

The Promotion of Learning Arabic Language via Religious Tourism: The Case of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Annual tourism flows to Saudi Arabia are known to draw large numbers of Muslims from across the world who visit the country for various religious purposes, such as the Hajj and Umrah. This study explores the possibility of using religious tourism flows to Saudi Arabia as an intervention for learning the Arabic language. This study focuses on two main research objectives, including establishing the key Arabic language aspects that religious tourism can potentially promote in Saudi Arabia and exploring the likelihood of using language practices of religious tourism to promote the learning of the Arabic language to non-Arabic speakers' visitors. A qualitative study addresses the research objectives by drawing on the perspectives of fourteen religious tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for the annual events. The results of this study demonstrated that it is possible to use the vast annual flows of religious tourism to Saudi Arabia to promote learning the Arabic language. However, efforts must be made to underscore the importance of non-Arabic-speaking visitors to Saudi Arabia learning the Arabic language against globalization and beyond the cultural and religious identity imperatives.

Keywords: Religious, Tourism, Saudi Arabia, Arabic, learning, language, culture, Hajj, Umrah

1. Introduction

Religious tourism, which is sometimes referred to as spiritual tourism, continues gaining global popularity. According to Kim et al. (2020), religious tourism is originally traced to the pilgrimage, which is usually regarded as the oldest form of touristic activities for religious purposes. Moreover, Rashid (2018) underscored that even tourists who are not primarily driven by faith in their touristic adventures can visit certain religious places out of curiosity, discover new meanings attached to life, and accumulate positive energies. A common approach in the literature of religious tourism is comparing and exploring different visitors' experiences, such as pilgrims and tourists in a given site (Bond et al., 2015). Therefore, religious tourism can enable the transmission of cultural practices as various people travel to religious sites and interact.

Religious tourism is the leading cause of people visiting Saudi Arabia (Alanzi et al., 2023). According to Stephenson (2017), the primary reason for religious tourism activities in Saudi Arabia is the unique destination it offers for the Hajj and Umrah. Alanzi et al. (2023) reported that in 2018, religious tourism accounted for 60% of all visitor arrivals in Saudi Arabia, while 16% and 15% came to the country for conferences/business and visiting friends, respectively. Alanzi et al. (2023) underscore that millions of pilgrims

travel to Mecca in Saudi Arabia annually, which is Prophet Mohammed's birthplace. The annual travels are essential in the performance of Hajj or Umrah. These vast numbers of visitors to the country's religious sites provide a breeding ground for transmitting Arabic culture, including the language. Among those traveling to Saudi Arabia for the religious events of Hajj and Umrah are non-Arabs from diverse locations worldwide (Alghamdi, 2024). The growing number of Muslims traveling to Saudi Arabia is necessitated by all Islamic adherents being requested to perform Hajj at least once in their lifetimes (Khan & Shambour, 2018). Essentially, Arabic is Muslims' language of worship (Hikmah et al., 2023; Mohamed et al., 2023), reinforcing the need for non-Arabic Islamic adherents to have enhanced Arabic language proficiency. According to Rabiah (2018), language is a tool for communication between groups and facilitating cultural exchange because the language of a nation is inseparable from its culture. Therefore, language is an indispensable tool for expressing a nation's cultural reality and is closely linked to the behavior and attitudes of the people or group speaking it (Rabiah, 2018). For this reason, the high number of visitors going to Saudi Arabia for religious purposes presents the case of the possible use of religious tourism to learn the Arabic language. Thus, the need to probe the possibility of using religious tourism to learn the Arabic language warrants this scholarly investigation.

The primary purpose of this inquiry is to explore how Saudi Arabia can benefit from the many tourists who perform Hajj and Umrah annually to foster the acquisition of Arabic language proficiencies. The primary goal is achieved by two objectives. The first objective is to establish the key Arabic language aspects that religious tourism can potentially promote in Saudi Arabia. The

second objective is to explore the likelihood of using language practices in religious tourism to encourage teaching the Arabic language to non-Arabic speaker visitors. In meeting these two aims, the researcher sought to answer the question: How can the vast numbers of religious tourists going to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umar be used to promote non-Arabic-speaking visitors to learn the Arabic language?

The study is significant to academia and practical contexts of religious tourism because it serves as a base for enacting the transmission of cultural practices, including language transfer from the host country's citizens to non-Arabic speakers visiting Saudi Arabia for religious purposes. For this case, the study is relevant to Saudi Arabians interested in using religious tourism to promote the learning of the Arabic language to non-Arabic speaking visitors. The study is relevant in fostering a scholarly understanding of how Saudi Arabia can tap into religious tourism as an alternative to facilitate learning the Arabic language. Notably, this study bridges an existing gap in the literature. Thus, other researchers can use the findings of this investigation to enhance their understanding of the possibility of using religious tourism as the ground for learning the Arabic language. Future researchers can use the results of this study to enable them to identify further gaps on which to focus their further inquiries.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizations of Religious Tourism and Language Learning

The Arabic language has played a vital role in religious tourism by Islamic adherents to sacred sites. Hassan et al. (2023) contend that religious tourism involves three basic levels of discussion. The first level concerns provision, focusing on areas of tourism that involve product creation, promotion, and sale (Hassan et al., 2023). The second level

concerns various encounters and focuses on the ability of believers in the host country to handle physical contact with tourists as they go about the religious events of their interest in destination countries (Hassan et al., 2023). The third level concerns management and focuses on various tourism issues in a managerial context to ensure that value is delivered to visitors (Hassan et al., 2023). According to Kim et al. (2020) and Rashid (2018), religious tourism is an ancient form developed in historical religions. Consequently, religious tourism recognizes people's traveling to historical sites that they consider sacred and, therefore, have attached religious meanings to them.

Religious tourism involves specific destinations categorized according to the various value propositions they deliver. The first category involves high-value sites that attract high volumes of tourists. The second category consists of a host of religious festivals. The third category requires pilgrimage shrines. Tourists travel to these religious sites in groups or families during certain seasons. This travel is influenced by various factors such as climatic conditions, holidays, festivities, and other work schedules (Hassan et al., 2023). The motivation of tourists to travel is occasioned by either a push or pull motive. Li et al. (2015) defined push motives as forces one to travel to escape a home-surrounding environment, tedious routines, and daily hassles.

However, pull motives pull a tourist to visit specific destinations and may include a desire to explore, seek knowledge, and enhance ego (Ayoub & Mohamed, 2024).

Religious tourism is driven by diverse motives that define why people move to other countries or locations to visit historical sites to which they attach religious meanings. For instance, Bond et al. (2015) contend that one such motive is the desire to find the meaning of life and develop personal attributes. This

argument is supported by Hassan et al. (2023), who stated that people travel to religious sites to learn, where religious, touristic, and recreational interests are fulfilled. Muslims are tied to pilgrims for various motivations. Indeed, similar views from Griffin and Raj (2017) underscore that Muslims often travel to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage, especially Mecca and Medina, for religious purposes because they link these sites to sacred occurrences. In concurrence, Hassan et al. (2023) assert that Muslims pray in Masjid al-Haram to get forgiveness for their sins, illustrating the religious significance given to this historical site. The second justification involves looking for love and pleasure, which, according to Hassan et al. (2023), Griffin and Raj (2017), and Bond et al. (2015), Muslims consider that the Prophet Muhammad visited those sites. As a consequence, Muslims travel on pilgrimages as a way of appreciating themselves and enabling them to respect the cultural and ethnic beliefs of other travelers.

The concept of language learning denotes the ability to master the key concepts and ideas that are necessary for communicating using the language. Abdallah (2015) and Benson and Voller (2014) demonstrated that such communication is evident through an individual's ability to write and use language verbally in their day-to-day life. Moreover, language is considered an expression of culture, hence crucial in disseminating the shared meanings and values that people attach to events and everyday experiences (Rabiah, 2018). Therefore, language learning is vital to the preservation of cultural values, ethos, and practices of people.

2.2. Factors Affecting Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is affected by various factors, including per capita income, transport costs, size of the population, and trade volumes. The number of religious tourist

arrivals gives a positive impression of the price of tourism in Saudi Arabia (Alodadi & Benhin, 2015). According to Qurashi (2017), the economic factors that affect the demand for tourism include income, exchange rates, and price in general. Per capita income is the most significant measurement in the research on tourism demand (Alanzi et al., 2023; Qurashi, 2017). Religious tourism heavily relies on the income of the country of origin and that of the destination country. The income of the destination country guarantees the capacity to provide essential services to various visitors and pilgrims. The relative price of tourism is inversely proportional to the international tourism demand. Transport costs are the backbone of global tourism, especially religious tourism. However, Alodadi and Benhin (2015) emphasize that when the distance between the country of origin and the destination country is greater, traveling takes more time, which affects the cost of transport. Due to this, Saudi Arabia has dramatically invested in tourism infrastructure.

2.3. Impact of Knowledge of Arabic Language

The Holy Quran is written in Arabic. Any Muslim must learn Arabic to understand and recite the text quickly. The Quran has English translations, but reading the original version is much better (Versteegh, 2018). In the wake of religious tourism, many people travel to Arabic countries for exploration, which makes it crucial to understand the language (Al Alili & Hassan, 2017). Before traveling to such Arabic countries, it is prudent for one to learn about their culture and various traditions. This learning enables one to communicate and interact with Arabs smoothly. It is prudent to learn about the Arabic culture for multiple reasons. First, according to Al Alili and Hassan (2017),

learning Arabic creates cultural awareness, which is essential in enabling people to accept and appreciate different traditions and cultural practices. Next, learning Arabic helps in fostering relationships. Understanding Arabic culture helps one connect and communicate with Arabic-speaking people (Arifin, 2018). This communication and connection are essential in building working relationships in a globalized economy. Furthermore, learning Arabic boosts tourism and travel. Arabic countries are top-rated tourist attraction destinations. Saudi Arabia, for example, is highly regarded for religious tourism.

Learning Arabic eases integration and appreciation of various places to be toured (Arifin et al., 2021). Learning the language thus helps avoid misunderstandings during visits and opens minds to cultural diversity (Al Alili & Hassan, 2017). Another critical aspect of learning Arabic is its intellectual and historical contributions (Arifin et al., 2021). Al Alili and Hassan (2017) assert that the Arabic culture has played a significant role in various fields, including philosophy, art, literature, and science in general. Learning about the Arabic culture thus opens the minds of individuals to the understanding and appreciation of its contributions. The culture offers various business opportunities, underscoring the importance of familiarizing oneself with Arabic as an integral part of this cultural milieu (Al Alili & Hassan, 2017). Arabic countries are experiencing rapid economic growth with massive business opportunities. Business-oriented individuals looking forward to venturing into the Arabic market would possess valuable skills in learning Arabic culture. Thus, one must learn Arabic culture and religion to travel to Arabic countries. Religious tourism across Saudi Arabia calls for equality, respect, and love.

2.4. Literature Gap

The gap in the literature is the possibility of using religious tourism flows to Saudi Arabia as a site to promote learning the Arabic language. While numerous studies, such as Alanzi et al. (2023), Tabash et al. (2023), and Qurashi (2017), have acknowledged the high number of tourism inflows to Saudi Arabia, none has examined the possibility of using these vast numbers to promote the learning of the Arabic language. Thus, this study bridges this gap by exploring the potential of using religious tourism flows to Saudi Arabia to learn the Arabic language. The study predicts promoting and encouraging religious tourism in Saudi Arabia can enhance Arabic language learning. The prediction is based on the notion that non-Arabic religious tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for major religious events have opportunities to learn Arabic, which is vital for effective participation in such events.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted an exploratory research design to investigate the potential of religious tourism in Saudi Arabia being used to facilitate non-Arabic visitors' learning of the Arabic language. According to Mbaka and Isiramen (2021) and Žukauskas et al. (2018), an exploratory research design concerns the tentative investigation into an underexplored phenomenon to form the basis for further conclusive research in the future. Hence, the exploratory research design was suitable for this study as the concept of using religious tourism to promote the learning of Arabic is novel and thus under-researched in the literature. For this reason, the results from this investigation will pave the way for further conclusive research. This study lays the groundwork through a qualitative exploration of this phenomenon to facilitate a nuanced

and in-depth understanding of the possible use of this mechanism to promote Arabic language learning by religious tourists going to Saudi Arabia for the annual events of Hajj and Umrah. In undertaking the qualitative exploration, the research also adopts an interpretivism research paradigm and inductive approach by acknowledging the value of examining and interpreting the experiences, views, and opinions of research participants in gauging the possibility of using the annual religious tourism flows to Saudi Arabia as a possible opportunity to promote the learning of Arabic language to non-Arabic visitors (Ryan, 2018).

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The study's sample size was 14 participants, who were chosen through purposive sampling. The sample size was appropriate because such a small sample ensures in-depth insight into the study topic in phenomenological studies. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that a sample size of between 10 and 15 would be appropriate for qualitative studies. The choice of sample size in such studies often depended on the desired theoretical and data saturation the researcher needs and the required homogeneity. Qualitative and phenomenological studies focusing on homogeneity usually adopt a small sample size (Palinkas et al., 2015). In the present research, homogeneity was a pivotal factor; hence, a small sample size of 14 respondents was considered appropriate. The participants were selected based on purposive sampling, a non-random sampling technique that allows the researcher to choose potential respondents based on judgment (Campbell et al., 2020). The criteria considered for choosing participants were occasional religious visitors to Saudi Arabia, aged 24 years and above, and knowledgeable about the issues of religious tourism. The participants were initially located on the X

platform and contacted through the same platform to provide their perspectives on the possibility of using religious tourism flows to Saudi Arabia as an intervention for learning the Arabic language. In this regard, the researcher shared a sponsored ad on the X platform and requested that visitors with prior experience traveling to Saudi Arabia for religious purposes who were potentially knowledgeable on the subject matter participate in the study. Willing and available participants were asked to send a direct message to the researcher through the X platform, which opened opportunities for subsequent interaction and recruitment for research participation.

Semi-structured interviews were utilized in this investigation to obtain relevant perspectives from the participants on religious tourism as a potential opportunity for promoting Arabic language learning in Saudi Arabia. This approach was suitable for this inquiry to permit the evaluator to raise follow-up questions, hence broadening the depth of detail captured by the data, as Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021) suggest. The key aspects assessed through the semi-structured interviews were the complexity and possibility of adults learning the Arabic language through their annual spiritual and religious tours to Saudi Arabia. The interviews were conducted via Zoom, which was necessary to offer the researcher the convenience of having the interviewees respond to the questions whenever they had the time. The interview guide or a document with five probing questions to be used in the interview was adopted (Jamshed, 2014). The interview guide was devised based on Bond et al. (2015) and Majid et al. (2017). The focus was on ensuring that the interview questions devised answered the research question effectively. (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Although no survey was conducted to gather feedback on the questions, the interview guide

with open-ended questions was sent to peer groups via email for their review. The peer groups comprised research scholars pursuing their doctoral studies for suggestions and reviews on the language, wording, and relevance of the questions in the interview. Each interview lasted for about 23 minutes on average.

3.3. Data Analysis

The researcher synthesized and presented the findings of this investigation through thematic analysis. Perspectives from Nowell et al. (2017), Maguire and Delahunt (2017), and Dawadi (2020) noted that thematic analysis is suitable for synthesizing qualitative results because of its flexibility and adaptability in terms of how themes diversely emerge from the data. For this reason, the utilization of this analytical framework in this inquiry permitted relevant ideas, concepts, and themes to emerge from the data to facilitate the construction of knowledge on the possibility of using religious tourism to promote the learning of the Arabic language by non-Arabic religious travelers who go to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umrah. The steps involved in analyzing the interview responses thematically in this study were getting familiar with the data, followed by identifying initial codes and concepts. After that, themes were identified using the codes and concepts identified above, which were subsequently reviewed. This stage was followed by naming and defining the determined themes before writing the final results of this inquiry. During the interview process, ethical issues regarding human participants, including informed consent and confidentiality, were considered. Participants in the study were free to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview.

One of the limitations of the methodology adopted in this study was the application of the purposive sampling

strategy, which exposed this inquiry to the possibility of selection bias. Using judgment in selecting respondents for the study was likely to result in biased and skewed findings. Bias in the result was possible to limit the generalization of the research findings concerning the possibility of religious tourism being used as an opportunity for promoting the learning of the Arabic language by non-Arabic speaking travelers going to Saudi Arabia for the annual events of Hajj and Umrah (Andrade, 2021). This limitation was mitigated by sticking to the selection criteria for choosing participants. In this regard, all respondents who had attained the threshold requirements were deemed qualified to offer their expert opinion on the potential use of religious tourism flows to Saudi Arabia to promote learning the Arabic language by non-Arabic visitors.

4. Findings

This section presents the results of this investigation by analyzing the interviewees' perspectives about the possible use of religious tourism in Saudi Arabia to promote the learning of the Arabic language by non-Arabic speaking visitors. The analysis of the interviewees' responses yielded three main themes, which included the possible use of religious tourism to support the learning of the Arabic language by non-Arabic speaking visitors, possible challenges hampering the use of religious tourism to learn the Arabic language by non-Arabic visitors in Saudi Arabia, and perspectives of the connection between the Arabic language and the Islamic religion and culture. These themes are analyzed below to illustrate the diverse perspectives of the participants.

4.1. Perspectives on the Possible Use of Religious Tourism to Support the Learning of Arabic Language by Non-Arabic Speaking Visitors

This theme emerged from the respondents' views, which indicated the possibility of leveraging the opportunity created by religious tourism to promote the learning of the Arabic language by non-Arabic visitors traveling to Saudi Arabia during the events of Hajj and Umrah. The respondents' perspectives acknowledged the massive annual tourist flows to Saudi Arabia. They emphasized that it could be possible to promote the use of the Arabic language as a potential way to increase learning by visitors. For instance, P1 argued that:

I think this is a plausible suggestion because, ideally, many non-Arabs coming to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage already do not have the know-how of the Arabic language, even though it is the language used in our Quran. Thus, using the opportunity of religious tourism can reinforce learning the Arabic language.

Based on this excerpt, it is possible to promote the learning of the Arabic language to religious tourists going to Saudi Arabia because most non-Arabs do not have the basics of this language. Their only interaction with Arabic texts is from the Quran, which may show a possible use of the opportunity to visit Saudi Arabia to learn the Arabic language. This perspective implies that the Saudi opportunity would reinforce non-Arabic visitors' enhanced understanding of Arabic and increase its use to broader populations since visitors coming to the country for religious functions such as Hajj and Umrah emanate from diverse geographical contexts. This view was consistent with that of P3, which underscored that:

That would be very important because every Muslim would use their

proficiency in the Arabic language as a possible mechanism for cultural and religious identity. They can also increase their reading and interpretation of the texts from the Holy Book. I think most of us non-Arabs traveling to Saudi Arabia for religious purposes will very much like this idea. It is an opportunity.

The argument above acknowledges the desirous need of all Islamic religion adherents to have proficiency in Arabic as a mark of identity and cultural preservation. If the idea of using the Hajj and Umrah events to learn the Arabic language is accepted by most of those visiting Saudi Arabia annually, it would create meaningful support for its implementation. Indeed, having non-Arabic speaking visitors improve their proficiency in Arabic would promote the cohesion, homogeneity, and religious identity of Muslims.

4.2. Possible Challenges Hampering the Use of Religious Tourism to Learn the Arabic Language

One of the potential challenges that impedes those making annual visits to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umrah from learning the Arabic language is the widespread acceptance and adoption of the English language for communication and transactions. The impact of the widespread adoption and acceptance of English is expressed by the sentiments of Participant 2 (P2):

With the advent of globalization, I find many people comfortable with the English language, which potentially creates an impediment to the extent to which non-Arabic-speaking religious tourists can embrace the Arabic language. The Quran also has translations, making them comfortable in their languages.

As highlighted in the excerpt, most people find English the most appropriate mode of communication due to globalization. The widespread acceptance and adoption of English as a language of communication in the world impeded non-Arabic-speaking religious tourists from learning and speaking Arabic. Equally, since the Quran is translated into other languages, non-Arabic religious tourist finds no motivation to learn and use the Arabic language. They can easily communicate and read the Quran in their languages. The short period of these events is another factor that prevents non-Arabic religious tourists from making annual visits to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umrah and from learning the Arabic language. The effect of time in learning the Arabic language is expressed in Participant 5 (P5) sentiments:

Unlike children, I think adults take a considerably extended period to learn a new language. I'm saying this because the annual events of Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia take a significantly shorter duration and are dedicated to various remarkable events of the Islamic religion. So, I don't think the time can be enough to allow non-Arabic speaking adults to learn the full extent of the Arabic language.

The sentiments of the fifth participant indicate that the short duration of the Hajj and Umrah limits non-Arabic tourists from learning the Arabic language. Non-Arabic religious tourists travel to attend these events and may not have time to learn the Arabic language within a short time. Thus, non-Arabic speakers prefer to use their languages rather than learn Arabic. A similar view was held by P4, P8, and P10, who expressed concern for the suitability of the limited time frame for non-Arabic speaking visitors to master the language fully. For instance, P4 argued that:

For effective mastery, continuous learning is needed. But I doubt this is different because I travel to Saudi twice a year. This means that for other than two months, I spend the rest of the year elsewhere speaking to people in English. I guess by the time I return to Saudi Arabia again, I will have forgotten everything. So, I still insist that learning Arabic would require consistent interaction with the concepts, ideas, grammar, pronunciations, and other relevant tools.

Based on the excerpt above, non-Arabic religious leaders must learn Arabic to ensure continuous mastery. However, tourists' short time in Saudi Arabia limits their continuous learning and interaction with the language. The lack of adequate interaction with Arabic-speaking people and continuous language learning prevents non-Arabic tourists from mastering and learning the new language. The ninth respondent (P9) holds a similar position to the fourth respondent on the effect of time in learning the Arabic language. According to P9, limited spacing of the events impeded non-Arabic religious tourists from learning the Arabic language:

I think the events are not spaced well enough for non-Arabs like me to learn consistently because I think you mean that we learn by interacting with Arabic texts and verbal exchanges every time we visit Saudi Arabia. I also doubt that for my growing age, and even for other adults, juggling a lot of stuff could make this a priority.

The complexity of the Arabic jargon was also mentioned as an independent hindrance to non-Arabic religious tourists learning the Arabic language. The complexity of the Arabic language jargon is expressed in the sentiments of the sixth respondent (P6):

The Arabic language contains vast jargon, including various words with the same meanings. I think adult learners of this language might find it challenging to memorize those words and use them contextually appropriately to make the meaning interpretable as initially intended. It is also important to acknowledge that Arabic has many words with diverse meanings depending on their context.

As noted in P6 sentiments, non-Arabic religious tourists' learning of Arabic is inhibited by the different meanings attributed to exact words in Arabic. It is also difficult to memorize and use the Arabic language.

4.3. Perspectives of the Connection Between Arabic Language and The Islamic Religion and Culture

This theme stemmed from the participant's views on the link between the Arabic language and its use for religious purposes in Islam and as a cultural tool. The respondents' perspectives indicated that since the Quran is written in Arabic, it acts as a unifying factor. For instance, P7 argued that:

You know, the Quran was originally written in the classic Arabic language, and this serves as a key unifying factor that connects Islamic culture and religion. All the prohibited practices in the Islamic culture are originally those prohibited by Allah as written in the Holy Quran.

Based on the notion above, the Quran links Islamic culture to the Arabic language and religion. In other words, Muslims have to learn, understand, and use the Arabic language in their day-to-day lives because it is part of their culture and upbringing as they interact with the holy book of the Quran. Indeed, a similar perspective was presented by P13, who argued that:

This connection exists because preserving the Arabic language is a

precursor to preserving the Islamic culture. Indeed, a complete statement of any written text can only be expressed in Arabic, reinforcing that the Quran was not revealed to us in this language. If one constantly speaks Arabic, one's mind, religion, and morals are positively impacted.

According to the excerpt, there is an intricate connection between Arabs, as the language used in the Quran texts, and the Islamic religion and culture. For this reason, it is believed that speaking Arabic has cultural and religious implications through enhanced religiosity and the moral conduct of individuals. Concurrently, P11 mentioned that:

Islam and the Arabic language are profoundly impactful on the culture as well as the society of Muslims around the world. The two are typically responsible for cultural as well as religious conversions. Within the Muslim world, the Arabic language is regarded as the means of communication and Islamic identity marker.

Hence, the Arabic language is a means of the Islamic people worldwide as it is used to identify those professing the faith and communication between themselves. In this regard, the Arabic language is profoundly and intricately connected to the Islamic faith, religion, and culture. Overall, learning the Arabic language is vital to the Islamic faith as it enables believers to read the Quran, interpret it, and live as per the dictates of the Holy Book. This aspect leads to the inculturation and preservation of values, ethos, and practices pertinent to the Islamic religion.

5. Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the results established in this investigation to

understand the possibility of using the vast number of touristic flows to Saudi Arabia to promote the learning of the Arabic language by non-Arabic speaking visitors. The section evaluates the evidence revealed by the perspectives of the interviewees above by comparing and contrasting them with the evidence from the literature reviewed in section two and, hence, contextualizes the outcomes of this inquiry within the broader body of knowledge. In addition, this part discusses the implications of the findings concerning the possibility of using the vast numbers of religious tourists to Saudi Arabia to enhance the learning of the Arabic language by non-Arabic speaking visitors.

5.1. Key Arabic Language Aspects That Religious Tourism Can Potentially Promote to Non-Arabic Speaking Travelers in Saudi Arabia

The Arabic language is a key cultural aspect as it links to the Islamic religion. The finding is supported by various existing literature (Al Alili & Hassan, 2017; Griffin and Raj, 2017; Kim et al., 2020; Rashid, 2018). These studies indicate that the Arabic language is closely linked to Islamic culture, being used as a medium of communication, cultural preservation, and performance of religious events. Hence, non-Arabic religious tourists who visit pilgrimage in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia can learn Arabic because it enables them to understand Arabic culture and effectively participate in the events. The study also found that certain religious tourism destinations are classified according to the value propositions attached to them, and conducting such events in Arabic would promote the chances of non-Arabic speaking visitors wanting to learn the language. The finding is in line with existing research, which reveals that global visitors often go to Saudi Arabia due to the significance they have attached to pilgrimage

shrines in the context of religious tourism, and these visits offer opportunities for non-Arabic religious tourists to learn Arabic language (Qurashi, 2017; Alanzi et al., 2023; Hassan et al., 2023; Tabash et al., 2023). However, globalization and widespread adoption and acceptance of English as a primary language of communication limit non-Arabic religious tourists from learning Arabic even when there are opportunities to do so. Equally, not everyone going to Saudi Arabia does so out of religious purposes, and such travels to Saudi Arabia are influenced by different factors, including climate conditions, holiday moods, festive seasons, and other arranged work schedules (Hassan et al., 2023). These factors may not entirely motivate people to learn the Arabic language since they are not closely connected to the religions or history of Muslims.

5.2. The Likelihood of Using Language Practices of Religious Tourism to Facilitate the Transmission of The Arabic Language from Visitors to Saudi Arabians and Vice-Versa

Promoting the learning of the Arabic language by non-Arabic speaking visitors in Saudi Arabia is possible since large numbers of foreign travelers occasionally visit sacred religious sites in the country annually during the Hajj and Umrah. The finding is consistent with existing research (Alanzi et al., 2023; Griffin and Raj, 2017; Tabash et al., 2023; Qurashi, 2017). These studies showed that Saudi Arabia is a major religious tourist attraction due to Hajj and Umrah and the pilgrimage experiences of Mecca and Medina. Due to these events, the high number of non-Arabic speakers visiting Saudi Arabia increases opportunities for learning Arabic. Thus, religious tourism can be used to transmit the Arabic language.

5.3. Implications of the Results

The first implication of the results of this investigation is that any effort to promote the learning of the Arabic language must first acknowledge the advanced trends of globalization and determine factors that might interest visitors in learning the Arabic language beyond those of religious and cultural identity. The growing importance of understanding a language that is communicated by most people the world over presents a significant hurdle that can likely hamper religious tourists' learning of the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia. As a result, efforts must be made to choose one specific variation of the Arabic language to promote its learning and use by those visiting religious sites in Saudi Arabia during the annual events of Hajj and Umrah. The second implication of the results of this investigation is that the Arabic language is a rich source of Islamic culture that links people to the Muslim faith. Therefore, to enhance one's Islamic religiosity, learning Arabic is crucial to preserve the Islamic culture and values, rules, practices, and ethos emphasized in the Quran. The Arabic language is integral to all aspects of religious tourism by Muslims to various sites that are considered holy. Hassan et al. (2023) state religious tourism has three integral levels. The leading level is provisioning, primarily focusing on creating, promoting, and selling various products. It is closely followed by encounters, a level that weighs the ability of multiple believers in the host country to successfully have physical touch with a host of tourists who satisfy their spirit of adventure at religious events within the destination country.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has examined the potential of promoting the learning of the Arabic language through the vast numbers of tourists visiting Saudi Arabia for religious purposes,

especially the annual Hajj and Umrah events. The study focused on two research objectives, including establishing the key Arabic language aspects that religious tourism can potentially promote in Saudi Arabia and exploring the likelihood of using language practices of religious tourism to facilitate the transmission of the Arabic language from visitors to Saudi Arabians and vice-versa. The study applied a qualitative research method, employing semi-structured interviews with 14 religious tourists who occasionally visit Saudi Arabia.

The study addressed the research question by demonstrating that the vast numbers of people going to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umrah annually can potentially provide a platform for learning the Arabic language. Concerning the first research objective, the findings revealed that religious tourism can promote language learning since the Quran was initially written in Arabic. However, religious tourism can only foster learning the Arabic language when globalization and emphasis challenge the knowledge of globally dominant languages for international connectedness. Regarding the second research object, the results emphasized that for this goal to be attained, there is a need to consider the age and interest of non-Arabic visitors in learning the Arabic language. The results indicated that the acquisition of Arabic language skills, including the structure, diction, and correct use of words with shared meanings, can be challenging to non-Arabic speaking adults because of slowed learning processes in adulthood coupled with the occasional events of Hajj and Umrah that take a considerably shorter duration than is required to master a new language. The period within breaks of those events was mentioned as a possible barrier to learning because, by the time the non-Arabic speakers visit Saudi Arabia, they might have forgotten key aspects

of the Arabic language since they interact with language composites elsewhere.

6.1. Recommendations for Practice

Educators Teaching Arabic foreign language programs should address the complexity of the Arabic language to promote how non-Arabic-speaking visitors to Saudi Arabia understand and use vocabulary, pronounce words correctly, and follow grammar rules. One way to address such complexity in vocabulary and pronunciation is to provide non-Arabic religious tourists visiting Saudi Arabia an opportunity to learn modern standard Arabic. The modern standard Arabic language combines the needs of foreign learners who want to know the culture and religion of Saudi Arabia. Modern Standard Arabic is suitable for non-Arabic tourists because they can easily learn and remember it. Moreover, this standardized form is the most used for communication in other Arab countries, which can mitigate challenges associated with using local dialects. The Ministry of Tourism in Saudi Arabia should develop its domestic tourism infrastructure and opportunities to encourage religious tourism. Specifically, the Ministry can encourage religious tourism during major religious events by providing quality hotels and accommodations at subsidized rates. The increased number of non-Arab-speaking religious tourists can learn the Arabic language through the opportunities offered to them during and after the main religious events. Equally, agencies in Saudi Arabia dealing with cultures, such as the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, should ensure that incompatibilities between the cultures, values, ethos, and practices of Muslims within the Arab world and beyond are resolved since the Arabic language is viewed as a tool for cultural preservation. The strategy is essential in ensuring that any textual or verbal

misunderstandings are eliminated and shared meanings are reached.

6.2. Recommendations for Future Research

Further research should determine the quantifiable link between religious tourism and the possibility of learning language practices between the hosts and visitors. Such a study should be conducted based on quantitative data to establish a clear link between the possibility of using vast flows of visitors to enact language learning practices across diverse contexts, particularly sites of religious significance. Moreover, further research should explore whether Arabic texts and cultures within the broader Arab world are linked to different cultural practices, values, and meanings to pave the way for a possible harmonization. Such a study could help researchers understand some grammar rules, pronunciations, and jargon that could be problematic to how non-Arab speaking visitors interpret meaning from verbal and textual interactions.

6.3. Limitations of Study

The exploratory nature of this study hindered it from establishing objective results concerning the causal relationship between religious tourism and the transmission practices of language in the context of Saudi Arabia. Despite this limitation, efforts were made to mitigate it by incorporating diverse and in-depth perspectives. These provide detailed descriptions of how the significant tourist flows to Saudi Arabia could be utilized to promote learning the Arabic language." The other issue of this study was the study scope, which focused on Saudi Arabia, thus limiting the findings from being interpolated to other geographical settings with religious sites that attract touristic flows. This limitation could not be overcome in this study as it was beyond the scope of this investigation to focus on other geographical settings.

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