



## The Role of Hajj and Umrah Seasons in the Sustainability of Tourism Development in Saudi Arabia – Vision 2030

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr. Ehssan Ibrahim AllahGabu Ibrahim\*, <sup>2</sup>Ms. Anamika Raj, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Hiba Al-Zubair Abdel-Majid,  
<sup>4</sup>Dr. Mahasin Abdullah Ali Shomo, <sup>5</sup>Dr. Randa Mohammed Abdel-Halim, <sup>6</sup>Shahid Hussain

<sup>1</sup>Email: eibrahim@kku.edu.sa

Employee Number: 21974

<sup>2</sup>Email: araj@kku.edu.sa

Employee Number: 9133

<sup>3</sup>Email: hebah@kku.edu.sa

Employee Number: 13443

<sup>4</sup>Email: mshomo@kku.edu.sa

<sup>5</sup>Email: randa@kku.edu.sa

<sup>6</sup>Email: shosain@kku.edu.sa

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to highlight "the role of Hajj and Umrah seasons in the sustainability of tourism development in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030" and to demonstrate the economic developmental benefits for Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it sheds light on the Kingdom's leadership and pioneering role in providing social responsibility services to pilgrims visiting the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah.

The study, based on a survey-based approach, confirms the presence of a statistically significant relationship between the Hajj and Umrah seasons and the sustainability of tourism development and the prosperity of the Saudi economy. The findings emphasize the importance of fostering an attractive environment for pilgrims, which will have a positive impact on increasing the number of visitors. This aligns with Saudi Arabia's strategy of cybersecurity sustainability to build a vibrant society, an ambitious nation, and a thriving economy under Vision 2030.

Saudi Arabia enjoys various attractive tourist sites, and Hajj and Umrah seasons serve as key economic tourism indicators, reflecting sustainable development efforts through advanced organizational and engineering plans as well as progressive social responsibility initiatives.

### Keywords:

Hajj and Umrah Seasons - Tourism Development Sustainability - Vision 2030 - Tourism in Saudi Arabia

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### Introduction

Hajj and Umrah seasons represent the performance of a fundamental spiritual duty in Islam. However, beyond their religious significance, these seasons serve as major global gatherings for spiritual enrichment, intellectual exchange, business transactions, and cultural integration, as well as being a core component of

Saudi Arabia's tourism development strategy.

These seasons facilitate interactions among diverse nationalities, shopping for souvenirs, and exploring the rich tourism offerings across the Kingdom.

#### Economic Importance

According to Dr. Yahya Al-Hujairi and Munira Al-Saad (Jeddah), economic experts have highlighted studies and reports on the Hajj and Umrah economy, revealing that revenues from these religious seasons were expected to exceed 47 billion Saudi Riyals by 2020, following the completion of expansion projects in the holy sites. Additionally, economic indicators predict continuous growth in revenues from subsequent years.

During a specialized economic seminar on Hajj and Umrah economics, experts stated that the average cost incurred by a pilgrim in their home country before arriving in Saudi Arabia accounts for 63% of the total expense, whereas the remaining 36% is spent within Saudi Arabia. This underscores the global economic impact of Hajj and Umrah, extending beyond the Saudi economy to benefit the home countries of pilgrims as well.

### Chapter One: Research Methodology

#### Significance of the Study

The Hajj and Umrah seasons play a **significant role in Saudi Arabia's economic growth**, serving as a **strategic indicator for economic development**. The Kingdom has continuously worked on **advanced organizational, engineering, and social responsibility plans** to ensure **efficient management and sustainable economic growth**.

#### Research Problem

The study focuses on **"The Role of Hajj and Umrah Seasons in the Sustainability of Tourism Development in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030."**

Key research questions include:

1. How does tourism development grow with the sustainability of Hajj and Umrah seasons?
2. Is the strength of Hajj and Umrah embedded in a **social responsibility strategy for sustainable development**?
3. What are the key **economic indicators of Hajj and Umrah** in the **development of Saudi Arabia's economy**, both **currently and in the future**?
4. What are the **tourism challenges** that need solutions to ensure **sustainable tourism development**?

#### Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the **role of Hajj and Umrah seasons** in **developing tourism in Saudi Arabia**.
2. To highlight **the challenges facing the tourism experience during Hajj and Umrah**.
3. To examine the **relationship between Hajj and Umrah and sustainable tourism development**, along with the **impact of cybersecurity strategies**.
4. To analyze **the expansion strategies of the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah**.
5. To propose **recommendations and solutions to enhance Saudi Arabia's economic and tourism development strategy**.

#### Scope of the Study

- **Time Frame:** 2024–2025
- **Geographical Scope:** Hajj and Umrah Institutions

- **Study Population:** Officials and employees of Hajj and Umrah organizations

#### **Research Hypotheses**

1. **First Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant relationship between the Hajj and Umrah seasons and Saudi Arabia's economic prosperity.
2. **Second Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant relationship between enabling a sustainable tourism development strategy and the growth of Saudi Arabia's economy.
3. **Third Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant relationship between Saudi Arabia's commitment to providing hospitality services, cybersecurity strategies, and the expected annual increase in pilgrim numbers.

#### **Research Tools: Data Collection Sources**

- **Primary Sources:** Statistical data from 2023 survey results and questionnaires.
- **Secondary Sources:** Books, research papers, journals, conference studies, and relevant previous research.
- **Online Resources:** Internet-based databases and reports.

#### **Review of Previous Studies**

##### **Study 1: "Sustainable Development and Its Social, Economic, and Environmental Dimensions" – Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture**

- **Objective:** Sustainable development is an international socio-economic concept formulated by the United Nations to improve living conditions worldwide. It focuses on developing production methods while ensuring that natural resources are not depleted for future generations.
- **Findings:** Sustainable development requires a comprehensive strategy encompassing:
  - **Economic Growth**
  - **Sustainable Social Development**
  - **Environmental Conservation**

##### **Study 2: "Tourism in Saudi Arabia" – Wikipedia & Ministry of Tourism**

- **Objective:** The Saudi government has significantly expanded support for the tourism sector by launching major projects, improving infrastructure, and upgrading heritage sites.
- **Findings:**
  - The tourism sector contributed 2.7% to Saudi GDP in 2011.
  - The sector employed 62% Saudi nationals, with 76,000 direct tourism-related jobs.
  - Tourism jobs accounted for 1.9% of the total private sector workforce in Saudi Arabia.

#### **Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework**

##### **Introduction:**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has placed significant emphasis on Hajj and Umrah seasons, recognizing them as key religious rituals that attract pilgrims from around the world. As a result, these seasons have evolved into a vital economic resource. This focus has led to the preparation of suitable accommodations and facilities for pilgrims, along with the enhancement of hotel and tourism services to attract visitors.

##### **Theoretical Framework**

##### **Sustainable Tourism: Definition and Objectives**

**Definition of Sustainable Tourism:** Sustainable tourism aims to meet the needs of tourists and local communities without compromising the environment or cultural heritage.

**Practices of Sustainable Tourism:** These practices include waste reduction, cultural heritage preservation, and support for local activities to enhance economic benefits.

**Sustainable Development Goals:** Sustainable development aligns with tourism by strengthening local economies and creating environments that can be maintained for future generations.

Sustainable tourism is essential in balancing economic, social, and environmental needs. By adopting sustainable tourism practices, communities can be supported, cultural heritage can be preserved, and healthy lifestyles can be promoted. The global sustainable development goals further reinforce this approach, encouraging innovation in tourism management.

### **Objectives of the Expansion of the Two Holy Mosques**

- **Primary Goal:** To ensure the well-being of pilgrims in the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, providing comfortable and dignified accommodations that ensure relaxation and peace of mind.
- **Healthcare Services:** Providing essential medical care and healthcare centers for pilgrims.
- **Pilgrim Awareness and Education:** Ensuring that all pilgrims are well-informed about their religious journey, making Hajj a spiritually enriching and seamless experience.
- **Security and Safety:** The Kingdom has prioritized comprehensive security, including cybersecurity measures, to ensure the safety of all pilgrims.

During King Abdulaziz's reign, the security and comfort of pilgrims remained a top priority. Despite ongoing conflicts and sieges in the Hejaz region, he refused to allow disruptions to the pilgrimage, issuing a public statement on August 1, 1343 AH (February 25, 1925 AD) from Mecca to reassure Muslims worldwide about the stability and security of the pilgrimage season.

### **Accommodation and Comfort for Pilgrims**

The establishment of security has reassured pilgrims worldwide, ensuring unprecedented peace and stability. The Kingdom has welcomed pilgrims while guaranteeing their safety and comfort. Various accommodation options, ranging from multi-tiered hotels to temporary housing in Mina and sites for the stoning ritual, have been provided.

Ensuring comprehensive guidance for pilgrims and catering to all their needs enhances the spiritual quality of the pilgrimage, enabling them to perform rituals with ease. Saudi Arabia has consistently worked to address all challenges facing pilgrims, dedicating its financial and human resources to their safety. Government agencies, committees, and civil institutions responsible for pilgrimage services have developed plans and programs to educate pilgrims on various aspects of their journey.

### **Development of Tourist Sites and Hajj Services**

The Kingdom has focused on restoring and improving religious tourist attractions using architectural designs that enhance the visitor experience. The engineering and facilities management departments have worked to align services with modern engineering and administrative standards. Given the importance of Hajj and Umrah, Saudi Arabia continuously invests in engineering advancements and expansion projects for the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque to enhance health and safety standards for pilgrims.

One of the significant advancements includes structured movement planning for the Jamarat Bridge, ensuring smooth and safe access to this critical Hajj ritual. Standing at Mount Arafat is considered not only a religious obligation but also a form of spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and emotional tourism.

### **Attracting Global Investors to Saudi Arabia**

Hajj serves as an international conference, bringing together Muslim delegations from around the world.

After completing their pilgrimage, many are drawn to Saudi Arabia's promising investment environment. The Kingdom has developed a robust institutional investment strategy that safeguards investors' rights across various critical sectors, aligning with Vision 2030.

### **Cybersecurity Strategy During Hajj and Umrah Seasons**

#### **The Importance of Cybersecurity in Hajj and Umrah**

Cybersecurity plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and security of pilgrims and Umrah performers in Saudi Arabia. With millions of visitors relying on digital platforms for registration, guidance, and communication, protecting these operations from cyber threats is paramount.

Key aspects of cybersecurity during Hajj and Umrah include:

1. **Protecting Personal Information:** Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms for Hajj registration, permit issuance, and transportation bookings, safeguarding pilgrims' personal data is essential. Saudi cybersecurity authorities, such as the National Cybersecurity Authority (NCA), have implemented sophisticated systems to prevent data breaches.
2. **Preventing Cyber Attacks:** Hajj and Umrah seasons are potential targets for cyber threats due to their significance. Saudi Arabia has countered numerous cyber-attacks in previous years. The NCA has introduced advanced training programs and cybersecurity measures to protect digital infrastructure, ensuring the safety of financial and logistical systems.
3. **Cybersecurity Awareness for Pilgrims:** The Kingdom has organized awareness campaigns, workshops, and exhibitions to educate pilgrims about digital threats and best practices for safe online interactions.
4. **Ensuring Digital Service Continuity:** Protecting essential digital services such as electronic navigation and transportation systems from cyber threats is a key challenge. Authorities employ advanced monitoring systems to ensure uninterrupted services.
5. **International Collaboration:** Saudi Arabia collaborates with various global entities to enhance cybersecurity during Hajj, coordinating efforts across government agencies and the private sector to provide the highest level of digital security.

These efforts reflect Saudi Arabia's commitment to ensuring both physical and digital security for pilgrims during Hajj and Umrah seasons.

#### **Religious Tourism in Saudi Arabia: A Unique Spiritual Experience**

Saudi Arabia has been actively diversifying its economy and reducing its dependence on oil, with religious tourism playing a central role in these efforts. As part of Vision 2030, the Kingdom aims to increase the number of Hajj and Umrah visitors to 30 million annually, three times the current figures.

The government has made significant investments in infrastructure projects, including the \$35 billion expansion of King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah and the \$16 billion Mecca Metro project. These initiatives enhance the pilgrimage experience while supporting economic growth.

Saudi Arabia has also streamlined visa procedures, increased accommodation capacity, and improved business environments to attract more visitors. These measures position the Kingdom as a leading destination for religious tourism and economic diversification.

#### **Challenges Facing Hajj and Umrah Seasons**

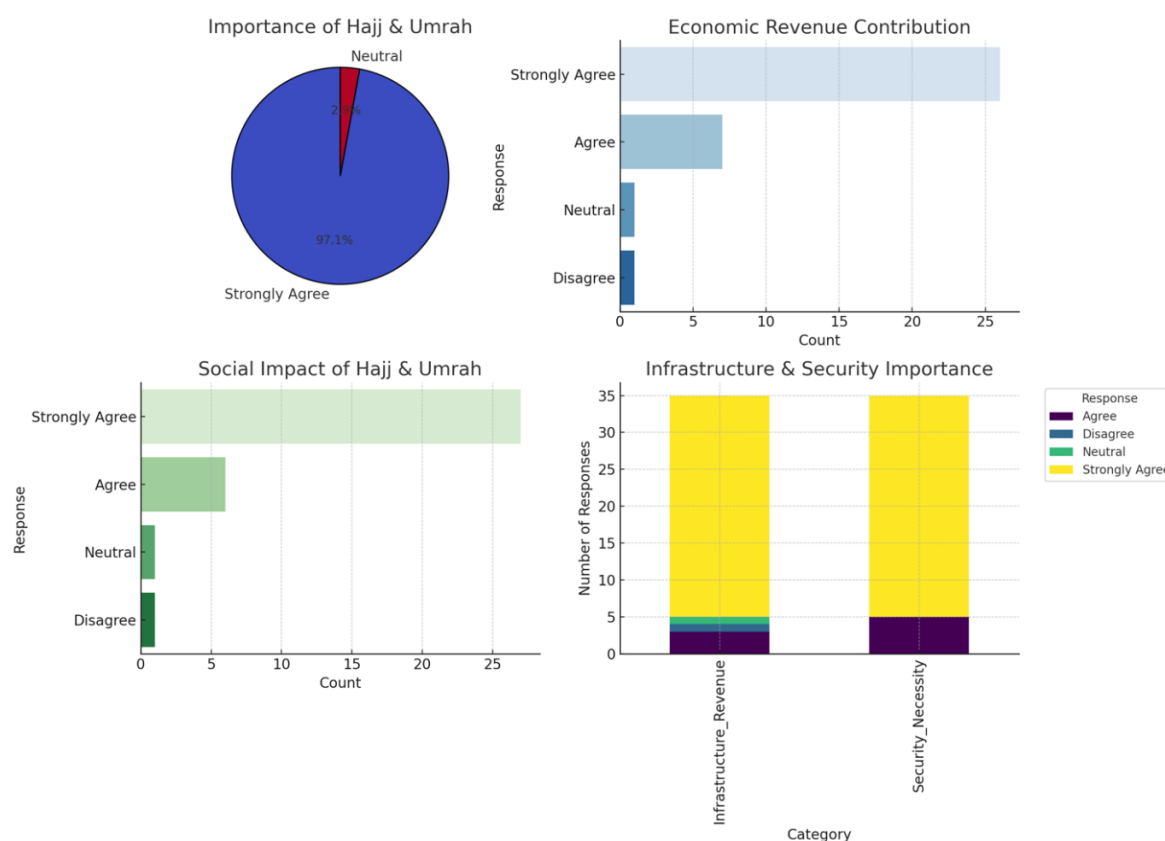
1. **Noise Pollution:** The massive influx of pilgrims leads to noise pollution, causing discomfort and stress.
2. **Environmental Pollution:** Overcrowding in the Grand Mosque and Prophet's Mosque, along with ongoing construction, contributes to environmental concerns that impact the health of residents and visitors.

#### **Methodology**

- **Research Approach:** The study employs descriptive-analytical, inductive, and historical methodologies.

- **Statistical Tools:** SPSS software was used to assess the internal consistency of the survey.
- **Survey Design:** A structured questionnaire was distributed to officials and employees in the Hajj and Umrah sector.
- **Validation and Reliability:** The questionnaire's validity was confirmed through expert review, and its reliability was tested to ensure consistency.

Hajj and Umrah are not only **spiritual journeys** but also **major economic and social phenomena**. The findings from this survey highlight the importance of **strategic planning and investment** to ensure that these pilgrimages continue to positively impact religious, economic, and social spheres. By focusing on **sustainable infrastructure, economic diversification, and security enhancements**, Saudi Arabia can further strengthen its position as the leading destination for Muslim pilgrims worldwide.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

Hajj and Umrah play vital roles not only in religious and cultural aspects but also in economic and social spheres. Strategic planning and investment in sustainable infrastructure, economic diversification, and security measures can further strengthen Saudi Arabia's position as the leading destination for Muslim pilgrims worldwide.

Enhancing religious tourism requires ongoing efforts to balance cultural heritage preservation, economic growth, and security advancements, ensuring a fulfilling and safe experience for all pilgrims

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