digital transformation aided destination marketing.
3	Alshammari (2022)	Smart Tourism and Vision 2030	Smart tourism is integral to national transformation.
4	Alotaibi (2021)	Social Media & Engagement	Social media boosted institutional-tourist interaction.
5	Alharthy (2023)	Digital Branding of Heritage	Cultural identity was digitally reinforced.

IV.2. Final Research Findings

1 **Digital Transformation as a Strategic Element:** It is not merely a technical update but a strategic pillar utilizing smart platforms, AI, and VR to enhance engagement.

2 **Strengthening Public Communication:** Digital tools (social media, influencers, government portals) have successfully projected a global image of the Kingdom and highlighted its cultural heritage.

3 **Vision 2030 Integration:** The vision provided the institutional environment for a transparent and professional public communication system.

4 **Supporting Factors:** Cybersecurity, trust, and Big Data analytics are crucial for effective digital communication and understanding tourist behavior.

Conclusion

Based on the PRISMA-guided review of 18 academic studies, the Saudi model of digital transformation in tourism communication demonstrates a **comprehensive strategic integration** of modern technology with cultural heritage. Smart platforms have enhanced tourist experiences, digital campaigns have shaped a positive global image, and cultural identity has been reinforced in alignment with Vision 2030.

This model illustrates how digital transformation can serve simultaneously as a **technological strategy**—through AI, VR, and Big Data—and as a **cultural strategy**—through heritage storytelling and identity reinforcement. Together, these elements support economic diversification, sustainable tourism development, and global openness.

Saudi Arabia thus emerges as a leading example of how nations can leverage digital transformation not only to modernize tourism communication but also to **embed cultural heritage within global narratives**, ensuring both competitiveness and authenticity.

Recommendations

Based on the PRISMA-guided review and the detailed findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen Saudi Arabia's digital transformation in tourism communication:

1. **Technological Recommendations**

- Expand the use of **AI-driven personalization** to tailor tourism content to diverse visitor profiles.
- Invest further in **VR/AR immersive experiences** that allow tourists to explore heritage sites virtually before visiting.
- Enhance **Big Data analytics** to predict tourist flows, optimize resource allocation, and improve service delivery.

2. **Institutional Recommendations**
   - Strengthen coordination between government agencies, private sector, and cultural institutions to ensure a **unified communication strategy**.
   - Establish **cybersecurity protocols and trust frameworks** to safeguard digital platforms and build confidence among international users.
   - Integrate Vision 2030 objectives into all tourism communication initiatives to maintain alignment with national development goals.
3. **Marketing & Cultural Recommendations**
   - Develop **heritage-focused storytelling campaigns** that highlight Saudi Arabia's cultural identity while appealing to global audiences.
   - Utilize **social media influencers and digital ambassadors** to amplify the Kingdom's image internationally.
   - Promote **sustainable tourism practices** by embedding cultural preservation messages into digital campaigns, ensuring authenticity and long-term impact

Bibliographical References

b) The printed sources

1. Takrourt, M. (2009). The importance of ICT in developing tourism services. *National Symposium on Tourism Marketing*, Algeria.

c) The studies (books and articles)

2. Alghanayem, H., et al. (2023). A dark side of retargeting? *Innovative Marketing*.
3. Bilgin, Y. (2018). The effect of social media marketing activities. *Business and Management Studies*.
4. Issani, A., & Bouraoui, A. (2014). E-marketing as a mechanism for activating tourism services. *Journal of Rights and Human Sciences*, Algeria.

e) Research tools (dictionaries and Encyclopaedias)

5. PRISMA Statement. (2025). Standardized framework.

f) Mediagraphy (YouTube video, website, film, etc.)

6. Saudi Ministry of Tourism. (2025). Official portal. Retrieved from https://www.mot.gov.sa