

Gender and Tourism Motivations in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This study investigated whether the perceptions of Saudis toward tourism differ by gender in their motivations for engaging in domestic and international tourism. Data were collected through a survey of 1,536—769 men and 769 women—between 18 and 35 years of age to examine what motivates their engagement in tourism. In terms of domestic tourism, the results indicated gender differences in several areas of motivation. Women tended to favor events, festivals, pilgrimages and family gatherings more than men. In terms of international tourism, the study found that men were more likely than women to favor affordability, freedom from adherence to customs and traditions, and the formation of new friendships. Women showed more interest than men in getting to know different cultures.

Keywords

domestic tourism, international tourism, gender, motivations, Saudi Arabia

What are the Differences Between Saudi Arabian Men and Women's Domestic and International Tourism Motivations?

Gender plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' travel behaviors, preferences and motivations. Research has shown that men and women often exhibit different motivations for travel, influenced by a combination of cultural, social, psychological, and economic factors. These gender-based differences manifest in the types of tourism activities they prefer, how they plan their trips, and their overall travel experiences. As Kinnaird et al. (1994) point out, gender is an issue that is embedded in all aspects of tourism-related development and activities. Due to differing socialization experiences, gender roles, and cultural expectations, men and women may prefer distinct tourist activities or become involved in different aspects of the same activity (Crompton, 1979). These dynamics of gender influence are especially significant when exploring the tourism landscape in Saudi Arabia.

For many years, tourism in Saudi Arabia was largely limited to religious pilgrimages, with domestic tourism primarily focused on religious travel. This was influenced by the dominant conservative religious values in society, which historically placed less emphasis on non-religious

leisure activities (Abuhjeeleh, 2019; Al-Wedinani, 2016; Lacroix, 2011). The belief that life should focus on worship often led to the view that leisure activities unrelated to religious duties were less significant in terms of their impact on the afterlife (Al-Ghathami, 2015; Henderson, 2011). Economically, tourism was not traditionally a priority for the Saudi government, which relied heavily on oil revenues, and tourism was not seen as a key sector for economic development (Johnson, 2010).

However, in response to economic challenges, such as fluctuating oil prices and the need for greater economic diversification (Mitchell & Al-Furaih, 2018), the Saudi government recognized the importance of reducing its reliance on oil. In April 2016, Saudi Arabia unveiled strategies aimed at diversifying its economy and

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expanding the private sector over the next 15 years, focusing on reducing dependence on oil and fostering other sources of national income (Al-Qahtani, 2020; Al-Shuaibi, 2017; Nuruzzaman, 2018; Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). As part of these efforts, the Saudi government sought to develop the tourism sector, expanding its scope beyond religious tourism to attract both local and international visitors. This shift involved implementing social, economic and organizational changes to encourage the growth of tourism in the country.

Socially, the government has made some progress toward liberating society from the stranglehold of extreme religious ideology, especially in terms of women's empowerment and protection (Abuhjeeleh, 2019; Al-Qahtani, 2020; Hvidt, 2018). Economically, there was a decisive increase in support for the entertainment industry, including cooperative concert spaces, historical and ancient locations, theatres, amusement parks, and cinemas (Abuhjeeleh, 2019; Kinninmont, 2017). In 2019, tourism visas began to be issued after years of bans on visiting the country except for work or religious reasons. This was accompanied by the issuance of various other visa types to remove barriers to visitors, such as transit, personal visit, medical treatment, business visit, residence, and *Umrah* visas (KSA's National Source for Government Services and Information, 2013).

In the last quarter of 2019, Saudi Arabia started to receive the first wave of tourists from 49 countries. In 2020, the country received 440,000 tourists, and this number grew by 58% in 2023 (KSA's National Source for Government Services and Information, 2013; Saudi Press Agency, 2023). For the first time, Saudi citizens experienced tourism and began to benefit from growth in the tourism sector. This has had economic benefits, and various jobs have been created in the sector (Abuhjeeleh, 2019).

The government's shifting attitude is reflected in research on tourism in Saudi Arabia. Much of the research conducted in response to the policy changes concerns tourism's economic aspects, management, hospitality, and women's empowerment (Abuhjeeleh, 2019; Alasgah & Rizk, 2023; Al-Hazmia, 2020; Ali, 2018; Ali & Salameh, 2021; Almathami & Mair, 2023; Alsumairi & Tsui, 2017; Bokhari, 2021; Hassan et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Jamel, 2020; Naseem, 2021; Ozturk et al., 2022). In addition, Saudi travelers' motivations have caught the attention of several researchers (e.g., Bogari et al., 2003; Mansour & Mumuni, 2019; Rehman & Alnuzhah, 2022). Traveler motivations are complex, varied, and difficult to explore due to tourists' unwillingness and inability to express and reflect on their true motives for travelling (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Li, 2016). However, researchers have found that gender influences the motivation to travel, differences have been identified

between men's and women's perceptions of ideal tourist destinations (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1993). However, to date, there has been no research on gender differences in Saudi tourism that addresses both main categories of exploration—that is, domestic and international tourism.

The gap in the literature identified in this study (e.g., Al-Anazi, 2017; Al-Harithi, 2019; Alramih, 2007; Al-Turkistani, 1998; Bogari et al., 2003; General Authority for Tourism and Antiquities [GATA], 2011; Seddon & Khoja, 2003; Al-Turkistani, 1998) lies in exploring the motivations for both domestic and international tourism and examining gender differences in tourism motivations in the Saudi Arabian context. While gender differences in tourism motivations have been well documented globally (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1993), no attention has been paid to how these dynamics play out in Saudi Arabia, especially in relation to both domestic and international tourism. The contribution and significance of this study lie in addressing this gap in the existing literature, given the ongoing sociocultural and economic transformations in the Kingdom, amid the Saudi Vision 2030, which are reshaping tourism behaviors and men's and women's roles in the tourism sector. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how gender, cultural norms, and societal roles shape tourism behaviors in Saudi Arabia. This investigation is essential, given that the Saudi society is in transition from conservatism to modernity. Moreover, the study provides practical implications for tourism stakeholders, offering guidance on developing gender-sensitive policies and tourist packages to contribute to the growth and diversification of Saudi Arabia's tourism sector.

Using data on tourism from a wider quantitative study of men and women in Saudi Arabia, this article focuses on an under-researched aspect of tourism in Saudi society. It examines the differences between men and women in terms of their motivation to travel and engage in domestic and international tourism. This study is guided by the following research question:

How do gender differences influence tourism motivations for both domestic and foreign travel in Saudi Arabia?

This study's conceptual model suggests that gender influences tourism motivations, with men often seeking adventure and women focusing on family and cultural experiences. Age, family size, and income act as moderating factors, whereby older individuals prioritize culture, and larger families and higher-income individuals are likely to engage in domestic and international tourism. This model is used to explore how these factors interact to shape tourism behaviors in Saudi Arabia.

Literature Review

Tourism plays an important role in enhancing the economic and cultural capacities for progress within a nation. On the individual level, it is key to satisfying an individual's needs for entertainment and change of routine (Bayih & Singh, 2020). Tourism can be categorized as foreign or domestic. International tourism refers to all activities that tourists engage in outside their native countries. This form of tourism is prevalent and economically essential all over the world due to its role in trade flows and monetary exchanges (Bayih & Singh, 2020; WTO, 1997). Domestic tourism refers to citizens' travel for recreational purposes inside their home countries. Domestic tourism is considered to have been the first type of tourism known to civilization. Today, it is still considered significant, reaping economic benefits for nations all around the world (Bayih & Singh, 2020).

Motivations for Domestic and International Tourism

Touristic decision-making can be affected by many motives and reasons that differ based on individual desires. Researchers have investigated the motives that drive both domestic and international tourism in various countries. These studies have successfully identified the most common motivations for tourism in general, including escaping one's daily routines (Albughuli, 2011; Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Hermansyah & Waluya, 2012; Isa & Ramli, 2014; Kanagaraj & Bindu, 2013; Lien, 2010; Mohammad & Som, 2010), enhancing one's social image by impressing friends and relatives (Hermansyah & Waluya, 2012; Isa & Ramli, 2014; Kanagaraj & Bindu, 2013; Lien, 2010; Mohammad & Som, 2010), facilitating togetherness with family and friends (Hermansyah & Waluya, 2012; Lien, 2010), improving health and expanding knowledge (Albughuli, 2011; Isa & Ramli, 2014; Kanagaraj & Bindu, 2013; Lien, 2010), and seeking adventure (Isa & Ramli, 2014; Lien, 2010). Tourism researchers have highlighted social and cultural reasons (Albughuli, 2011; Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Isa & Ramli, 2014; Kanagaraj & Bindu, 2013; Lien, 2010), entertainment activities (Albughuli, 2011; Bui & Jolliffe, 2011), religious and spiritual motivations (Albughuli, 2011), and economic affordability (Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Kanagaraj & Bindu, 2013) as motivations for travelling.

To better understand tourism motivations, researchers have sought to model and categorize these motives. Several theories developed by studying traveler motivations have highlighted "push and pull" factors (Dann, 1977), personal and interpersonal escapism and personal and interpersonal seeking (Iso-Ahola, 1982). These models attempt to explain why travelers are motivated by one motive rather than another. They have proven that explaining travelers' motivations is complex, as they

differ from one person to another and for each person across time (Andreu et al., 2006). Moreover, psychological and sociological reasons have been adduced to explain traveler motivations. From a psychological viewpoint, people are born with basic needs, and travelers choose tourism destinations based on what satisfies these needs (Jamal & Lee, 2003). On the other hand, the sociological perspective points to the impact of the social environment on traveler behavior, as tourism is a social-cultural production (Jamal & Lee, 2003; Wang, 2000).

In the case of Saudi Arabian tourism, researchers have focused on various aspects of tourism. For example, Algassim et al. (2023) explored residents' emotional responses to current tourism development. The researchers found that the residents worried about losing resources due to tourism development and that a lack of tourism knowledge heightened these concerns. On a similar note, Rehman et al. (2023) investigated the relationships between tourist experience quality, perceived price fairness, regenerative tourism involvement, and tourist satisfaction. Their findings showed that escapism, relaxation, involvement, perceived price reasonableness and regenerative tourism involvement did not have a direct impact on tourist satisfaction. A few studies have been conducted on Saudi international tourism in general and the related motivations (e.g., Al-Anazi, 2017; Al-Harithi, 2019). They concluded that international tourism is the more common variant in the Arabian Gulf countries, especially among tourists seeking entertainment and shopping. Several studies have focused on domestic tourism and identified what motivates it (Alramih, 2007; Bogari et al., 2003; GATA, 2011; Seddon & Khoja, 2003; Turkestan, 1998). For example, Bogari et al. (2003) found that nine motivations encouraged Saudi citizens to participate in domestic tourism: cultural value, utility, knowledge, socialization, economic reasons, family togetherness, interest, relaxation, and convenience of the facilities. However, they concluded that cultural values and religion were the most common motivations felt by Saudi tourists. Contrarily, other scholars (Alramih, 2007; GATA, 2011; Turkestan, 1998) have suggested that the most significant factors in decisions about domestic tourism are environmental and economic. They indicated that Saudi tourists prefer domestic tourism, largely due to affordability, pleasant weather and the ease of finding what they need.

Gender and Saudi Arabia's Collectivist Society

Saudi Arabia is regarded as a highly collectivist society in which religious and tribal values play a strong role (Al-Qahtani, 2015; Ourfali, 2015). In such a culture, individuals consider themselves part of a group and are motivated by the norms and duties imposed by their

culture. They consider achieving collective aims to be more important than achieving their personal goals (Triandis, 2018). Additionally, they avoid behaviors that could bring shame to their in-group or themselves as part of that group (Arpaci et al., 2018). Under collectivism, individuals live less atomically and act as part of the group, which impacts their privacy and freedom (Sampson, 1997).

Saudis seek to conform to the principles and beliefs of their group and other groups (Bohnet et al., 2010). Family, tribe and nation are three significant groups that play a vital role in influencing the behavioral decisions of individuals in society (Ourfali, 2015; Triandis & Suh, 2002). For instance, the family is the most important group to which an individual must be loyal, and their actions must honor all members of their family (Al-Zahrani & Kaplowitz, 1993). Family members—including both males and females—are supposed to protect the family's reputation through their behavior, as their negative or positive behaviors affect the whole family. Making a family lose honor means losing social acceptance and respect in society (Stanger et al., 2017). Thus, collectivist cultures and the pressure they place on individuals produce a split in personality: each person has a public personality, which meets social and cultural expectations, and a private personality that differs from the former and meets personal needs, which may conflict with social expectations (Hawamdeh & Raigangar, 2014).

In terms of gender, cultural values play a vital role in the definition of men's and women's positions in Saudi society. It can be said that both men and women are under cultural pressure to meet social expectations, although the pressure over women is far greater than the pressure on men. The man is represented as a leader, provider and protector, while the woman has long been represented as a wife, daughter and mother who relies entirely upon men to live (Al-Rawaf, 1990; Arebi, 1994). Saudi men and women grow up in separate worlds, where men have every opportunity to grow psychosocially, while women have no options to pursue different types of lifestyles, as their lifestyle is dictated by cultural values and institutions that support male dominance (Harkness, 2019; Khader, 2018). However, despite the official governmental position on empowering women and narrowing the gap between genders—for example, by abolishing the male guardianship system, issuing passports for women to travel abroad without male permission, allowing women to drive and opening the door for women to study and work in fields that were formerly exclusive to men, such as petroleum and mineral extraction—there remain cultural restrictions on women that hinder their enjoyment of these rights (Al-Enazy, 2017; Al-Shuaibi, 2017; Hvidt, 2018; Krane & Majid, 2018; Ulrichsen & Sheline, 2019).

Gender Differences in Tourism Motivations

The subject of gender differences and sex roles has drawn much attention among scholars; who study how men and women are different in character, behavior, thought, and attitude. Numerous studies indicate gender differences, as men tend to be more independent and conservative, while women are more interdependent and open to new experiences (Ndubisi, 2006; Trivedi & Teichert, 2019). Many attempts have been made to explain gender differences, including their biological and social aspects (Murphy, 2004). Some researchers argue that differences in character and attitude could be a result of biological differences (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). On the other hand, many conclude that these differences can be explained by social factors, such as socialization, legitimation, and institutionalization (Wharton, 2025).

In the context of tourism, gender is an important influence on the preferences of travelers. Gibson (2004) suggested that the socialization of gender roles has a clear influence on tourists' behavior, as it may encourage or discourage certain behaviors in terms of motivations, making decisions, and choosing destinations. For instance, in terms of preferences, it has been found that women seek relaxation, desire new cultural experiences and emphasize family bonding through traveling. On the other hand, men tend to seek adventure and travel experiences that involve physical activities and sports (Andreu et al., 2006; McGehee et al., 1996; Wilson, 2004). Mumuni and Mansour (2014) suggest that men tend to be conservative and avoid entertainment activities, while women are more likely to seek entertainment. However, in their study of the impact of nationality, gender, and age on travel motivations, Jönsson and Devonish (2008) concluded that there were no significant differences between men and women in tourism motivations, which they considered a "surprising" finding, given previous conclusions on this issue.

Certainly, the studies mentioned above provide some insights into the impact of gender on tourism. In terms of Saudi society, despite the nascent attempts of some of these studies, the differences between men and women in terms of domestic and international tourism motivations remain unexplored. Thus, this paper discusses domestic and international tourism motivations in relation to gender differences.

Method

As this study aimed to assess gender differences among Saudi Arabians in terms of domestic and international tourism motivations, the target population was Saudi male and female citizens aged between 18 and –34. Thirteen research sites representing the main regions in Saudi Arabia were chosen for the data collection: Riyadh, Makkah, Madinah, Al-Qasim, Al-Sharqia, Asir,

Tabuk, Hail, the Northern Borders, Jazan, Najran, Al-Baha, and Al-Jouf. According to the General Authority for Statistics (2022), the youth population in these 13 regions was 12,451,229 in 2022. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) method of determining sample size, the suitable sample size was 1,536 participants (i.e., 769 men and 769 women, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%). A stratified random sampling method was adopted for this study, given that the study population of youth is a heterogeneous community in terms of the variables of gender and the administrative region to which the youth belong. Therefore, this type of sampling was considered the most appropriate for the study to ensure a representative sample and reduce heterogeneity in the population (Ladusingh, 2018).

The sample was divided into two subgroups based on each individual's region and gender. The sampling distribution resulted in 354 participants from Riyadh, 332 from Makkah, 100 from Madinah, 76 from Al-Qasim, 248 from Al-Sharqia, 128 from Asir, 56 from Tabuk, 20 from Hail, 22 from the Northern Borders, 92 from Jazan, 34 from Najran, 28 from Al-Baha and 28 from Al-Jouf. Each of these subgroups was distributed evenly according to gender.

This study used a five-part survey: the first part sought demographic information on the respondents' travel activities, favorite tourism destinations and time spent travelling. The second part asked about the respondents' understanding of the concept of tourism. The third part sought information on the motivations that encouraged the participants to travel internally. The fourth part asked about their reasons for preferring international tourism. The survey asked respondents to specify the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a 3-point Likert-type scale (1 = *agree*, 2 = *neutral*, and 3 = *disagree*). To ensure the content validity of the survey used in this study, it was designed based on previous research on domestic tourism motivations (Al-Anazi, 2017; Alramih, 2007) and international tourism motivations (Al-Harithi, 2019; Al-Turkistani, 1998). In addition, expert opinions were sought on the relevance and clarity of the survey items. These experts, who have experience in tourism and social studies, provided feedback on the appropriateness of the questions for the Saudi context. A pilot study was also conducted with a small sample from the target population to assess the comprehensibility and relevance of the survey items. Based on the feedback from the experts and the pilot study participants, the survey was refined to ensure that it accurately captured the constructs of domestic and international tourism motivations. The data were collected from September to November 2022 at shopping malls in the main cities in each region. These malls were grouped based on their location in each city (north,

south, east, west, and central) and chosen randomly, with one mall from each location, resulting in five malls in each city. SPSS software was used to analyze the data collected for this research.

Results

This section is divided into three parts. The first part presents the demographic data, the respondents' tourism activities and, their favorite destinations. The second part identifies gender differences in motivations for participating in domestic tourism. The third part identifies gender differences in motivations for participating in international tourism.

Baseline Characteristics

The descriptive results indicated that slightly less than half (42.0%) of the respondents of both sexes were students, and 67.5% were single. Nearly three-quarters (70.6% of the men and 68.6% of the women) were above 22 years old. About 32.3% of the men and 36.2% of the women belonged to a medium-sized family, and monthly family income was over 9,000 SR for most of the respondents (71.3% of men and 70.8% of women). Three-quarters 80.6% (79.9% of men and 81.2% of women) had travelled inside Saudi Arabia, and nearly the same percentage 79.1% (63.1% of men and 94.6% of women) had done so with family. Makkah was the most-visited destination 59.4% (59.3% of men and 59.6% of women). We found that 52.6% of the respondents (56.3% of men and 48.9% of women) had engaged in international tourism, and 70.3% (50.7% of men and 92.5% of women) had done so with family. The Arabian Gulf countries were the destinations most visited by the sample 39.7% (57.8% of men and 62.8% of women). For an overview of the relevant demographic data, see Table 1.

Domestic Tourism

An independent-sample *t*-test was conducted to compare males and females. The findings (see Table 2) indicate significant differences in motives for engaging in domestic tourism. Women had stronger desires to experience other Saudi cultures, attend events and festivals, embark on pilgrimages, and organize family gatherings ($p < .05$). However, in the other motivations, including affordability, safety, commitment to custom, and lack of mastery of foreign languages, the findings for the sexes were similar.

Ordinal logistic regression analysis (for both the males and the females) was conducted to investigate the relationship between domestic tourism motivations (measured on an ordinal scale) and three independent

Table 1. Demographic Data of Responds.

Variable	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	n	%	n	%
Professional status				
Student	349	41.7%	358	42.3%
An employee in the government sector	238	28.4%	61	7.2%
Private sector employee	147	17.6%	141	16.7%
An employee in the non-profit sector	8	1.0%	7	0.8%
Free business	23	2.7%	26	3.1%
Do not work	72	8.6%	253	29.9%
Age group				
Less than 22 years	246	29.4	266	31.4
22 years to less than 28 years	295	35.2	306	36.2
28 years and above	296	35.4	274	32.4
Family size				
Small size family (6 or less individuals)	210	25.1	225	26.6
Medium size family (7–8 individuals)	270	32.3	306	36.2
Above medium size family (9–10 individuals)	193	23.1	188	22.2
Large size family (11 or more individuals)	164	19.6	127	15.0
Monthly family income				
Less than 9,000 SR	240	28.7	242	28.6
9,000 to less than 15,000 SR	310	37.0	312	36.8
15,000 SR or more	287	34.3	292	34.5
Have you ever traveled to a city within Saudi for the purpose of tourism?				
No	168	20.1%	159	18.8%
Yes	669	79.9%	687	81.2%
When traveling for tourism outside Saudi, you travel				
Alone	34	5.1%	11	1.6%
With family	422	63.1%	650	94.6%
With friends	213	31.8%	26	3.8%
Visited cities				
Riyadh				
No	485	57.9%	491	58.0%
Yes	352	42.1%	355	42.0%
Makkah				
No	341	40.7%	342	40.4%
Yes	496	59.3%	504	59.6%
Madinah				
No	545	65.1%	522	61.7%
Yes	292	34.9%	324	38.3%
Al-Qasim				
No	717	85.7%	720	85.1%
Yes	120	14.3%	126	14.9%
Al-Sharqia				
No	543	64.9%	566	66.9%
Yes	294	35.1%	280	33.1%
Tabuk				
No	759	90.7%	772	91.3%

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variable	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	78	9.3%	74	8.7%
Hail				
No	741	88.5%	741	87.6%
Yes	96	11.5%	105	12.4%
Jazan				
No	546	65.2%	580	68.6%
Yes	291	34.8%	266	31.4%
Asir				
No	642	76.7%	647	76.5%
Yes	195	23.3%	199	23.5%
Al-Baha				
No	747	89.2%	775	91.6%
Yes	90	10.8%	71	8.4%
Najran				
No	807	96.4%	813	96.1%
Yes	30	3.6%	33	3.9%
Al-Jouf				
No	802	95.8%	813	96.1%
Yes	35	4.2%	33	3.9%
Northern Borders				
No	779	93.1%	788	93.1%
Yes	58	6.9%	58	6.9%
Visited countries				
Gulf countries				
No	483	57.8%	531	62.8%
Yes	353	42.2%	315	37.2%
Asian countries				
No	668	79.9%	704	83.2%
Yes	168	20.1%	142	16.8%
Arab countries				
No	684	81.8%	698	82.5%
Yes	152	18.2%	148	17.5%
African countries				
No	784	93.8%	824	97.4%
Yes	52	6.2%	22	2.6%
Countries in North America				
No	807	96.5%	819	96.8%
Yes	29	3.5%	27	3.2%
Countries in South America				
No	824	98.6%	833	98.5%
Yes	12	1.4%	13	1.5%
European countries				
No	678	81.1%	698	82.5%
Yes	158	18.9%	148	17.5%
Australia				
No	828	99.0%	837	98.9%
Yes	8	1.0%	9	1.1%

variables: age group, monthly family income and family size. For the males, the model fit was statistically significant ($p = .006$), suggesting that the model was effective

Table 2. Domestic Tourism Motivations.

Subscale	Gender	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Getting to know other Saudi cultures	Male	837	2.77	.535	−3.299	1598.823	.001
	Female	846	2.85	.430			
Events and festivals	Male	837	2.70	.614	−2.952	1639.160	.003
	Female	846	2.78	.528			
Commitment to customs and traditions	Male	837	2.79	.511	−.481	1681	.631
	Female	846	2.80	.489			
Pilgrimage	Male	837	2.82	.489	−3.177	1582.392	.002
	Female	846	2.89	.383			
Family gathering	Male	837	2.78	.525	−3.297	1603.503	.001
	Female	846	2.86	.424			
Safety	Male	837	2.91	.346	−.274	1681	.784
	Female	846	2.91	.326			
Lack of mastery of foreign languages	Male	837	2.41	.796	.051	1681	.960
	Female	846	2.41	.810			
Affordable costs	Male	837	2.17	.902	.684	1681	.494
	Female	846	2.14	.905			

in differentiating between the levels of events and festivals as a domestic tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo *R*-square values (Cox and Snell = .026) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors. In terms of the individual predictors, monthly family income was the only significant factor ($b = .558$, $SE = .223$, Wald = 6.249, $p = .012$), with the positive relationship suggesting that higher monthly family income is associated with higher levels of domestic tourism motivated by events and festivals. Age group and family size, however, were not found to be significant predictors.

For the males, the model fit was statistically significant ($p = .038$), indicating that the model effectively differentiated between levels of pilgrimage as a domestic tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo *R*-square values (Cox and Snell = .019) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors, while in terms of the individual predictors, family size was the only significant factor ($b = -.908$, $SE = .369$, Wald = 6.035, and $p = .014$), with the negative relationship suggesting that a smaller family size is associated with higher levels of domestic tourism motivated by pilgrimages. Age group and monthly family income, however, were not found to be significant predictors.

For the males, lack of mastery of foreign languages was found to be a motivation for domestic tourism. The model fit was statistically significant ($p = .016$), suggesting that the model could differentiate between different levels of lack of mastery of foreign languages. The pseudo *R*-square values (Cox and Snell = .023) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors, while monthly family income was the only significant factor ($b = .630$, $SE = .181$, Wald = 12.150, $p < .001$) among the individual predictors, with the positive

relationship suggesting that a higher monthly family income is associated with higher levels of domestic tourism motivated by lack of mastery of foreign languages. Age group and family size, however, were not found to be significant predictors.

For the males, the model fit was statistically significant ($p < .001$), suggesting that the model was effective in differentiating between levels of affordable costs as a domestic tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo *R*-square values (Cox and Snell = .040) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors, and age group was the most significant individual predictor ($b = .797$, $SE = .185$, Wald = 18.600, $p < .001$), with the positive relationship suggesting that an older age group is associated with higher levels of domestic tourism motivated by affordable costs. Monthly family income also emerged as a significant predictor ($b = .482$, $SE = .174$, Wald = 7.704, $p = .006$), indicating that as monthly family income increases, so does domestic tourism. This trend seems to be motivated by affordable costs, albeit to a lesser extent than age group. Family size, however, was not found to be a significant predictor.

For the female participants, the model fit was statistically significant ($p < .001$), suggesting that the model effectively differentiated between levels of affordable costs as a domestic tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo *R*-square values (Cox and Snell = .036) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors. In terms of the individual predictors, age group was the most significant factor ($b = .715$, $SE = .179$, Wald = 15.853, $p < .001$), with a positive relationship suggesting that an older age group is associated with higher levels of domestic tourism motivated by affordable costs. Family size also emerged as a

Table 3. International Tourism Motivations.

Variable	Gender	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Getting to know different cultures	Male	837	2.82	.466	-2.048	1661.906	.041
	Female	846	2.86	.423			
Freedom from adhering to customs and traditions	Male	837	2.37	.828	3.912	1675.447	.000
	Female	846	2.20	.886			
Freedom to engage in socially unacceptable behaviors	Male	837	1.77	.895	.725	1681	.469
	Female	846	1.74	.905			
Freedom to engage in religiously unacceptable behavior	Male	837	1.62	.858	.407	1681	.684
	Female	846	1.60	.874			
Feeling of pleasure	Male	837	2.78	.506	-1.694	1666.453	.090
	Female	846	2.82	.466			
Formation of new friendships	Male	837	2.60	.673	2.960	1662.643	.003
	Female	846	2.50	.756			
Prestige	Male	837	2.50	.705	-1.598	1681	.110
	Female	846	2.56	.675			
Affordable costs	Male	837	2.53	.697	3.758	1668.208	.000
	Female	846	2.40	.769			

significant predictor ($b = .463$, $SE = .233$, Wald = 3.928, $p = .047$), indicating that as family size increases, so does domestic tourism motivated by affordable costs, albeit to a lesser extent than age group. Monthly family income, however, was not found to be a significant predictor.

International Tourism

A comparison between males and females in terms of motives for international tourism is shown in Table 3. There were significant differences in a number of motivations for international tourism ($p < .05$). Men were more likely than women to be strongly motivated by freedom from adhering to customs and traditions, forming new friendships, and maintaining affordability. Women were prone to be strongly motivated by getting to know different cultures. However, the other motives for international tourism did not differ significantly between the sexes.

Ordinal logistic regression analysis (for both the males and the females) was conducted to investigate the relationship between overseas tourism motivations (measured on an ordinal scale) and three independent variables: age group, monthly family income, and family size. For the males, the model fit was statistically significant ($p = .002$), suggesting that it could differentiate between levels of freedom from adhering to customs and traditions as an overseas tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo R -square values (Cox and Snell = .030) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors. In terms of the individual predictors, monthly family income was the only significant factor ($b = .658$, $SE = .180$, Wald = 13.340, $p < .001$), with the positive relationship suggesting that a higher monthly family income is associated with higher levels of overseas

tourism motivated by freedom from adhering to customs and traditions. Age group and family size, however, were not found to be significant predictors.

For the males, the model fit was statistically significant ($p = .001$), suggesting that the model was effective in differentiating between levels of freedom to engage in socially unacceptable behaviors as an international tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo R -square values (Cox and Snell = .033) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors, as for the individual predictors, monthly family income was the only significant factor ($b = .516$, $SE = .173$, Wald = 8.879, $p = .003$), with the positive relationship suggesting that higher monthly family income is associated with higher levels of overseas tourism motivated by freedom to engage in socially unacceptable behaviors. Age group and family size, however, were not found to be significant predictors.

For the females, the model fit was statistically significant ($p = .001$), suggesting that it was effective in differentiating between levels of freedom to engage in religiously unacceptable behaviors as an international tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo R -square values (Cox and Snell = .031) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors, and in terms of the individual predictors, monthly family income was the only significant factor ($b = .666$, $SE = .183$, Wald = 13.182, $p < .001$), with the positive relationship suggesting that higher monthly family income is associated with higher levels of overseas tourism motivated by freedom to engage in religiously unacceptable behaviors. Age group and family size, however, were not found to be significant predictors.

For the females, the model fit was statistically significant ($p = .008$), suggesting that the model was effective

in differentiating between levels of prestige as an international tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo *R*-square values (Cox and Snell = .025) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors, and in terms of the individual predictors, monthly family income was the only significant factor ($b = .564$, $SE = .186$, Wald = 9.247, $p = .002$), with the positive relationship suggesting that a higher monthly family income is associated with higher levels of overseas tourism motivated by prestige. Age group and family size, however, were not found to be significant predictors.

For the females, the model fit was statistically significant ($p = .006$), suggesting that the model was effective in differentiating between levels of freedom to engage in religiously unacceptable behaviors as an international tourism motivation based on the predictors. The pseudo *R*-square values (Cox and Snell = .026) suggested a substantial relationship between the predictors. In terms of the individual predictors, monthly family income was the only significant factor ($b = .626$, $SE = .189$, Wald = 10.990, $p = .001$), with the positive relationship suggesting that higher monthly family income is associated with higher levels of overseas tourism motivated by freedom to engage in religiously unacceptable behaviors. Age group and family size, however, were not found to be significant predictors.

Discussion

This study investigated the differences between Saudi Arabian men and women in terms of motivations for engaging in domestic and international tourism. Domestic tourism was more popular than international tourism among both sexes. A large proportion of the sample reported that they usually travelled with their family. This is not surprising, given that most respondents were single students, who depend on their families financially (Sereetrakul et al., 2013). It seems that domestic tourism was preferred over foreign travel for family trips. This finding is consistent with Alramih (2007), who concluded that Saudi families prefer domestic tourism because it satisfies their needs and meets their expectations more than international tourism.

In terms of domestic tourism, gender differences were identified in several motivations. The women in this study were more motivated than men to attend events and festivals, which confirms Mumuni and Mansour's (2014) argument that men tend to avoid festivals compared to women; however, this finding contradicts with that of Alshammari et al. (2019). It seems that women seek entertainment and strive to enjoy themselves more than men do. Men have more freedom than women to engage in various activities and events throughout the year, while women are often culturally bound by rules

that prevent them from enjoying the same opportunities as men.

Moreover, the women tended to enjoy spending time with their families, which relates to the Saudi sociocultural context (Alshammari et al., 2019). Saudi culture is collective, and its values play a role in defining women's position. Culturally, a woman does live in isolation; she is considered part of her family. Thus, women see themselves as part of their families, and their main roles within the family are to be mothers and wives—roles encouraged by the conservative, religious, and collective culture (Al-Rawaf, 1990; Arebi, 1994). On the other hand, men can be apart from their families at any time due to the cultural assumption that men are independent. Thus, men do not think of themselves as part of the family in the same way that women do.

The findings also revealed that women sought to visit holy places and undertake *Umrah*, an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, more than men. This finding can be explained by the socialization processes for men and women (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 2014). In Saudi society, men and women are raised differently. Women are raised to be nurturing and submissive in preparation for their traditional role, which may influence their religiosity. This socialization process tends to make women more interested in religious matters and more religiously committed than men, who are raised to be leaders and independent (Mol, 1985). Additionally, women's roles as mothers and wives include several expectations, such as being loving and caring while believing more strongly in Islamic values, ethics and morality (Walter & Davie, 1998).

The findings also showed that women are expected to be motivated to explore other cultures both inside and outside Saudi Arabia. Due to social expectations, it is difficult for women to be independent, which prevents them from experiencing other cultures, except what they are allowed to see with family companions. Despite the governmental effort to ease women's lives and empower them by facilitating their solo travel without a guardian's permission, this change has yet to be culturally accepted. It is still forbidden for many women in various cultures and families to travel independently and discover the world around them without a guardian (Al-Shuaibi, 2017; Ulrichsen & Sheline, 2019). Thus, women see both domestic and international tourism as a chance to expand their knowledge of local and international cultures.

The findings revealed that various factors, such as age, family size, and income, significantly influenced domestic tourism motivations in Saudi Arabia, with notable differences between the males and females. For the males, higher family income was associated with a greater motivation for activities like attending events and festivals, as well as engaging in affordable tourism

absence of language barriers. Older individuals, both males and females, were likelier to travel to affordable destinations. This behaviour could reflect their financial considerations, such as limited income or a greater need for value-oriented travel options. Also, larger family sizes were associated with a greater interest in domestic tourism driven by cost consideration, which suggests that families with more members are likelier to prefer domestic tourism options due to the lower costs compared to international travel.

In terms of international tourism, the men in the study were more prone to experience tourism outside the country as an escape from tradition and customs. They perceived international tourism as a chance to enjoy themselves by escaping from a culture that compels certain behaviors. The collectivist culture in Saudi Arabia imposes strict expectations on both men and women. The traditional role of women as bound to and inseparable from their families is maintained through family travel. The situation is different for men, who can be apart from their family at any time and spend time outside the home. This makes international tourism a unique opportunity for men to enjoy privacy and freedom from cultural and family burdens (Hawamdeh & Raigangar, 2014).

In terms of international tourism, male members in the sample reported their preference to travel to form friendships. This finding was not surprising, given that one would expect male tourists to be able to make friends more easily due to looser restrictions on communicating with others for any purpose. Gendered socialization means that men consider friendship differently to women. This finding reflects Greif's (2008) conclusion that men are raised with the idea of not asking for help or expressing feelings, as this contradicts their socially determined sense of manhood. Thus, men perceive friendship as helping them communicate their needs and feelings to others.

In this study, men appeared to be more motivated by economic factors than the women were. This indicates that men look for affordable trips more than women do. Again, this might be a result of how males and females were raised. Saudi society expects men to be independent and raises them to be responsible for their families. A man is expected to be capable of holding the main power in his family; thus, he is prepared to lead a family financially and socially (Clarke et al., 2005). Through the socialization process, men learn the necessity of filling that role. Thus, men are likelier to observe their fathers managing expenses and avoiding overpaying, which leads to them being more concerned about the cost of traveling. Women are expected to be financially dependent on their families, which prevents them from

learning financial management and being concerned about travelling costs.

In term of overseas tourism, the findings suggest that economic factors, particularly family income, play a critical role in shaping tourism behaviors in Saudi Arabia, while socio-demographic factors, such as age and family size, appear less influential. This highlights the high cost of international tourism for families, as transportation and commensation can put heavy pressure on families, considering that most of the sample had a medium family size (7–8 members).

Limitations

Despite this study's strengths and its contribution to tourism research in Saudi Arabia and gender studies more generally, several limitations should be noted. The first limitation concerns the data collection method. A quantitative method was considered the best approach, although a qualitative method might have provided a richer and more in-depth understanding of gender differences in tourism motivations. The second limitation concerns the sample age range, as the current study sampled both sexes at a young age (18–34 years). This prevents us from extending our insights to older individuals. However, this gives future researchers an opportunity to study a broader age range.

Conclusion: Implication and Further Research

The main aim of this study was to examine gender differences in terms of motivations for domestic and international tourism. The findings of this study align with previous research (Gibson, 2004) that highlighted women's greater interest in family-oriented and cultural tourism while also emphasizing the societal role of women in Saudi culture, which is often more family-centric. Regarding international tourism, this study identified gendered motivations, with men exhibiting a stronger desire for freedom from customs and the opportunity to form new friendships, while women showed a greater motivation to explore different cultures. This study enriches gendered tourism motivation theories by demonstrating how gender influences domestic and international tourism motivations in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the distinct preferences of men and women. It highlights the intersection of gender and culture, showing how cultural expectations shape tourism behavior, with women preferring family-oriented and cultural tourism, while men are drawn to novelty and socializing. The study also contributes to the family tourism literature by underscoring the importance of family-based tourism in

conservative societies where gender roles and familial ties play a significant role. Additionally, it expands existing travel motivation frameworks by linking gendered motivations to sociocultural factors. Finally, the research provides valuable insights into gender and tourism in Saudi Arabia, offering a comprehensive understanding of how gender impacts tourism choices in the region, thus filling a gap in the existing literature.

An important implication to be drawn from this study is for tourism stakeholders in both the governmental and private sectors to collaborate in developing gender-sensitive tourism policies and programs, ensuring that tourism strategies consider both the social and economic roles of men and women. Such strategies could include the following: developing and promoting tourism packages for women that focus on family-friendly activities, cultural heritage and immersive local experiences; highlighting family-oriented attractions, such as cultural festivals, traditional crafts and family-themed hotel accommodations; and designing adventure and social travel packages for men that offer unique experiences, such as outdoor activities (e.g., hiking, sports, and nature tours) and group-based travel that foster freedom from cultural norms.

To complement this study's contributions, future research should further examine gendered views of domestic and international tourism. This knowledge would support and extend the findings of this study and help planners address the needs and aims of tourists of both sexes, which may assist the development of the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia. However, given the limited age range examined in this study, the results could vary. Thus, future researchers should investigate whether travelers' motivations differ by sex among various ages of tourists. This would provide insight into the needs of genders of all ages. Additionally, future studies could explore how changing social norms and governmental enhancement of gender equality influence travel behaviors. As more women gain financial independence and access to decision-making, it would be valuable to understand how these shifts impact their travel motivations and preferences, particularly in non-traditional tourism activities, such as adventure or solo travel. Finally, the role of social media in shaping gendered travel experiences presents another important avenue for future research, as digital platforms increasingly influence both the planning and execution of travel, especially among younger generations.

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