A DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO IMPROVE RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract

The most important cities in the religion of Islam are located in Saudi Arabia. Muslims from around the world come to perform Umrah and Hajj in Mecca each year. Therefore, I would like to come up with a development plan that aims to generate different sources of income, to decrease the unemployment rate, and to provide leisure time for the citizens and the visitors of the kingdom. In addition, in this project, I would like to address project’s issues by using GIS tools. I will locate all historical and archaeological places in one GIS map. Then I will evaluate and compare the quality of these places from different points of view, such as historical and economic value.
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Chapter one: Introduction

1-1 Introduction

Tourism is the fastest growing sector of the world economy. According to a recent report by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2011, international tourism generated more than one billion dollars in export earnings, and tourist arrivals revenue grew by nearly 4% in 2011 to $983 million in general (look to figure 1-1). Moreover, international tourism constitutes 30 percent of the world’s exports of services. Economists estimate that there will be 1.8 billion international tourists by 2030 (UNWTO, 2011). Tourism is also one of the most effective ways to diversify the economy of a country. For instance, the hosting of the World Cup and other sporting events has become a massive opportunity for countries to improve their economy and to decrease the unemployment rate. Two million and thirty five thousand jobs worldwide were generated by tourism (UNWTO, 2011).
The figure shows the number of the international tourists and the international revenue from the tourism sector. According to the figure above, the number of international tourists has been increasing since 1990. In 2011, the revenue of international tourism was more than one billion dollars, and the number of tourists was around nine hundred million tourists. (UNWTO, 2011)

1-2 Tourism in the Middle East

There are 74 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Middle East. Most of them are related to several religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Arab spring and the political problems in the Middle East have affected the tourism sector in the region (Stausberg, 2011). According to the US - Office of Travel and Tourism Industries in 2011, the number of the
international tourists have been declined by more fifty percent lower than the previous year in the Middle East (look to figure 1-2).

![Number of Visitors in the Middle East](image)

Figure 1-2: Number of Visitors in the Middle East, (Stausberg, 2011)

The figure illustrates the number of visitors in the Middle East. In 2012, the number of visitors decreased fifty percent because of the political conditions in the region (Stausberg, 2011).

### 1-3 Religious tourism in Saudi Arabia

The most important cities in the religion of Islam are located in Saudi Arabia. Muslims from around the world come to perform Umrah and Hajj in Mecca each year. From an economic point of view, in Mecca alone, the estimated revenue from the Hajj pilgrimage is more than one hundred million dollars every year. Today, more than 15 million Muslims visit Saudi Arabia...
annually (look to figure 1-3) (Ministry of Hajj Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2010).

![Number of Pilgrims](image)

**Figure 1-3: Number of Pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012)**

The figure above shows the number of pilgrims between 1995 and 2012. According to the figure, the number of pilgrims in general has been increasing since 1995 (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012). However, the number of visitors was limited and restricted by the Ministry of Hajj in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Hajj regulates rules to limit the number of visitors because there is not enough infrastructure to accommodate millions of visitors in a particular place and time. For example, one of the Ministry of Hajj rules is that Muslim persons are eligible for a religious visa once every five years.
According to the Guinness Book of World Records in 2003, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. One hundred and twenty million people converted to Islam between 1990-2000 (Guinness, 2003). Another report by the PEW Research center indicates that "by 2030 Muslims will represent about 26.4% of the global population (out of a total of 7.9 billion people)" (PEW Research Center, 2011) (look to figure 1-4). Therefore, the Ministry of Hajj needs to increase investments to develop the religious infrastructure, such as the hotel industry, transportation, and other related services, as the population of Muslim grows.

Figure 1-4: Muslims population as a share of the world from 1990 to 2030, (PEW Research Center, 2011)
According to the figure above, about a quarter of the world's population believes in Islam (PEW Research Center, 2011).

Figure 1-5: The percentage of the visitors in Saudi Arabia during 2012 (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012)

The figure shows the percentage of the outside visitors in Saudi Arabia in 2012. According to this chart, the rush hours are in November and December (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012).
1-4 Problem Statements

A recent study was written by the Ministry of Finance in Saudi Arabia that indicates that approximately eighty percent of the country's income depends on the petroleum trade (look to figure 1-6).

Figure 1-6: Percent distribution of gross domestic product by economic activities in Saudi Arabia (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012).

According to the figure above, around eighty percent of the income in Saudi Arabia has come from the petroleum industry and natural gas (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012). However, this is not a sustainable economic plan especially since the unemployment rate has
been increasing in Saudi Arabia recently (look to figure 1-7) (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012).

![Unemployment Rate for Citizens](image)

**Figure 1-7:** The statistical data and indicators on Saudi human resources (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012).

The figure above shows that the rate of unemployment has increased since 2008 especially in the female community (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012).

In addition, it is not a sustainable economic plan because many international industrial organizations are working together to provide new ideas that could limit and decrease fuel consumption, such as solar energy, wind power, and hydropower. Therefore, I would like to come up with a
development plan that aims to generate different sources of income, to
decrease the unemployment rate, and to provide leisure time for the citizens
and the visitors of the kingdom. Indeed, Saudi Arabia has many historical and
archaeological areas that have been mentioned in different religious books,
such as the Torah, the Bible and the Koran. However, these areas have not
been well developed, and most of them are abandoned.

1-5 Methodology

In this paper I will use the case study approach. I will study the
religious tourism in Turkey because there are strong relationships between
religious tourism in Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Tourism in Turkey is a good
case study for religious tourism in Saudi Arabia for many reasons. First, there
are a variety of tourism attractions in Turkey that are similar to tourism
attractions in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, cultures, characteristics, heritages and
religion in both countries are similar to each other.

According to OECD Fact book 2010, religious tourism in Turkey has
positive impacts on the economy and the community. Therefore, this case
study will seek to figure out how the Turkey's government addressed the negative impacts when they invest in the tourism sectors.

1-6 Overview of Chapters

The first chapter introduces the purpose and the concept of religious tourism in general, and then presents the economic and the social benefits of the religious tourism, and the thesis's main issues. In the end, the chapter explains the current situation of religious tourism in Saudi Arabia. In chapter two, I will focus more on the concept of religious tourism. I will mention common theories that explain different factors that motivate people to travel. This chapter also presents tourism classifications and the history of tourism in different periods that explains the most common purposes of traveling for each period. Chapter three is a case study chapter. I will study the benefits of the religious tourism in Turkey. Then I will mention the most important religious monuments that motivate tourists to visit Turkey. Chapter four presents the current situation of the religious tourism in Saudi Arabia. In this chapter, I will evaluate the most important religious monuments in Saudi Arabia from different levels, such as accessibility, transportation, and number of
visitors. In the last chapter, I will talk about the policy of tourism in Saudi Arabia. I will discuss the role of tourism agencies and other related parties.

Then I will recommend some policies and suggestions to improve the religious tourism sector in Saudi Arabia.
Chapter Two, Literature review

Introduction

In order to manage and to understand the concept of religious tourism, we need to understand the religious tourists’ motivation first. It is important to be aware that there are numerous studies that describe tourists’ motivation. Tourists’ motivation is a controversial topic, and it is not an easy topic to describe. Raj and Morpeth (2007) define religious motivation as “something that commits people to a course of action” (Razaq & Morpeth, 2007).

2-2 Tourism theories

There are two distinguished motivation theories, which are Content and Process theory. Content theories focus on factors that motivate people to act in a certain way in order to satisfy themselves. Maslow (1954) conducted many studies to explain the idea of content theories. In his theory (the hierarchy of needs theory), he classified motivation into different parts, which are the classification of human needs and the relationships between the classes of needs. However, the process theories focus more on how motivation
happen. In other words, the process theories focus on the actual process of motivation (Stausberg, 2011).

2-3 Tourism definition

The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who "travel to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (UNWTO, 2011). From this quotation, we can infer that pilgrims and religious tourists are included into this definition.

2-4 History of Tourism

1) Roman Empire Period

During the Roman Empire period (between 27 BC and AD 476), architects designed infrastructure for people to travel for military, trade and political purposes. In addition, in ancient times, wealthy Romans traveled to seaside resorts in Greece and Egypt for recreational purposes (Introduction to Tourism, 2009).
2) Middle Age Period

Between 500 and AD 1400, travel for religious reasons increased. For example, many people traveled as pilgrims to visit their holy land, such as Mecca, Jerusalem and Rome (Introduction to Tourism, 2009).

3) 16th Century and 17th Century

In this period, people usually traveled to extend their own experience and knowledge (Introduction to Tourism, 2009). For instance, many people traveled throughout European countries, such as Italy, Germany and France for periods of time to improve their knowledge (Introduction to Tourism, 2009).

4) Industrial Revolution Period

The Industrial Revolution was between 1750 and 1850. During this period, many people converted from a traditional and agriculture lifestyle to an urban life. Many people, especially who are in the middle class, had been educated. There was a huge demand for tourism activities. For instance, people traveled for health and other medical purposes, or to visit the spa towns, such as
Bathin England, Baden in Germany, and seaside resorts in England, such as Scarborough, Margate and Brighton (Introduction to Tourism, 2009).

5) 19th to 20th Centuries

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the social and technological changes have had an immense impact on tourism. Great advances in science and technology made possible the invention of rapid, safe and relatively cheap forms of transport: the railways were invented in the 19th century and the passenger aircraft in the 20th century (Introduction to Tourism, 2009).

2-5 Classification of tourism

Tourism classifications have been described by Jagbir Singh (2010) in different categories:

1) Domestic tourism:

Domestic tourism includes people who travel outside of their usual environment to other places inside their country. In addition, a domestic tourist could be any person traveling to another area for a period of time that is 24 hours or more (Singh, 2010).
2) **International tourism:**

International tourism includes any persons who travel to other foreign countries. In addition, international tourists could be any persons traveling to other countries for a period of time that is 24 hours or more, but no more than one year (Singh, 2010).

2-6 **Types of tourism**

There are different types and purposes of tourism.

1) **Recreational tourism**

Recreational or leisure tourism takes people away from their usual activities. For instance, in this kind of tourism people spend their leisure time to have some rest and relaxation at hills, beaches, etc. Jacksonville, FL is a good example of recreational tourism. It has more than 75,235 acres of parkland (Singh, 2010).

2) **Cultural tourism**

According to Jagbir Singh, cultural tourism concerns human lifestyles, built environment, history, religions, and other elements that describing peoples' culture (Singh, 2010).
3) Sport and/ Adventure Tourism

Sport tourism includes people who travel to participate in sport activities for entertainment, competitions or to visit sport events, and organizations, such as FIFA World Cups (Gibson, Attle, and Yiannakis, 1997) (Hudson, 2003).

4) Health tourism

Health tourism involves people who travel to different places that are away from where they live for medical purposes and treatment (Singh, 2010).

5) Educational tourism

Under this category, learning of knowledge and gaining experience is the main purpose of travel. For example, in Student Exchange Programs, students travel to learn a new culture (Brent, 2003).

6) Shopping tourism

Shopping tourism involves any person who travels for shopping. According to Tomori (2010) the improvement of mobility level has motivated people to travel outside of their usual environment for shopping (Mihaly, 2010).
7) Religious tourism

Lefebvre (1996), defines religious tourism as "consisting of a range of spiritual sites and associated services, which are visited for both secular and religious reasons." The world's largest pilgrimage is located in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. Other examples of religious tourism are Jerusalem in Israel, Varanasi in India, and the Vatican in Rome. Moreover, religious tourism cloud also includes non-religious sites, such as holy land experience in Florida, United States (Razaq & Morpeth, 2007).

Pilgrimage

According to Wiedwekeh, pilgrimage is not a vacation. It is a journey to religious and sacred sites that have spiritual motivation (Wiedwekeh, 2001). For example, there are five pillars of Islam. One of them is making pilgrimage to Makkah. According to the Quran (the holy book of people who believe in Islam), any Muslim person must make a pilgrimage in Mecca if she/ he is able to do so (look to figure 2-1).
In addition, people who believe in Hinduism also undertake pilgrimage to the Ganges (a holy river in India) (look to picture 2-2).

*Picture 2-1: The holy Mosque of Islam in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, (Wiedwekeh, 2001)*

*Picture 2-2: Buddha statues in India, (Wiedwekeh, 2001)*
Buddhists also make a pilgrimage to Buddha (a spiritual teacher's Statue in India) (look to picture 2-3). Christians make pilgrimage to many religious places that are connected to Jesus Christ, such as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and Rome.

Picture 2-3: The holy river in India (Wiedwekeh, 2001)

Umrah

Umrah is another form of pilgrimage in the religious of Islam. It is also called minor pilgrimage. Muslims who want to perform Umrah need to travel to the holy city of Islam, Mecca, to visit the holy mosque. It is different than Hajj because there is no specific time to preform Umrah.
**2-7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, according to the literature review, religious tourism was common in Middle Age Period. Many people travelled to visit the holy lands. According to UNWTO's tourism definition, religious tourism fits with the definition because people who travel to visit sacred sites or to make a pilgrimage usually will travel outside from their usual environment for less than one year.
Chapter three, Case Study of Religious Tourism in Turkey

3-1 Introduction

Tourism in Turkey is a good case study for religious tourism in Saudi Arabia for many reasons. First, there are a variety of tourism attractions in Turkey that are similar to tourism attractions in Saudi Arabia because the Ottoman Empire or Turkish Empire has ruled the Arab’s nations and many other counties for more than six centuries (from 27 July 1299 to 1 November 1922) (look to figure 8) (Derman, 2006). In addition, many of these attractions in both countries are related to Islamic history. Therefore, tourism attractions, cultures, characteristics, heritages and religion in both countries are similar to each other (Derman, 2006).
Figure 8: Ottoman Empire (Derman, 2006).

The yellow color in the map indicates the extent of the Ottoman Empire over Asia, Europe and Africa (Razaq & Morpeth, 2007).

3-2 Tourism in Turkey

Turkey is an ideal destination for History and Cultural heritage where Europe and Asia meets. From an economic point of view, according to OECD Fact book 2010, "during the next decade Turkey will grow faster than any other country besides India or China".
Figure 9: The average percentage of the world’s annual growth (OECD, 2010).

According to the chart above, we can infer that Turkey’s GDP is growing faster than United Kingdom, United States, France, Italy, and other developed countries (OECD, 2010).

Tourism in Turkey plays an important role in maintaining and improving the basic economic system. For example, Turkey has become an important destination for millions of foreign tourists. In 2011, Turkey attracted more than 31.5 million tourists (Derman, 2006).
Figure 10: Foreign Visitors Arriving in Turkey, (Derman, 2006).

According to the chart above, the number of the visitors has been increasing from seventeen million visitors in 2004 to more than thirty one million visitors in 2011.

There are a variety of tourism characteristics in Turkey, such as entertainment, cultural, sport, health, educational, religious, heritage, and social tourism. However, in this chapter we will focus on religious tourism, which is related to our topic. Religious landmarks in Turkey are scattered all over the country (Derman, 2006).
3-3 Religious Monuments in Turkey:

1- Akdamar Church

Akdamar Church is one of the oldest churches in the world. It is located on a small island in the southeastern part of Van Lake in Turkey. King Gakik ordered architect priest Manuel to build Akdamar Church between 915 and 921 B.C. The church was built from red Tufa stone (calcareous and siliceous rock). There are stone reliefs, such as life at the palace, hunting scenes and human and animal figures in the exterior of the structures that depict religious themes from the Bible. The walls from inside the church are decorated with frescoes showing religious themes (look to figure 11-12) (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).
Figure 11: Akdamar Church (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).

The picture shows the design and the red Tufa stone in the exterior side of the structure.
Figure 12: Akdamar Church design (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).

The picture shows the design and stone reliefs in the interior side of the structure.

2- Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia):

Figure 13: Ayasofya (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).

Ayasofya or Hagia Sophia museum was included in the list of UNESCO List of World Heritage sites. It is located in Istanbul in the northern part of Turkey. Hagia Sophia was built by emperor Theodosius (the last emperor of a united Roman Empire) and burned down in 532 A.D. Then emperor Justinian (Byzantine emperor) ordered to renew the church in 537 AD. The new church
was covered by a magnificent dome (180 ft high and 101 ft diameter). In 1453, during the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Mehmed converted the church into a mosque. Finally, Ayasofya now is a museum that depicts both Christian and Muslim culture (look to Picture 13-14) (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).

Figure 14: Ayasofya design (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011)

The picture shows the interior design of the building. Also, there is a picture of Mary (Mother of Jesus) close to Prophet Muhammad's name (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011)
3- Sumela Monastery

![Image of Sumela Monastery](image)

Figure 15: Sumela monastery (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011)

This place is known as “Meryem Ana” or “the Virgin Mary.” It is located in the eastern part of Turkey. It is a major historical, cultural, and religious attraction. Therefore, it is a famous destination for monks and tourists. It was rebuilt by General Belisarius (a general of the Byzantine Empire) in the 6th century. The major elements of Sumela monastery’s construction are "the Rock Church, several chapels, kitchens, student rooms, a guesthouse, a library, and a sacred spring revered by Orthodox Greeks" (look to Picture 15-16) (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).
Figure 16: The picture shows the interior design of the Sumela monastery (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).

4- Sultanahmet Mosque

Figure 17: Sultanahmet Mosque (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).
Sultan Ahmet Mosque or the Blue Mosque is located in Istanbul. It is a famous destination for architects and tourists. This mosque was established by Sultan Ahmet I in 1609. The mosque contains a central dome with dimensions of 140 ft height and more than 100 ft diameter. Also, there are 260 windows surround the building (look to picture 17-18).

Figure 18: Sultanahmet Mosque Design (Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, 2011).

The picture shows the interior design of the mosque.
Chapter 4: Religious tourism in Saudi Arabia

4-1 Heritages and sacred sites in Saudi Arabia

As a stated point, I will classify the religious attractions in Saudi Arabia according to Razzaq’s and Morpeth’s classifications. Razzaq and Morpeth (2007) classified heritages and sacred sites into four different types, which are

(1) religious and natural sites, such as sacred lakes, or islands, (2) buildings and sites that were built for religious reasons, such as churches, or mosques, (3) buildings with religious themes, such as religious museums, and (4) religious events that are held at non-religious sites such as a conference in a hotel (Razaq & Morpeth, 2007).
(1) Religious and natural sites

1- Zamzam

 Muslims around the world believe that Zamzam is a miracle water well. It’s located in Mecca (the holiest city of Islam). Environmental scientists could not find the major sources of this well until now. The well has been used for thousands of years before the beginning of the Islam religion. The story of the well starts when Prophet Abraham left his infant Ishmael and his second wife Hager in a dry valley in Mecca. Hager was looking for water between two hills called Safa and Marwah because Ishmael was crying and thirsty. Then
Ishmael scraped the land with his feet, and the water sprung out until now (Hjalmar, 2007).

Figure 20: Al Safa Hill (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

The figure above shows the Safa hill. After the expansion of Masjid al-Haram, Safa hill become part of Masjid al-Haram (Hjalmar, 2007).
2- Al-Nur mountain:

![Al Nur Cave](image)

Figure 21: Al Nur Cave (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

Al-Nur Mountain contains a cave called Hira. It is located close to Mecca in the western region of Saudi Arabia. This cave is very important in the Islamic world because it is the place where Prophet Mohammed received his first revelation from God by the angel Gabriel. Therefore, this cave is an important place to know the Prophet Mohammed's biography (Shaker, 1995).
3- Ghar al-Thawr

Figure 22: Ghar al-Thawr Cave (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

Ghar al-Thawr is a cave in a big mountain called Jabal Thawr. This mountain is located at the edge of Mecca. It one of the most important heritage places in Islamic history because God protected Prophet Muhammad and his friend in this cave. According to Islamic history, when Prophet Muhammad and his close friend Abu Baker emigrated from Mecca to Medina, they hid from their enemy in this cave. When the enemy reached the cave, they thought that nobody was inside the cave because they found a spider web across the cave and birds nesting near it (Shaker, 1995).
Figure 23: Ghar al-Thawr Cave from inside (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

This figure shows Ghar al-Thawr cave from inside. The cave is not developed. There are no sidewalks or paved roads to reach Ghar al-Thawr cave (Ministry of Hajj Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2010).
4- Mount Uhud

Figure 24: Uhud Mountain (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

Uhud is the highest mountain in Medina City. It has a big history in Islam. One of the biggest Islamic battles happened close to this mountain. Many of Prophet Muhammad's friends died in this battle. One of the things that distinguished this place is the grave of Hamza (Prophet Muhammad's uncle) (Shaker, 1995).
Figure 25: Hamza Grave (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

The figure above shows the grave of Hamza (Prophet Muhammad's uncle) who died in the battle of Uhud. There are many commercial booths in the surrounding area of the grave to serve the visitors (Shaker, 1995).
(2) Buildings and sites that were built for religious reasons

1- Masjid al-Haram

Figure 26: Masjid al-Haram (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

It is the largest scared construction in the world. It has an area of eighty-eight acres. It is also called the Grand Mosque. It is located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Muslims around the world pray five times daily toward this holy mosque. Kaaba is the main part of this mosque. It was built originally by Prophet Abraham as a worship place. In addition, according to the holy book of Islam (Quran), it is the first construction that was built for worship purposes (Shaker, 1995).
Figure 27: Kaaba Building (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

The figure above shows the main part of Masjid al-Haram, which is Kaaba. According to the Islamic religion rules, visitors who want to perform Umra need to move around Kaaba seven times (Shaker, 1995).
2- Al-Masjid an-Nabawi

Figure 28: Al-Masjid an-Nabawi (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

It is the second most important mosque in the Muslim's world. It's located in the city of Medina in the north part of Saudi Arabia. It is also called the prophet Mohammed mosque. Al-Masjid an-Nabawi was originally built by the prophet Mohammed thousands of years ago. The building includes other parts, such as a community center, a court, and a religious school. It also contains Prophet Mohammed's grave, and others graves of his friends, such as Abo Baker, and Omar (look to picture 29) (Shaker, 1995).
The figure above shows the Prophet Mohammad’s and his friends Abo Baker’s and Omar’s graves. Originally, these graves were located in Prophet Mohammad’s house. However, after the expansion of Al-Masjid an-Nabawi, these graves became a part of the mosque (Shaker, 1995).
3- Quba Mosque:

![Quba Mosque](image)

Figure 30: Quba Mosque (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

Quba is the first mosque in Islam, and the third most important religious site after Masjid al-Haram, and Al-Masjid an-Nabawi. It was built by Prophet Mohammad when he emigrated from Mecca to Medina. Prophet Mohammad advised Muslims to pray at this mosque. He said that "Whoever makes ablutions at home and then goes and prays in the Mosque of Quba, he will have a reward like that of an 'Umrah" (Shaker, 1995). In addition, this mosque has been mentioned in the Quran (the holy books of Islam) as the piety mosque. Finally, the mosque is distinguished by its six large domes (look
to picture 30). It also contains other facilities to serve the visitors, such as shops, Islamic libraries, hotel areas, and offices (Shaker, 1995).

![Quba Mosque from inside](image)

Figure 31: Quba Mosque from inside (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

The figure above shows the entrail design of Quba Mosque, which is the first mosque in Islam. The figure does not show the original design of the mosque that was built by Prophet Mohammad.
4- Abdallah ibn Abbas Mosque

Figure 32: Abdallah ibn Abbas Mosque (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

This mosque is located in the city of Taif. The city of Taif is located on the top of Altaif Mountain. The mosque of Abdallah ibn Abbas contains his grave. Abdallah ibn Abbas is Prophet Muhammad's cousin. He was one of the most knowledgeable person after Prophet Muhammad on the Islam religion and exegesis of the Quran. Many people visit this mosque to visit his grave. Also, the nice weather of the city has motivated many people to visit the city of Taif (Shaker, 1995).
(3) Buildings with religious themes

1- Mada'in Saleh

Figure 33: Mada'in Saleh (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

Mada'in Saleh is an archaeological human settlement. It is also called Hegra in Greek. It is located close to a small city called Al-Ula in the northern region of Saudi Arabia. It was built during the Nabatean Kingdom in the first century.
The figure above shows the external design of Mada’in Saleh that was built in the first century (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000).

According to the Quran, Thamud was the first tribe who lived in Mada’in Saleh during the time of Prophet Noah. The God punished them because of their sins and idol worship. In 2008, UNESCO accounts Mada’in Saleh as one of the most important world heritage sites. It reflects the Nabatean lifestyle (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000).
2- Jeddah

Figure 35: Nasef's Museum in Jeddah (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

Jeddah is the second biggest city in Saudi Arabia. It is located on the Red Sea and close to the holy city of Islam (Mecca). It is also called the gateway city because it has the only international airport, and the biggest Islamic seaport in Mecca's region. Therefore, Muslims who want to visit the holy city need to go through Jeddah first. There are many distinguished heritages and museums that were built with Islamic themes in Jeddah, such as old Jeddah wall and its ancient gate (look to picture 36) (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000).
Figure 36: Bab Makah Gate (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

The figure above shows Bab Makkah gate. It is one of the ancient Islamic monuments in Jeddah that depict Islamic history. It is located in the southern part of the old city (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000).
3- Aldesa Monument

Figure 37: Aldesa Monuments (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

Aldesa was founded in 500AD and its ancient monuments show that many civilizations settled there. One of these civilizations was mentioned in the Quran, such as the Thmoud tribe. Aldesa village is located in the northwest of Saudi Arabia in a region called Tabuk.
The people of Thmoud had a unique way of building their houses. They built their houses inside the mountains that surround Aldesa. Moreover, people there used to engrave stones. These stone inscriptions have different meanings. For example, one of the inscriptions recorded some wars that happened during that period (look to figure 38) (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000).
4- Miqat Sites

Figure 39: Religious Miqat (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

Miqat are different Islamic places around Mecca. According to the Quran, all able Muslim pilgrims who want to come to Mecca for pilgrimage are required to stop at one of these places first to prepare themselves. For example, pilgrims in Islam are required to wear special unified white clothes (look to figure 39).
There are five Miqat places around Mecca which are Zu 'l-Hulafa for pilgrims who come from the northern side of Mecca, Juhfa, for pilgrims who come from the northwestern side of Mecca, Qarn Manāzil for pilgrims who come from the eastern side of Mecca, Yalamlam, for pilgrims who come from the southern side of Mecca, and Zāt-i-'Irq for pilgrims who come from the northeastern side of Mecca (look to figure 40) (Shaker, 1995)
(4) Religious events that hold at non-religious sites

1- Muslim World League

The Muslim World League is the largest Islamic organization in the world. It was established in Mecca in 1962. Supporting the religion of Islam and explaining its principles are the main purposes of this organization (Muslim World League, 1962).

Figure 41: Muslim World League in Jeddah (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)
2- Islamic Development Bank

Figure 42: The Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

The Islamic Development Bank was established by King Faisal Bin Abdulaziz in 1975. It is located in Jeddah. The main purpose of this bank is to improve the economic development in the Muslims communities around the world (Islamic Development Bank, 1975).

4-2 Religious Tourism assessment in Saudi Arabia:

In this part, I would like to evaluate the religious tourism monuments in Saudi Arabia from different points of view. First, I will evaluate the quality of the services in the surrounding area of these monuments. Then I will compare
the religious value of these sites that motivate people to visit them. Finally, I will evaluate the transportation system and the accessibility of these sites.

1- Religious locations

The map below shows the location of the tourism sites in Saudi Arabia.

![Figure 43: The location of religious monuments and other tourism sites (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)](image)

From the map above, there are eighteen religious site that are the most valuable, and most of them are located in the western part of the country.
2- Religious value

The maps below show the importance of the sites in Saudi Arabia from a religious point of view.

Figure 44: Religious monuments value

The importance of the religious value of each site was evaluated by the history and number of visitors of each site. According to this map, Masjed Al Hram in Mecca and Masjed Al Nabui in Al- Madina are the most valuable religious sites in Saudi Arabia (Shaker, 1995).
3- Services evaluation

The map below shows the current situation of the services in the surrounding area of the religious sites in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 45: Service evaluation

The services in the surrounding area of the religious sites were rated based on the quality of the tourism services, such as hotels, travel agents, restaurants, etc. From the map above, we can infer that the religious monuments that are located in urban areas have better services than the other religious monuments.
4- Transportation

The map below shows the current situation of the transportation systems in the surrounding area of the religious sites in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 46: Transportation system evaluation

The transportation systems in the surrounding area of the religious sites were evaluated based on site accessibility in these monuments, alternative transportation systems, and other transit services, such as parking, bus stations, etc.
5- Number of Visitors

The map below shows a comparison between the number of visitors to the religious sites.

Figure 47: Number of Visitors

According to the map above, Makkah and Almadina are the most important cities for many visitors because they contain the most valuable monuments, such as Masjer Alharam and Masjer Al Nabui (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012).
6- The overall situation

The map below shows the overall situation of the religious sites in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 48: The overall situation

The overall situations in the surrounding area of the religious sites were evaluated based on the quality of the transportation systems, number of the visitors, and the quality of the tourism services. Religious sites that are located in Makkah and Al Madin are the best areas.
4-3 Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many different valuable religious sites that tourists would like to visit in Saudi Arabia. However, most of these monuments are undeveloped, especially the religious monuments that are located in suburban areas (Central Department of Statistic & Information in Saudi Arabia, 2012).

Figure 49: Level of service vs. number of visitor
Figure 50: Religious monuments evaluation (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

From the figure above, we can infer that the number of tourists is high in some monuments that have a high level of services and transportation systems. For instance, Aldisa has the lowest number of visitors due to the lack of services in the surrounding area.
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendation

1- Motivations factors for tourism investment in Saudi Arabia

According to Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority’s report, there are many factors that could encourage tourism investment in Saudi Arabia. First, the security and the government’s stability are the most important factors that encourage tourism investment in Saudi Arabia. Second, the development of the banking system and financial capacity play a huge rule to support many tourism projects economically. Third, there are developed infrastructures, such as road networks, in many tourism sites. Fourth, there are a variety of natural resources, heritages, and religious sites in Saudi Arabia. Finally, the trade policies in Saudi Arabia are attractive. For example, there are no restrictions for foreign investments (low tax system, free money transfer) (SAGIA, 2007).
According to the chart, foreign investments have increased between 2000 and 2006. The total of the foreign investment in Saudi Arabia is more than forty seven million dollar between 2000 and 2006. The investment of the United States in Saudi Arabia contains more than twenty three percent of the total (SAGIA, 2007).
Figure 52: Total expenditure of the domestic tourism and the international tourism in Saudi Arabia (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

The figure above compares the total expenditure of the domestic tourism and the international tourism in Saudi Arabia. According to the figure, in 2007, the total income of the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia ($ 5.2 billion) was approximately equal to the total expenditure of the international tourism ($ 4.7 billion) (SAGIA, 2007).
2- Commissions and associations for tourism development in Saudi Arabia

The main commission that concerns tourism development directly about is called Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities. It was established in 2000 as a national economic project (SCTA, 2010).

3- The goals of the Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities (SCTA):

The main goals of this commission are to organize, develop, and promote the tourism sector. According to Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, there are three basic factors to improve the tourism sector (look to figure 53).
Figure 53: Tourism Basic Infrastructure.

Therefore, the commission plays an important role to encourage private and foreign sectors in the establishment of the tourism facilities (SCTA, 2010).

4- Mission & Vision

The future vision of Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities (SCTA) is;

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as the land of Islam, seeks for variable and distinguished tourism development, with social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits in the framework of its Islamic values and genuine traditional hospitality" (SCTA, 2010)

From the quote above, we can infer that religious tourism is the most valuable sector in Saudi Arabia because it is the land of Islam.

5- MAS Center

MAS center was established in 2002. It is one of the most distinguished departments in SCTA. The MAS center is responsible for collecting the tourism data in Saudi Arabia and other related information that investors may need to establish their development. (SCTA, 2010).
6- Other concerned parties

The schedule below shows other commissions and organizations that are concern about the tourism sector.

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<th>Authority</th>
<th>Fields of Cooperation</th>
<th>Key Projects &amp; Achievements</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Scholarships - Cooperation with Universities - Academic Grants</td>
<td>• Enlisting tourism specialties in the Ministry’s scholarship plans and developing tourism human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Customs</td>
<td>Training Programs for Dealing with Tourists</td>
<td>• Equipping customs officials with the required skills for dealing with tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Abdulaziz University</td>
<td>Tourism Human Resources Development</td>
<td>• Developing the tourism research scholarship program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Fahad Security College</td>
<td>Training &amp; Research</td>
<td>• Establishing a specialized institute for tourism development and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Airlines</td>
<td>Tourism Promotion and Travel Operation</td>
<td>• Developing a tourism incubator for small and medium enterprises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Commission for the Development of Makkah and Maddinah</td>
<td>Activate the Tourism Development Strategies for Makkah &amp; Maddinah</td>
<td>• Cooperating in the fields of training and research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Saud University</td>
<td>Promote Tourism Development</td>
<td>• Activating and developing the “Discover Saudi Arabia Program”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Credit &amp; Saving Bank</td>
<td>Promotion &amp; Development of SMEs</td>
<td>• Participating in sponsorships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Centennial Fund</td>
<td>Promotion &amp; Development of SMEs</td>
<td>• Providing discounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of Saudi Chambers</td>
<td>Promotion &amp; Development of SMEs</td>
<td>• Exchanging information.</td>
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<td>National Commercial Bank</td>
<td>Promotion &amp; Development of SMEs &amp; Productive Families</td>
<td>• Establishing the Tourism &amp; Antiquities within the tourism human resources development program.</td>
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<td>Saudi Industrial Development Fund - Kautala Program</td>
<td>Promotion &amp; Development of SMEs</td>
<td>• Financing SMEs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imam Mohammad bin Saud University</td>
<td>Tourism Human Resources Development, Culture &amp; Heritage, Tourism &amp; Society, Research &amp; Information Technology</td>
<td>• Supporting SMEs and participation in the development and organization processes.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Tourism training programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Fields of Cooperation</td>
<td>Key Projects &amp; Achievements</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| King Abdulaziz City for Science & Technology | GIS – Space/Aerial Photography | • Cooperate with the SCTA regarding the GIS  
• Providing the SCTA with space/aerial photos |
| Saudi Geological Survey | Tourism in Areas of Geological Significance | • Protecting and preserving of geological sites and caves |
| General Authority of Civil Aviation | Transfer Licensing Jurisdictions for Tourism Services & Travel Agencies to the SCTA | • Coordinating for the achievement of joint goals and transferring relative licensing jurisdictions to the SCTA |
| Ministry of Municipal & Rural Affairs | Tourism Sites – Criteria for the Development of Tourism Projects & Activities | • Selecting sites for PTO’s headquarters, developing sites and destinations, investing & utilizing archeological sites, setting terms and specifications for road serving centers, developing archeological villages…. |
| Ministry of Commerce & Industry | Elevate Quality Criteria for Accommodation Facilities – Licensing Tour Operators | • Monitoring accommodation facilities seeking higher quality  
• Organizing exhibitions  
• Setting licensing regulations and transferring the licensing jurisdictions for tourism activities and occupations to the SCTA |
| Ministry of Agriculture | Tourism Sites & Activities | • Cooperating in the development of comprehensive strategies for ecotourism, agrotourism and promoting tourism activities |
| Ministry of Transport | Tourism Transportation – Road Services – TDA’s Road Projects | • Tourism transportation in general, road services, road signs, information centers, traffic safety, means of transportation used by tour operators |
| National Commission for Wildlife Conservation & Development | Tourism in Preserved Areas | • Developing some preserved areas for tourism investment and setting relative laws and regulations |
7- **Recommendation**

In this part, I would like to divide recommendations to improve the heritages and sacred sites in Saudi Arabia according to the Razzaq and Morpeth classification.

**A. Buildings and sites that were built for religious reasons**

The figure below describes the total number of visitors in each tourism classifications.

![Percentage of Visitors](chart)

- Religious natural sites: 6%
- Sites that built for religious reasons: 17%
- Sites with religious themes: 26%
- Events that hold at non-religious sites: 51%
Figure 54: Percentage of Visitors (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, 2000)

From the figure above, we can infer that sites that were built for religious reasons, such as Masjed Al Haram and Al Nabui have the largest percentage of the religious tourists in Saudi Arabia. However, this is not a comprehensive plan to improve the tourism sector. Tourism responsible parties should distribute the number of tourists to different places in order to accommodate more visitors, revive economy situations in the other sites, generate more jobs opportunities, and give the visitors a variety of places to visit in Saudi Arabia.

B. Buildings with religious themes recommendations

According to the result, buildings with religious themes, such as Miqat sites and old Jeddah, have the second largest number of visitors in Saudi Arabia (look to figure 54). Some of these places, such as Aldesa monuments, and Madain Saleh, are abandoned because they are located in suburban areas. Therefore, tourism agencies and responsible parties in Saudi Arabia should provide the basic tourism infrastructures (look to figure 53) in these sites. In
addition, they should improve the public transportation in these sites and make them more visible by connecting them to the new train networks. Planners that are planning the new train network should place the train stations in these sites to make them more visible.

C. **Religious and natural sites recommendations**

According to the results, most of the religious natural sites, such as Gjat Al Thawr and Al Nur Mountain, are undeveloped. Therefore, tourism responsible parties should maintain and protect the natural sites. They should also provide the basic tourism infrastructure that fit with these kinds of places, such as rest areas and sidewalks.

D. **Religious event that are hold at non-religious sites recommendations**

Responsible parties should pay more attention to religious event that hold at non-religious sites, such as Muslim World League and Islamic Development Bank. According to the results, this type of religious tourism has the lowest number of visitors (look to 54). Therefore, tourism agencies in Saudi Arabia
should encourage investors to establish more religious museums and religious conferences. However, these event should not be held at religious sites that have a high number of tourists to encourage the visitors to visit other sites, and to accommodate more visitors at the same period of time.

8- Conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>TOURISM CLASSIFICATIONS</th>
<th>TRANSPORTATION</th>
<th>TOURISM SERVICES</th>
<th>MAINTENANCE</th>
<th>TOURISM MOTIVATIONS</th>
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<td>sites that were built for religious reasons</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Buildings with religious themes</td>
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<td>Religious and natural sites</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Religious event at non-religious sites</td>
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</table>

As I have mentioned before, tourism is one of the most effective ways to diversify the economy of a country. It provides a massive opportunity for countries to improve their economy and to decrease the unemployment rate.

In addition, according to UNWTO's report, the tourism sectors have become the fastest growing sector of the world economy. Economists estimate that there will be 1.8 billion international tourists by 2030. Therefore, the decision
makers in Saudi Arabia should improve the tourism sector and take advantage of the fact that the most important cities in the religion of Islam are located in Saudi Arabia. Also, they need to improve the tourism sector to diversify the country's economic sources. Therefore, investing in the tourism sector is the best idea to create a sustainable economic plan especially when the unemployment rate has been increasing in Saudi Arabia recently. Finally, in order to improve the religious tourism in Saudi Arabia, decision makers and tourism organizations in Saudi Arabia should:

- Improve the quality of the tourism services.
- Protect and maintain the tourism attractions
- Establish many tourist information centers in different places to explain and to motivate tourists to visit other sites.
- Provide free tourist brochures that illustrate the provided tourism services and tourism packages in different religious tourism sites. In addition, tourism brochures should provide information that is related to the cultural and historical background of the tourist cities. Also, it should illustrate tourist attractions such as worship places, and archaeological
sites. It should also include information about restaurants and shopping malls, hotels, natural places, and parks in each tourist site. Finally, it should include information that is related to transportation, communications and motilities services.

- Provide the basic tourism infrastructure, such as accommodations, and transportation system.
- Amend the immigration policies in a way that encourage and increase the number of tourists.
- Improve the local citizens’ awareness in these religious sites by encourage them to participate in tourism development plans.
- Establish tourism educational institutions to provide training and educated workforces.
- Encourage local and foreign investors to invest and develop the religious sites.
- Highlight the social and economic benefits of improving tourism industry among the citizens in Saudi Arabia.
- Make tourism information accessible to everyone online.
• Participate in all exhibitions and international tourism conferences.

• Encourage the tourism sector to diversify in the national economy, increase government revenues, and create job opportunities for the local citizens.

• Provide tourist programs on TV channels to improve tourism awareness among citizens and residents.
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