



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Educational Tourism as a Suggested Strategy to Enhance the Competitiveness of Saudi Universities (Tabuk University as a Model)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: Jul 25, 2024 Accepted: Sep 30, 2024</p>	<p>The study aimed to reveal the reality of educational tourism as a proposed strategy to enhance the competitiveness of Saudi universities (Tabuk University as a model), through analyzing the content of some initiatives presented to enhance educational tourism, and identifying the roles of Saudi universities in developing educational tourism in the Kingdom. The study presented a proposed strategy for educational tourism in the Kingdom to enhance the competitiveness of Saudi universities, focusing on determining the university's direction with regard to educational tourism by making it an integrated part of its policies, institutional culture, structures, strategies, and operations through: Adopting written rules, guidelines and a code of ethics that define the university's commitment to educational tourism, including educational tourism as a key element in the university's strategy and integrating it into systems, policies and operations, putting programs, activities and initiatives into effect where the university's educational tourism plan is managed and put into practice through the Educational Tourism Committee. The study also recommended a set of recommendations, the most important of which are: promoting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a destination for study and learning by holding international education exhibitions, opening offices, and communicating with targeted countries and regions to market university and educational services and programs, enhancing the Kingdom's image as a study destination, and opening new markets, with a focus on digital marketing designed to enhance the awareness of target groups of the Kingdom's educational and tourism potential.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector is one of the most important sectors related to culture; as tourism plays an important role in encouraging cultural openness to different cultures. In return, culture contributes intellectually, economically and socially to encouraging the tourism sectors in their religious, recreational, creative and other forms. Cooperation between the culture and tourism sectors contributes to improving the quality of life of the individual by strengthening his national identity and acceptance of others and their culture on the one hand, and it also contributes to improving the quality of life of society by strengthening the culture of tolerance, dialogue and hospitality on the other hand. Successful strategic planning for the tourism and culture sectors is linked to the quality of life of society, and this planning begins with scientific and research institutions, primarily

universities, their scientific departments, and the specialized programs they offer; such as linguistics, literature, philosophy, art, humanities and others.

Tourism is a vital field of human activity, its size and impact on economic and social growth is expanding year after year as a result of the economic boom in many countries and with the rise in the level of luxury and development in transportation and travel services. Tourism has become an independent industry on which the economies of many countries in the world depend, as it represents a major source of their income. Tourism also plays a role in positively stimulating many sectors in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development, which requires countries to pay attention to the issue of competitiveness in the tourism and travel industry (Arab Tourism Organization 2016). The types and forms of tourism vary into several types, such as cultural, therapeutic, archaeological, educational, religious, adventure tourism, culinary tourism, and educational tourism.

Educational tourism comes (Educational-Tourism) is one of the types of tourism that has received increasing attention recently due to the availability of factors for its growth and expansion, as the changes that have occurred in the tourism industry over the past two decades, along with changes in education, have led to the convergence of these two industries (tourism with (education) which facilitates mobility and learning to become an important part of the tourism experience (2013. (Dale:

Educational tourism involves a deliberate and explicit educational experience in which the traveler intends to actively participate in the learning experience through exposure to and experience of a specific educational program, where the tourist has the desire and readiness to learn as an important condition for successful learning. In order for learning to occur in educational tourism, the tourist faces a certain degree of cultural difference from ordinary life experiences (:2017McGladdery & Lubber,).

It is worth noting that educational tourism is not limited to researchers, students and those working in the educational and research field, but rather extends to include all people, regardless of their cognitive, built or age levels, who wanted to improve their knowledge and experiences through travel. Among the most prominent groups seeking education outside their homelands are international students, who are called in some Arab countries, including Egypt, incoming students; The numbers of these students are increasing year after year, and countries compete to obtain the largest share of them to strengthen their national economies and support the competitiveness of their universities (Ashraf Muhammad, 2020).

Educational tourism is a type of international tourism that is widespread in many countries of the world. It has a significant positive impact that goes beyond the economic impact, as it includes academic, research, experimental, and cultural dimensions, contributing to building a global, comprehensive, innovative, and interconnected society.

There are many academic visions that emphasize the importance of granting universities their independence as an entry point to achieve a competitive advantage. Al-Saleh (2012) believes that granting universities independence is one of the most important external requirements to support the competitiveness of higher education institutions, the regulatory channel that ensures flexibility in decision-making through boards of trustees. Khalaf (2017) also stresses that universities cannot achieve a competitive advantage unless they enjoy a high degree of independence. Al-Hamdan and Al-Baqmi (2019) also indicate that university independence plays an effective role in creating a competitive advantage: between universities, as it contributes to transforming universities into specialized institutions with a legal, independent and clear personality, enjoying high flexibility in creating regulations and systems that enhance their distinction and creativity. On the other hand, Ba'said (2020) explains that university independence has become a global issue to enable universities to achieve a competitive advantage, especially in light of the increasing demand for

university education, and the rapid succession of economic and social developments (Khaled bin Al-Naseer (2021).

Based on the above and the importance of educational tourism and its positive impact on the community, both directly and indirectly, in support of competitiveness among higher education institutions, the importance of this study comes in developing a proposed strategy for educational tourism to support the competitiveness of Saudi universities.

Problem of the Study

The competition between Saudi universities to provide cultural and educational services to serve the tourism sector with strategic and economic objectives comes within the Kingdom's vision (Quality of Life, 2030) to build a vibrant society, a prosperous economy and an ambitious nation.

Perhaps the increasing interest in the subject of educational tourism stands out as the most important gateway to a field that forms the link between development aspirations and higher education plans. It is even more appropriate that this subject receives greater attention for countries that enjoy special advantages and the ability to benefit from the reality of tourism on the international level (Nadine Alameh, 2010).

The higher education sector at all levels is considered a major axis in the ability of modern economies to compete internationally and improve the local competitive environment. For this reason, many countries provide material and moral support to education and its institutions. Universities represent the most important institutions in this sector in terms of their ability to contribute to the competitiveness of the national economy by performing their main functions (Al-Saleh, 2012).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the leading countries in two fields: higher education and tourism, especially religious tourism; which has enabled it to play an important role in the educational tourism industry as well. Its experience may seem related to Arab and East Asian students, but there are real efforts by universities to raise educational tourism in order to attract more students from all over the world.

Believing in the importance of educational tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it launched the tourism education initiative for school and university students. The initiative seeks to partner with national and international educational institutions to open educational opportunities for university students to enroll in specializations required by the labor market (Agency of the Ministry of Tourism, 2023).

Based on the above and in light of the development of Saudi universities and granting them administrative, financial and academic independence, and in light of the contents of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, and in response to the recommendations and proposals contained in a number of recent educational studies, by creating a competitive climate to develop educational tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an entry point to achieve competitive advantage, and since Tabuk University is one of the Saudi universities that seeks to enhance its capabilities and develop its resources; this study came and the study problem can be crystallized in the following main question:

- What is the reality of educational tourism at Tabuk University in light of competitiveness through document analysis?
- What is the proposed strategy for employing educational tourism to enhance the competitiveness of Saudi universities (Tabuk University as a model)?

Objectives of the Study

The current study aims to:

- Revealing the reality of educational tourism at Tabuk University in light of competitiveness.

- Presenting a proposed strategy for educational tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to enhance the competitiveness of Saudi universities.
- Providing a comprehensive definition of educational tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Defining the roles of Saudi universities in developing educational tourism.

Importance of the study

The importance of the current study is represented in two parts: theoretical importance and applied importance.

Theoretical importance:

- This study is a response to the recommendations of many foreign and Arab studies and recent conferences that call for the need to pay attention to educational tourism.
- The importance of educational tourism in strengthening national economies, and enhancing the competitiveness of Egyptian universities and their international reputation, as international students represent an important indicator in international university rankings.
- The scarcity of Arab studies that deal with the topic of educational tourism, which imposes on those working in educational scientific research.
- Providing a comprehensive conceptual framework to explain educational tourism in Saudi Arabia, its importance, origins, impact on society, and how to work to develop it.
- Explaining the meaning of competitiveness for Saudi universities, its role in Saudi society, and how to work on developing it and benefit society from it.

Practical importance:

- It is expected that this study will contribute to providing a tool to measure the reality of educational tourism in Saudi universities.
- This study may help identify the obstacles they face when employing educational tourism and ways to overcome them.
- It is hoped that the strategy proposed in this study will help decision-makers and senior management officials at Tabuk University in preparing the necessary training plans and programs to enhance the competitiveness of the university.
- The study explains the most important obstacles and problems in implementing educational tourism in universities.
- The study provides a comprehensive guide on how to enhance competitiveness among universities.

Study terms:

The study included the following terms:

- **Educational tourism Educational tourism**

According to the World Tourism Organization, educational tourists are individuals or groups who travel to places outside their usual environment and stay there for more than 24 hours but not more than a year: with the motivation to engage in learning, business, leisure and other activities.(2019. Haraneh, et al)

Educational tourism is a form of tourism activity that focuses on educational content to meet the needs of the swimmer and their motivation to gain knowledge during their travel.Malihah & Setiyorini, 2020).

We can define it as a specific and clear educational experience, in which one travels from one place to another with the aim of learning and acquiring skills, and in addition to that, the main goal may be entertainment and enjoyment.

- **(The competitiveness of universities)**

Huwaihi and Al-Suhaimi (2019) define it as: “The university’s ability to excel and achieve qualitative superiority over its competitors, and to obtain advanced positions in the global ranking of universities through its possession of the necessary resources and competencies, which enables it to accomplish its activities and provide its services in a unique manner at the lowest cost and highest quality.” (p. 6).

The researcher defines it procedurally as the ability of Saudi universities to acquire and attract incoming students, which gives them an advantage and superiority over their competitors from local, regional and international universities.

- **(A Suggested Perception)**

Zain Al-Din (2013) defines it as: “Future planning based on actual field results through methodological or quantitative tools to build a general intellectual framework adopted by categories of researchers or educators.” (p. 6)

The researcher defines it procedurally as: a future work approach that aims to enhance the competitiveness of Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage in light of the review of educational tourism.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Based on the cumulative nature of science, any research becomes clear through previous studies and research and the results reached. The researcher presents these studies as follows:

First, Arabic studies:

1- Study (Ashraf Ahmed, 2020)

Titled: A proposed vision to activate educational tourism to enhance the national economy.

The research aimed to develop a vision for the requirements for activating educational tourism for its role in strengthening national economies. Using the descriptive approach, some scientific writings, reports and international experiences related to educational tourism and international students were analyzed. The research addressed the concept of educational tourism, its importance, its origins and the factors affecting it, its types and its effects on national economies and its reality in Egypt, especially on international students, and ended with identifying the requirements for activating educational tourism. The research concluded that educational tourism is an important source for strengthening national economies, and has positive effects on the system of international relations and strengthening the soft power of the state. The research recommended the need to pay attention to educational tourism and combine all official and civil national efforts to spread awareness of the importance of educational tourism.

2- Study by Najwa Al-Fawaz (2020)

Titled: The orientation of universities to achieve competitive advantage based on the principles of internationalization of higher education in line with the requirements of the objectives of the NEOM project.

The study aimed to identify the degree of orientation of Tabuk University to achieve competitive advantage, based on the principles of internationalization of higher education in line with the

requirements of the NEOM project objectives. To achieve the study objectives, the researcher used the descriptive analytical approach. The study sample was selected randomly, and consisted of (53) academic leaders at Tabuk University (deans of colleges). To achieve the study objectives, the researcher used the questionnaire as a study tool that was applied to collect data and answer the research questions. The results of the study indicated that Tabuk University showed a very high orientation to achieve competitive advantage based on the principles of internationalization of higher education in line with the requirements of the NEOM project objectives. It also showed that the NEOM project faces very large obstacles to achieving competitive advantage. The results of the study also showed that Tabuk University obtained a very high score for the dimension of the requirements necessary to achieve a competitive advantage, based on the principles of internationalization of higher education. The results of the study revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in the degree of orientation of Tabuk University towards achieving a competitive advantage according to the principles of internationalization of higher education, including the requirements of the NEOM project, attributed to the following variables: job duties, gender, academic rank, and years of experience.

3- Farouk Atallah's study (2020)

Title: Educational Tourism as a Tool to Increase the Competitiveness of Education in Egypt: A Critical Study

The aim of the research is to evaluate educational tourism in Egypt. The research methodology is through a critical study of the researcher based on the work experience and responsibility of international students, as well as in light of international experiences of educational tourism. The most important results: Among the important results highlighted by the study is that the Ministry of Higher Education in Egypt has a new vision for educational tourism through which it seeks to attract more international students to study in Egypt and the medical sector has acquired a large percentage of international students. Limitations: There is no specific current information obtained by higher education experts or their responsibility, so the researcher relies on his own review of the limited published information available and his own responsibility in the work. The study presented some recommendations, including increasing the percentage of joint academic programs with international universities, and granting incentives and benefits to tourism companies that provide educational tourism services and facilities..

4- Study (Presented by Waheeba, 2021)

Titled: Educational Tourism: Reality and Prospects (A Study of the Jordanian Experience)

The current research aims to clarify the concept and importance of educational tourism in general, and through it we learn about the reality and prospects of Jordan's experience in the field of educational tourism and its efforts made in this framework. The study relied on the inductive approach, where information related to educational tourism in general and educational tourism in Jordan was collected from various sources, articles, master's and doctoral theses, and websites. We analyzed what was mentioned in these sources, in order to reach generalizable results and recommendations that can be used. The study concluded that Jordan's experience is distinctive and important; The study recommended the necessity of developing the university tool and paying attention to the efficiency of the teaching staff and coordinating Jordanian universities with advanced Western universities in order to create a competitive advantage in terms of the quality of university performance, which is a factor of attraction for students from other countries.

5- Study (Khaled bin Abdul Karim bin Suleiman Al-Naseer, 2021)

Titled: The Independence of Saudi Universities to Achieve Competitive Advantage in Light of American and British Experiences.

The study aimed to present a proposed vision for the independence of Saudi universities to achieve competitive advantage in light of American and British experiences. To achieve the study objectives, the descriptive approach was used, and the questionnaire was relied upon to collect data. The study was applied to a sample of (56) academic experts. The study reached the following results: The dimensions of university independence were represented in the administrative dimension, the financial dimension, and the academic dimension, and that the degree of its importance in achieving competitive advantage from the point of view of the study individuals was high, that the difficulties facing university independence to achieve competitive advantage were high, and that the approval of the study sample individuals on the proposals to activate university independence to achieve competitive advantage was high. The study concluded by presenting a proposed vision for the independence of Saudi universities to achieve competitive advantage from American and British experiences, including the starting points, goals, pitfalls, implementation stages, difficulties, and evaluation.

Secondly, foreign studies

6- study (Kadek Ayu Ekasani, Ni Kadek Ajeng Wangi Bhuanaputri, Paulin Yosephanny, Felicia Johny Alberta, 2020).

Titled: The Role of Educational Tourism in Indonesian Development.

The study attempts to discover the relationship between educational tourism and Indonesian development. Educational tourism is one of the types of tourism activities recognized by the Indonesian government. It is a field trip related to an activity or trip whose purpose is recreation or entertainment and contains educational materials. The activities in it were used the interview data method to collect data to obtain some information from local people or the community, and qualitative descriptive data. The results showed that teaching tourism in English through the phenomenon of Kampung Ingres is one of the educational tourism destinations in Indonesia. The results showed that educational tourism has many benefits, such as creating job opportunities, improving the education system, and increasing the competitiveness of young generations. The role of education can make the country able to enjoy a highly developed competitiveness and most importantly.

7- study (Thavorn Thithongkam, John Walsh, 2011)

Title: Higher Level Tourism Education and Competitive Advantage: A Comparison between Thailand and Malaysia

This paper examines the comparative extent of such education at the tertiary level for individuals in both Thailand and Malaysia. It aims to compare the number and diversity of people being trained in the tourism and hospitality industry and the extent to which languages are taught. The results show that there is some disconnect between the languages available and the languages desired by tourists in terms of their mother tongue. The study therefore recommends that the future of tourism education in Thailand and Malaysia could be divided into two areas. Firstly, there will be a collaborative programme between universities and government tourism organisations funded and supported by the government. Secondly, the development of postgraduate programmes for people with university qualifications in tourism and related fields to enhance their skills by gaining additional qualifications to enhance their career prospects is also offered, with a focus on languages. A range of languages are offered in tourism education.

8- study (Sabrina Tomasi & Gigliola Paviotti and Alessio Cavicchi, 2020)

Titled: Educational Tourism, Local Development and the Role of Universities

This study summarizes views on how higher education institutions can (HEIs) Promoting local development through educational tourism, the results show that international students can be

considered educational tourists, and their stay can benefit them and in this context, the university can actively facilitate relationships between tourists and local stakeholders to promote learning in the destination and improve the sustainability of the local economy, some reports on specific cases are described and the tourism component should be considered by any institution that organizes or manages educational programs, in order to exploit the opportunities offered by the destination to achieve learning objectives. More specifically, the study focuses on educational tourism related to higher education students in international mobility programs, who are educational tourists in terms of their general experience in the destination including leisure and tourism activities. The results of the study confirm the need for further research on educational tourism to formulate intervention models.

9- study (Marta-Christina Suci¹, Marco Savastano², Gheorghe-Alexandru Stativă³, Irina Gorelova⁴, 2022)

Titled Educational Tourism and Local Development

This study presents educational tourism and highlights the key role it plays in local development. The study used a multi-level approach. The indicators of this central axis, specifically educational tourism, were analyzed. The results indicate the importance and effectiveness of the role of educational tourism in the local development of the country. The study therefore recommended that international educational tourism programs should cooperate better with universities in order to promote more and better quality educational offerings. Furthermore, the university can develop different marketing and communication strategies in order to highlight its position in this higher education institution, the destination country, and the different tourist attractions according to the local communities. Graduates of these higher education programs should be considered as brand ambassadors for the university and the destination country.

DISCUSSION OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

First, in terms of the goal: Previous studies have varied in terms of educational tourism, the economy, the role of educational tourism in increasing competitiveness in education, as well as its role in developing societies and countries, and comparing countries in their use, as well as strengthening the competitive advantage between universities.

Secondly, in terms of the sample The studies differed in the sample, as some were studies on a sample from one country, a comparative study between two countries, and studies on the global level.

Thirdly, in terms of methodology Previous studies used the descriptive approach and were divided between descriptive analytical and descriptive inductive.

Fourthly, in terms of results: The most important results can be summarized in the following points:

- Educational tourism has many benefits such as creating job opportunities and improving the education system.
- Educational tourism is an important source for strengthening national economies, and has positive effects on the system of international relations and enhancing the soft power of the state.
- The necessity of developing the university tool and paying attention to the efficiency of the teaching staff.
- The importance of supporting competitiveness among universities and working to develop it.

The current study is distinguished from others in terms of its objective, as it aims to develop a proposed strategy using educational tourism to support competitiveness among universities. The current study is also distinguished in terms of selecting the sample, as it chose to work on universities. The study is also distinguished by the fact that it is applied in the Saudi environment in

light of the scarcity of studies in that aspect and in response to governmental and community initiatives.

Study methodology and procedures

In light of the nature of the study and the objectives it seeks, the descriptive approach was used as a content analysis method, as it is the appropriate approach for this study; through which some initiatives that took place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are analyzed, and the efforts made to support educational tourism in the Kingdom are described, including:

1. Tourism Education Initiative

The Saudi Ministry of Tourism has announced its new tourism education initiative, which aims to partner with universities and higher education institutions across the Kingdom to provide and activate unique educational and enrichment programs.(Market, 2023)

The new programmes are designed to align the level of education related to the tourism and hospitality sector with market needs, and provide future employees in the sector with the knowledge and skills needed to secure rewarding careers.(Market, 2023)

This initiative comes as part of the Ministry's strategy to prepare to meet the needs arising from the rapid growth in the tourism sector. The launch of these programs will also ensure the availability of the appropriate talents to support the Kingdom's journey to achieve the goals of the National Tourism Strategy and Vision 2030 by empowering the next generation of Saudi talents. The university's educational program will allow students to enroll in a number of specialized programs, such as the "Diploma in Tourism and Travel" at Tabuk University in partnership with Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the "Diploma in Hospitality in Mountain Resorts" at King Khalid University in partnership with La Roche School of Switzerland, the "Diploma in Hospitality and Business Administration" from King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, the Diploma in Medical Tourism at Al-Batterjee Medical College with the University of Palermo in Italy, and the Master of Management - Tourism Track at Prince Mohammed bin Salman College. (Souq, 2023)

As part of its new tourism education initiative, the Ministry of Tourism has developed four educational enrichment programmes that will be offered in collaboration with a number of major public schools in the Kingdom's various regions, which are expected to witness further expansion in the tourism sector. These programs include "Career in Tourism" at KAUST schools, "Tourism and Hospitality Skills" at King Abdulaziz Model Schools, "Tour Guidance" at Al-Kifah Academy, and "Tourist Destinations: The Saudi Experience" in cooperation with Camp Entertainment, which is scheduled to be held in several regions of the Kingdom. These interactive enrichment programs were designed to encourage students to enroll in tourism majors, to be dealt with within extracurricular activities and summer programs. The participating schools were selected based on the large numbers of their students who enroll in prestigious universities, both within the Kingdom and internationally. (Souq, 2023)

The World Tourism Organization praised UNWTO in its 2023 educational bulletin on the initiative of the Ministry of Tourism in the Kingdom for tourism education "School Enrichment Programs", as one of the valuable examples and ideal models for exploring students' professional tendencies, enhancing their desire to join the tourism sector and investing in enrichment program activities for professional and career development, praising the possibility of benefiting from the experience of the Ministry of Tourism in the Kingdom as an ideal model to be emulated by member states of the World Tourism Organization. (National Platform, 2023 AD)

The tourism education initiative "School Enrichment Programs" launched by the Ministry's Tourism Human Capacity Development Agency during the first quarter of 2023 aims to raise students' awareness and guide their future journey towards tourism education paths, in cooperation with four

international schools: King Abdulaziz Model Schools in Tabuk, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) Schools, Al-Kifah Schools in Al-Ahsa, and Camp Entertainment. It will contribute to raising the level of students' culture in local tourist areas, enhance their concepts to promote the Kingdom as a tourist destination, and help them highlight the cultural heritage and spirit of authentic Saudi hospitality. The initiative will also invest in school enrichment program activities to learn about the state's directions in the Kingdom's Vision 2030, with regard to tourism development in all its elements. (National Platform, 2023).

2. Saudi Tourism E-Learning Platform

An educational platform about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a leading tourist destination by introducing the information needed by local and international tourism partners regarding tourist destinations, regulations, visas, activities, etc. (National Platform, 2024).

From the above, it becomes clear that university education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia needs to unify future efforts by developing a clear strategy to achieve competitiveness in the field of educational tourism between Saudi universities and between regional and international universities, through application to Tabuk University.

Second: The proposed strategy for employing educational tourism to enhance the competitiveness of Saudi universities (Tabuk University as a model):

Proposed strategy premises

The university and its leadership's understanding of social responsibility, its topics, principles and benefits will greatly help integrate social responsibility. The beginning of understanding social responsibility is represented by considering all the potential impacts of the university's activities and decisions on society, and the extent to which there is a possibility of negative results resulting from those activities and procedures. Therefore, the university should have a tool for self-assessment of all activities and decisions to reveal the nature of their impacts on society and people. This is done by opening channels for dialogue with all those affected by the university's decisions and activities from stakeholders or an interactive window through the university's official website. Feedback from those affected by those decisions and activities serves as an information base for decision-making and taking those interests into account. Then, the university's response to the needs and requirements of its community is stipulated in the periodic reports on social responsibility for two reasons: the first is the continuity of receiving that information after the public is convinced that their ideas and suggestions, in addition to their needs, are being considered by the university, and the second is obtaining the necessary support to continue the social responsibility programs.

The proposed strategy is based on the following principles:

- Competitiveness depends on several basic elements, which are achieving and maximizing the satisfaction of all stakeholders by providing distinguished products and services compared to competitors, identifying the current and future needs of beneficiaries and then meeting them in a better way than competitors, being the first to seize opportunities to achieve new competitive advantages, the ability to surprise and impress others, taking the necessary measures and methods to create a competitive advantage, announcing the approved strategies and working to implement them to know the reactions of competitors, and organizing successive and consistent steps for strategic development, which allows for the creation of new marketing opportunities.
- Globalization in its various forms has led to competition between countries in terms of the quality of goods and services. Therefore, applying quality in the education sector, including educational tourism, ensures the achievement of quality in all other productive or service sectors in society.
- The emergence of new concepts for university education as a result of the increasing interest of developed countries in the investment role of education on the one hand, especially in the field of educational tourism, and ensuring its quality to achieve competitiveness on the other hand.

➤ **Proposed detailed plan for educational tourism as a proposed strategy to enhance the competitiveness of Saudi universities:**

1. Arranging issues and priorities of educational tourism

The issues of educational tourism are very numerous and varied, and what determines the university's relevance to these issues are two factors: the first: the nature of the university's work and its capabilities, and the second: the needs of stakeholders and the extent of the necessity of those needs. In order for the university to determine the relevant issues, it can do the following:

- Identify and classify stakeholders as previously explained.
- Identifying issues and areas of educational tourism related to university functions.
- Identifying permanent educational tourism issues and other temporary issues that arise under special circumstances.

After identifying the core issues that the university should be concerned with from the issues of educational tourism, and their number is usually large, the university determines the priorities for work among those issues. The university must involve stakeholders (students, faculty members, employees, members of the local community, owners of projects and factories, and others who are related to the work of the university) in the process of determining priorities.

2. Determining the university's direction in educational tourism

At this stage, the university's direction regarding educational tourism is determined by making it an integral part of its policies, institutional culture, structures, strategies and operations. This can be done through:

- Adopting written rules, guidelines and a code of ethics that define the university's commitment to educational tourism.
- Incorporating educational tourism as a key element in the university's strategy and integrating it into systems, policies and operations.
- Implementing programs, activities and initiatives, as the university's educational tourism plan is managed and put into practice through the Educational Tourism Committee.

3. Communication

Practices needed Educational tourism To many types of internal and external communication as these communications serve the university's activity in relation to Educational tourism Including:

- Raising awareness internally and externally of the university's strategies, objectives, plans, performance and the challenges it faces in implementing them. Educational tourism.
- Create dialogue with stakeholders.
- Demonstrate the university's responsiveness to and commitment to stakeholder needs. Educational tourism
- Internal and external motivation to support the university's activities in social responsibility.

4. Review and Improve

The effective performance of educational tourism is based on the extent of careful monitoring, evaluation and continuous review of the activities carried out by the university, the progress achieved, the objectives achieved and all the efforts made. The continuous monitoring process aims to ensure that the planned activities are implemented in the required manner and to identify problems and crises that may be outside the normal framework and then make appropriate adjustments.

Study Recommendations:

- Enhancing the presence of Saudi universities in international rankings by developing scientific and technological infrastructure and striving to comply with accreditation standards with the aim of obtaining international accreditation from international accreditation institutions with an international reputation.
- Encouraging the University Affairs Council to compete between different universities in their ability to attract visitors through some awards for universities that achieve higher results in educational tourism.
- Providing advice and community support to international students, providing accommodation and housing services, and providing care for them from their arrival at the airport until their return to their countries.
- Establishing units or offices for international graduates at universities and the Ministry of Higher Education to strengthen links and communication channels with graduates and provide post-graduation services, to enhance the Kingdom's reputation as a study destination
- Promoting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a destination for study and learning by holding international education exhibitions, opening offices, and communicating with targeted countries and regions to market university and educational services and programs, enhancing the Kingdom's image as a study destination, and opening new markets, with a focus on digital marketing designed to enhance the awareness of target groups of the Kingdom's educational and tourism potential.
- Simplify visa and residence procedures for international students and their families, expand online services for visa applicants, simplify the process of renewing student visas and securing long-term visas for the duration of study, and give more privileges to study visas to make them more attractive than other countries.
- Simplify admission, registration and re-enrollment procedures for international students in international university and educational programs, and prepare and continuously develop brochures and guides to keep pace with any changes that may occur in systems and regulations.
- More investment in scholarships by building a national program that contributes to attracting the best mental capabilities and talents to Saudi universities, which will make them, after their graduation and distinction, a feature of the reputation of Saudi universities and the international programs they offer. The scholarship program can also be used to open new channels for educational tourism.
- Expanding the scope of educational programs offered in English while offering specialized training programs for those enrolled in programs taught in Arabic for non-native speakers. Diversifying study path options, offering summer programs, blended learning programs, and online programs to suit the needs of international students. Adding more flexibility to study while maintaining quality standards.
- Establishing educational zones in tourist cities, especially those with airports, to become a meeting place for the largest number of international students, and to facilitate the promotion of the Kingdom in the field of educational tourism.
- Strengthening the role of the media in all its forms in developing community awareness of the importance of educational tourism for the national economy, and the role of international students in improving the Kingdom's reputation as a study destination, and in a way that contributes to creating a public opinion that supports the expansion of attracting international students.
- Participation of the private sector and civil society in awareness efforts on the importance of educational tourism and in initiatives to support educational tourists.

- Maximizing the competitiveness of Saudi educational institutions at all levels to occupy advanced positions in international competitiveness reports and thus enhancing the status and reputation of Saudi education globally.
- Launching educational programs in rare specializations that will support Saudi universities and distinguish them in the field of educational tourism.

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