Transforming Toward a Digitally Enabled Tourism Experience in Saudi Arabia



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Foreword

Tourism has become a strategic driver of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 transformation, accelerating investment, digital innovation, economic diversification, and global engagement. Over the past years, the Kingdom has strengthened its tourism ecosystem through the development of world-class destinations, expanded infrastructure, and enhanced connectivity.

Building on this foundation, Saudi Arabia adopted a digital-first approach through the launch of the Digital Tourism Strategy in 2022, transforming how tourism is planned, managed, and experienced. As the sector enters its next phase, sustaining momentum will require a more integrated digital ecosystem enabled by smart infrastructure, intelligent data and analytics, and immersive technologies.

This report explores how these strategic enablers can support Saudi Arabia's ambition to become a leading global digital tourism destination beyond 2025.



KSA Tourism:

From a Traditional Destination to a Global Digital Experience

01



Saudi Arabia has positioned tourism as a cornerstone of Vision 2030, aiming to become a global leader in the sector



Saudi Arabia has been on a transformational journey to become a global hub for digital innovation and cultural experiences, by positioning Tourism as a core pillar of Vision 2030. Tourism growth supports the Kingdom's development by:

- **Generating large-scale employment**
- **Strengthening international positioning**
- **Advancing cultural diplomacy**

Under Vision 2030, tourism was guided by clear growth targets, many of which have already achieved substantial progress, highlighting the impact of the Kingdom's transformation initiatives.

Major Achievements and Milestones under Vision 2030



No. of Annual Visitors

77%

(116 Mn achieved of 150 Mn by 2030)



People Employed in Tourism Sector

60%

(967K of 1.6 Mn by 2030)



Contribution of Tourism Sector to GDP

5%

(of 10% by 2030)



Number of Foreign Umrah Pilgrims

57%

(17 Mn of 30 Mn by 2030)



Number of Saudi sites on World Heritage List

100%

(8 of 8 sites by 2030)

Source: Ministry of Tourism, UNESCO

To achieve these milestones, Saudi Arabia reinforced its tourism sector by developing world-class destinations, expanding hospitality infrastructure, enhancing transport connectivity and revitalizing heritage sites. As the ecosystem matured, the focus shifted from a traditional destination to a more seamless and innovation-driven sector.

The Kingdom identified core digital dimensions across the tourism ecosystem to transition from a traditional destination to a digital tourism ecosystem

Establishing an advanced tourism ecosystem required moving beyond isolated digital initiatives to a holistic rethinking of how the tourism value chain operates. To enable this shift, the Kingdom identified core digital dimensions that provided the foundation for a digitally enabled tourism destination, designed to operate as a connected ecosystem.

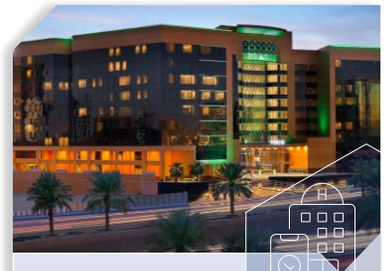
Key pillars for creating a digital tourism destination



- Seamless travel journey
- Ease of doing business
- Innovation enablement
- Digital travel experiences
- Sustainability promotion
- Data-driven decision-making
- Skilled digital workforce
- Investor engagement

The kingdom aimed to embed these dimensions across all components of the tourism ecosystem

Tourism Ecosystem Components



Accommodation

Lodging options (hotels, guesthouses, camps, homestays) that support tourists' stay at the destination



Access

Ease of reaching and moving within a destination through transport, connectivity, and infrastructure



Amenities

Supporting facilities and services (food, sanitation, shopping, healthcare) that enhance tourist experience



Attractions

The natural, cultural, historical, or man-made features that motivate tourists to visit a destination

The Digital Tourism Strategy was designed to embed innovation throughout the entire ecosystem, enabling a seamless visitor experience



The Three-Year Digital Tourism Strategy **was launched in 2022** to further accelerate the tourism sector growth and marked a significant milestone in Saudi Arabia's effort to position itself as a global leader in digital tourism under Vision 2030. The strategy focused on integrating advanced technologies, cross-sector collaboration, and data-driven governance to create a seamless and intelligent tourism ecosystem.

Key Pillars of the Strategy



Pillar 1

Innovative digital products and services to ease ways of doing business



Pillar 2

A seamless stakeholder experience, spanning investors, service providers, and travelers.



Pillar 3

An agile digital technology organization to future-proof the tourism workplace

Projected Outcomes



Achieve global leadership in digital tourism



Export Saudi-driven digital business models worldwide



Redefine visitor experience through seamless, data-led services

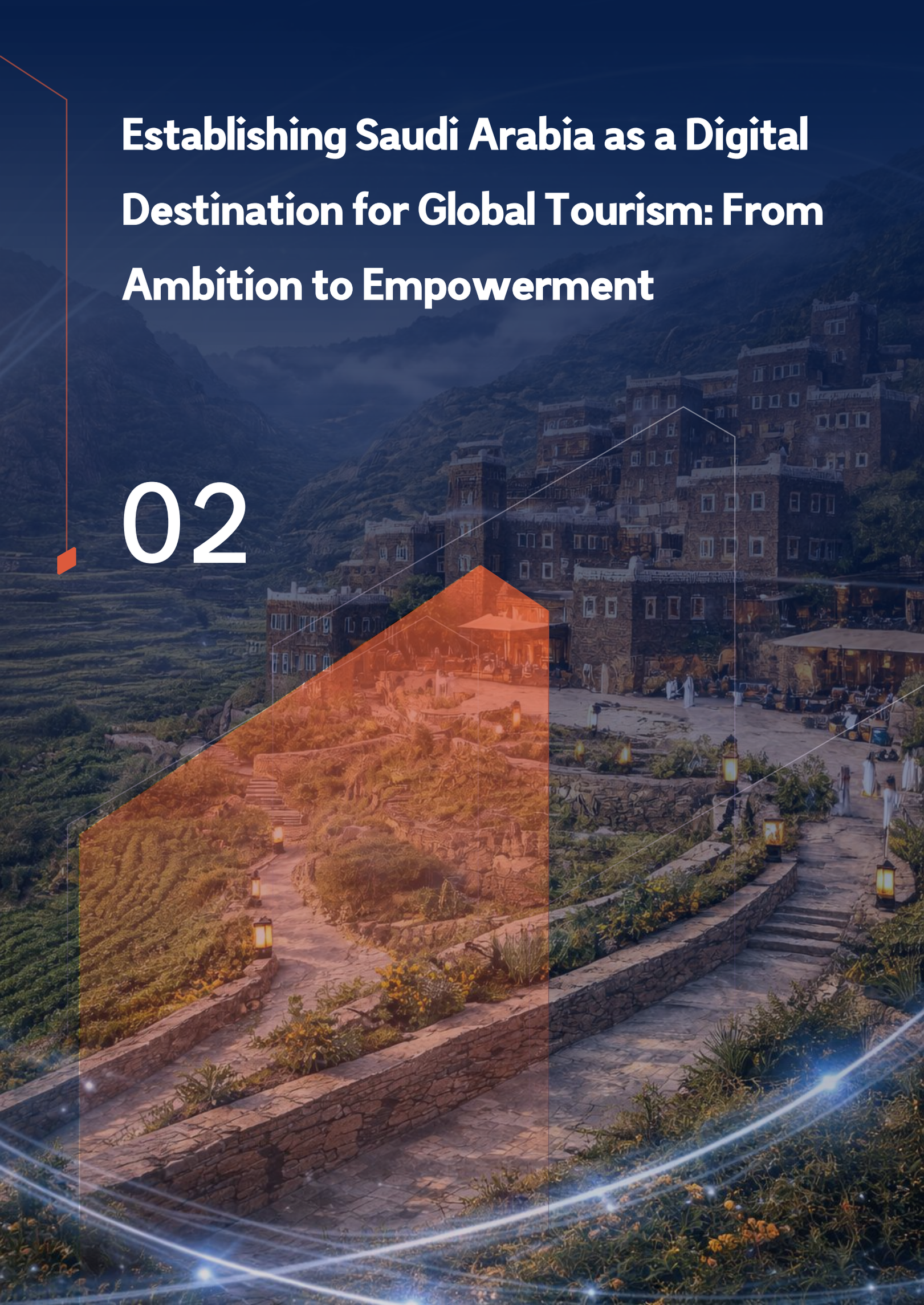


Drive national digital-economy growth through tourism

Visitor experience is a key part of this strategy, guiding digitization and technology initiatives. Through the launch of integrated platforms and interoperable systems, the Kingdom is unifying digital services, data intelligence, and emerging technologies to create a seamless, elevated visitor experience.

Establishing Saudi Arabia as a Digital Destination for Global Tourism: From Ambition to Empowerment

02



Advanced national digital platforms have been implemented to make travel planning, coordination, and management more streamlined for visitors

A suite of digital platforms was launched to deliver the outcomes of the digital tourism strategy. These platforms provide easy access to key services, enabling travelers to obtain information, manage permits & visas, receive real-time updates, and navigate destinations more easily. With their growing adoption, these platforms move beyond enablement to impact, streamlining journeys, reducing friction, and measurably improving the overall visitor experience.

A range of national tourism platforms were developed to improve how visitors plan, enter, and navigate



Visit Saudi
(Saudi Tourism Authority)

- Trip planning tools
- Interactive maps and itineraries
- E-visa application process
- Loyalty and rewards offerings
- 24/7 customer support services
- Regular updates via newsletters

51 million
No. of new users in 2023



Nusuk
(Ministry of Hajj and Umrah)

- Pilgrimage permit issuance (Hajj & Umrah)
- Travel and accommodation booking
- Digital completion certificates
- Seamless booking management services
- 24/7 customer support services
- Regular updates via newsletters

13 Mn+
visitors to the Holy Rawdah since the launch of platform



KSA Visa[1]
(Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

- Online visa applications
- Fee payments
- Application tracking for visa status

18.6 Mn
visas issued in 2023, with around 60 seconds to issue an e-visa



Tawakkalna
(SDAIA and the Ministry of Interior)

- Travel and access management
- Vaccination and health status integration
- Real-time alerts and permit verification
- 24/7 customer support services
- Regular updates via newsletters

34 Mn
Users as of Oct 2025, spanning across 77+ countries



Experience AlUla
(Royal Commission for AlUla)

- Attraction discovery
- Hotel and tour bookings
- Navigation support
- Regular updates via newsletters

220%
220% YoY increase in the share of website visitors completing online bookings

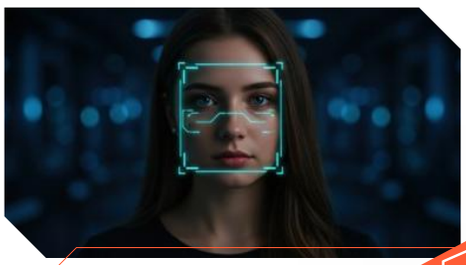
Note: 1. While KSA Visa enables applications for various visa types including tourism, study, and work, Visit Saudi has developed a dedicated e-visa portal that allows travelers to seamlessly apply for tourist visas directly through its platform

The rapid adoption of emerging technologies is transforming how visitors explore and experience tourism destinations

The Kingdom deployed advanced emerging technologies such as AI, XR, IoT, and biometric systems across tourism operations to strengthen mobility, personalization, and cultural engagement. These technologies support functions ranging from secure verification and autonomous transport to immersive storytelling, smart infrastructure, and real-time travel assistance.

New tech-enabled solutions were deployed to deepen visitor interaction with destinations and enhance on-site experiences

Non-exhaustive



Biometric ID Systems

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Saudi Visa Bio app and biometric screening at NEOM Airport enable secure, contactless verification using facial and fingerprint for visa processing and travel.



Autonomous Electric Mobility Pods

AI-enabled, zero-emission pods by the Royal Commission for AlUla offer sustainable, on-demand mobility, improving access and reducing congestion.



XR-based Immersive Experience

The Royal Commission for AlUla uses XR for 3D and audio storytelling, letting visitors virtually explore sites with realistic depth and interaction.



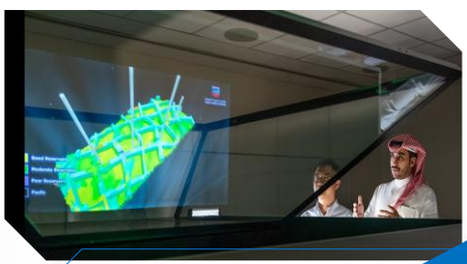
IoT-enabled Smart Tents

Developed by Saudi Telecom Company, smart IoT tents track environmental conditions and send real-time alerts to enhance pilgrim safety.



AI-powered Virtual Travel Companion

Saudi Tourism Authority's virtual assistant SARA AI customizes itineraries, offers multilingual support, and provide real-time travel recommendations.



Holographic Displays

King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) uses life-size holographic projections in exhibitions to deliver immersive cultural storytelling.

Digital platforms and emerging technologies are shaping a seamless, digitally connected visitor journey

Digital platforms and emerging technologies are supporting visitors across all stages of their journey, including pre-travel, during travel, and post-travel. They enable smoother planning and preparation before travel, provide real-time updates and on-ground support during travel, and facilitate follow-up interactions and documentation after travel. Together, these solutions are helping create a more connected and seamless end-to-end visitor experience.

Visitor Journey



Stage	Pre-travel	During Travel	Post-Travel
Key Activities Undertaken	Planning and customizing trip itinerary	Receiving updates on routes, events, weather etc.	Providing feedback and suggestions
	Securing travel documents and e-visa	Navigating destinations and engaging in experiences	Obtaining post-travel certificates/ documents
	Making bookings for flights, accommodation, and destination	Accessing support in case of any challenge	Staying connected through loyalty programs, newsletters, etc.
digital platforms: Visit Saudi	✓	✓	✓
Nusuk	✓	✓	✓
KSA Visa	✓		
Tawakkalna	✓		✓
Experience AlUla	✓	✓	✓
Emerging technologies: Biometric ID Systems	✓	✓	
AI Travel Companion	✓	✓	
Smart Mobility Pods		✓	
XR heritage explorer		✓	
IoT safety Tents		✓	
Holographic Storytelling		✓	

Integrated platforms and smart infrastructure, enabled by targeted operational considerations, will drive the next phase of digital tourism growth

With the Digital Tourism Strategy nearing completion, Saudi Arabia is advancing into the next phase of tourism sector growth centered on destination enhancement, through a set of forward-looking priorities. Advancing these priorities will strengthen long-term competitiveness and accelerate the Kingdom's vision to become the next global digital tourism destination.

Key future priorities



Enhancing platform interoperability to enable real-time, data-driven insights across the digital tourism ecosystem



Accelerating advanced tech infrastructure like 5G, cloud and smart infrastructure to power AI-driven, and immersive experiences



Strengthening last-mile connectivity through digital systems to ensure fluid, end-to-end visitor mobility across destinations

Realizing these priorities will require targeted actions across a set of critical operational considerations shaped by underlying implementation challenges.

Key considerations

Managing Integration Complexity across platforms through shared data standards, and clear governance to ensure seamless visitor journey

Addressing Cybersecurity Risks by ensuring strong cybersecurity and secure data sharing to protect unified tourism data and maintain trust

Strengthening Workforce Readiness by building digital maturity, technology skills, and the ability to adopt advanced tourism technologies

Overcoming Infrastructure Gaps by expanding 5G, smart systems, and cloud infrastructure to enable advanced and real-time tourism experiences

Translating these key priorities into impact by addressing operational areas can be achieved through learning from leading global destinations and international best practices, which will provide valuable insights in strengthening the Kingdom's strategic direction.

Global Benchmarking: Learning from Best Practices

03



Leading tourism destinations illustrate that visitor experiences can be made smarter through seamless integration of data, technology, and mobility

Global destinations are advancing similar priorities by integrating interoperable systems, deploying immersive technologies, and enhancing mobility infrastructure, showing how digital, physical, and experiential upgrades collectively reshape visitor planning, engagement, and movement across destinations.

Case in Point



Enhancing Platform Interoperability

VisitBritain Shop unifies different tourism services into a single interoperable ecosystem, reducing integration complexity and enabling seamless trip planning.

UK

Check Barcelona App integrates inputs from multiple city systems to display real-time occupancy data for public spaces, improving visitor flow and their experience.

Spain



Accelerating Advanced Tech Infrastructure

Singapore's Tourism Industry Digital Plan supports tourism SMEs with digital roadmaps, advisory support, and training, & grants, to enable faster tech adoption.

Singapore

Portugal's N-TourXP-5G smart tourism pilot in Aveiro leverages 5G, AI, and immersive technologies to deliver personalized visitor experiences.

Portugal



Strengthening Last-Mile Connectivity

Dubai's S'hail App integrates public transport, taxis, and ride-hailing services into one multilingual platform, strengthening last-mile connectivity.

UAE

Beijing's MaaS Platform connects metro, bus, bike, and ride-hailing services into a unified app, allowing journey planning, digital payments, and receiving green-travel incentives.

China

Experiences from global destinations illustrate how operational considerations have been addressed, helping inform Saudi Arabia's path toward next-generation destinations. This will be enabled by 3 strategic levers: smart infrastructure, integrated data and intelligence systems, and immersive experiential technologies.

Creating an Exceptional Digital Tourism Experience: Vision for the Future

04

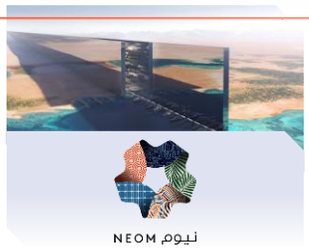


Digital tourism can be elevated by building connected and intelligent destinations that integrate technology, data, and experience

The Kingdom has already initiated efforts towards the development of several smart, digitally connected destinations that combine restored heritage districts with modern urban spaces, improved public amenities, and a wider range of cultural and leisure offerings. These destinations demonstrate early progress in creating connected, accessible, and experience-rich environments for visitors.

Digitally Interconnected Destinations













The future of tourism in Saudi Arabia lies in transforming these into fully connected digital destinations, where smart infrastructure, advanced analytics, and immersive technologies work together to enrich visitor experience. These strategic enablers, supported by interoperable systems, a digitally skilled workforce, advanced tech infrastructure, and robust cybersecurity, can collectively redefine how destinations are designed, managed, and experienced.

Strategic Enablers

Smart Infrastructure

IoT-enabled facilities, automation, and smart mobility assets that improve accessibility, efficiency, comfort, and visitor interaction

Intelligent Data and Analytics Systems

AI-driven analytics and predictive insights that enable real time decisions, operational efficiency, and personalized visitor experiences

Immersive and Experiential Technologies

AR/VR, digital twins, and metaverse platforms that enrich storytelling, bring attractions to life, and enable virtual destination discovery



Smart Infrastructure can enable destinations respond dynamically to visitor presence, movement, and needs

Smart Infrastructure Systems such as IoT-enabled facilities, automated systems, and smart mobility assets, shape the on-ground visitor experience by improving comfort, movement, and ease of exploration. By integrating adaptive design and service-supporting infrastructure, destinations can feel more welcoming, intuitive, and effortless to navigate.

For Saudi Arabia, strengthening this pillar can enable proactive visitor support and enhances the overall sense of comfort and flow across tourism spaces.



Use cases illustrating practical implementation across the tourism ecosystem

Accommodation facilities



Digital Check-In and Access

Biometric or mobile-based access that enables guests to bypass front desks entirely, allowing seamless room entry, elevator access, and amenity usage through a single secure authentication



Digital Indoor Wayfinding

Digital signage guide guests through large accommodation complexes, directing them to rooms, dining areas, wellness facilities, or event spaces based on real-time congestion

accessibility



Intelligent Queue-less Destinations

Virtual waitlists and dynamic routing systems that replace static queues, allowing visitors to explore nearby attractions while receiving real-time return prompts



Unified Visitor Identity Token

A unified, consent-based digital identity that enables hotel check-ins, attraction entry, payments, and local transport with a single authentication, creating a frictionless journey

Facilities



Urban Acoustic Comfort Zones

Sensor-based audio environments that monitor and modulate soundscapes using directional acoustics to reduce sensory overload and enhance visitor well-being



Robotic Micro-Mobility for On-Demand Support

Autonomous roaming support units that deliver water, first-aid, guidance, or cultural storytelling while navigating high-footfall zones to assist visitors in real time

Attractions



Climate-Responsive Infrastructure

Adaptive shading structures, ventilated façades, and temperature-modulating surfaces that maintain comfort in outdoor areas during varying climate



On-Demand Pop-Up Pavilion Ecosystems

Flexible pavilions that expand, relocate, or retract automatically based on real-time crowd patterns and seasonal demand, optimizing space usage and efficiency

Intelligent Data and Analytics Systems help destinations anticipate needs, personalize journeys, and optimize visitor flow in real time



Intelligent Data & Analytics Systems including AI-driven analytics, big data, and predictive insights, connect insights across mobility, ticketing, hospitality, and cultural touchpoints to understand how visitors move and engage. With real-time awareness of demand, preferences, and crowd flow, destinations can make visitor movement smooth and exploration feel natural

Strengthening this pillar enables Saudi Arabia to deliver journeys that are both well-orchestrated and personally meaningful.

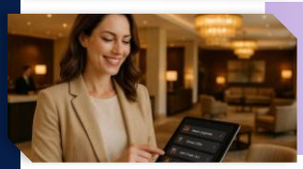
Use cases illustrating practical implementation across the tourism ecosystem

Accommodation facilities



Context-Aware Guest Support Systems

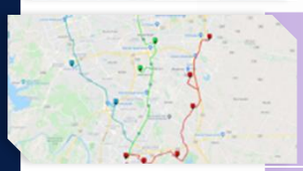
AI-enabled in-room and property-wide systems that analyze guest behavior and real-time conditions to recommend services such as dining slots, wellness availability, or late checkout options



Guest Preference and Behavior Intelligence

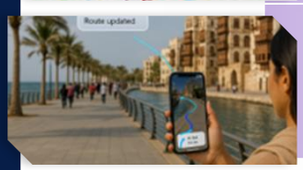
Consent-based data systems that analyze in-stay interactions, service usage, and movement patterns to build an understanding of guest preferences and provide personalized services

accessibility



Predictive Crowd Flow Management

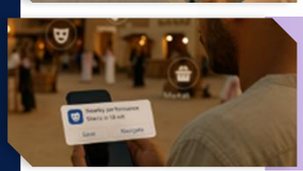
Real-time analytics that detect potential crowd build-up and redistribute visitors toward nearby experiences, maintaining comfort, safety, and smooth circulation



Dynamic Cultural Narrative Routing

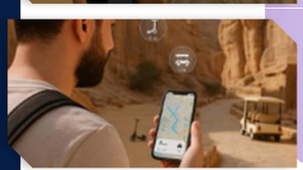
Routes and itineraries that adapt in real time to visitor identity, time available, and crowd conditions, ensuring every journey feels relevant and well-paced

Facilities



Context-Aware Cultural ‹Explore Mode›

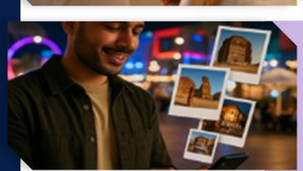
A location-responsive app mode that triggers nearby experiences in real time, such as cafes, artisans, performances, or heritage points



Proactive Mobility Positioning

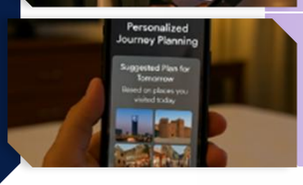
Systems that learn visitor movement patterns and automatically position the nearest mobility options along their expected route for seamless travel

Attractions



Personal Journey Memory Journal

A digital travel log that automatically compiles places visited, stories heard, and photos captured, allowing visitors to revisit and share their Saudi journey



Personalized Journey Planning

Evolving daily plans based on what the visitor enjoyed the previous day, allowing recommendations to create a continuous cultural storyline rather than isolated activities

Immersive and Experiential Technologies can deepen cultural connection by making exploration more sensory, interactive, and meaningful



Immersive and experiential technologies, including AR/VR, digital twins, and metaverse platforms, enrich the visitor journey by transforming cultural understanding into lived experiences. By layering storytelling across sight, sound, scent, and interaction, destinations become more engaging, expressive, and memorable.

Strengthening this pillar will enable Saudi Arabia to move beyond observation-based tourism toward experiences that are immersive, personalized, and designed to be shared.

Use cases illustrating practical implementation across the tourism ecosystem

Accommodation facilities



Virtual Room Personalization Pre-Arrival

Guests preview and customize room ambiance, layouts, and experience settings through digital interfaces before arrival to create personalized and satisfactory stay experience



Digital Window and Landscape Projection Systems

In rooms without views, immersive digital windows project real-time or curated landscapes, cultural scenes, or natural environments, enhancing the sense of place

accessibility



Augmented Destination Discovery

AR-enabled access platforms that allow visitors to point their device at destinations to instantly view information such as ticket prices, opening hours, crowd levels, travel time, and more



Spatial Destination Intelligence Maps

Large-scale immersive maps at access points that visualize the destination in 3D, showing travel time, accessibility levels, congestion, and experience intensity across districts

Facilities



Multisensory Culinary Immersion

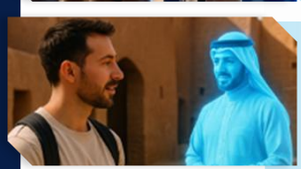
A VR dining experience where aroma, sound, and visuals accompany traditional dishes, allowing visitors to smell, hear, and see the cultural journey of the food as they taste it



Smart Personal Shopping Assistants

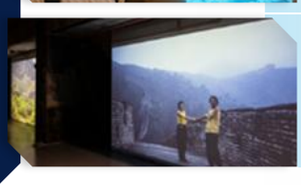
AI-enabled shopping assistants guide visitors through retail areas, suggesting products based on preferences, budget, and time availability

Attractions



Holo-Guide Cultural Companion

A friendly holographic guide that explains greetings, customs, and cultural stories in real time based on where the visitor is standing



Social Memory Projection Walls

Shared projection walls where photos and moments captured by visitors are blended into evolving visual stories, helping travelers feel part of the place

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia stands at a pivotal moment in advancing its Vision 2030 tourism ambitions. Building on a strong foundation, the Kingdom is now focused on enhancing connectivity, fostering innovation, and leveraging data intelligence to create greater value across the tourism ecosystem. The focus extends beyond increasing visitor numbers toward enriching journeys through personalized, immersive, and meaningful experiences that leave a lasting impact.

Realizing this vision will depend on how effectively Saudi Arabia advances the outcomes of its digital tourism strategy to build a fully connected tourism ecosystem. By integrating digital platforms with smart infrastructure, advanced data and analytics, and immersive technologies, the Kingdom can unify diverse initiatives into a seamless and connected visitor journey.

This integrated approach will support the development of fully connected digital tourism destinations, helping Saudi Arabia strengthen its global competitiveness and position itself as a leader in insight-led, experience-driven tourism that drives sustainable economic diversification while celebrating its rich cultural heritage.



Contact Us

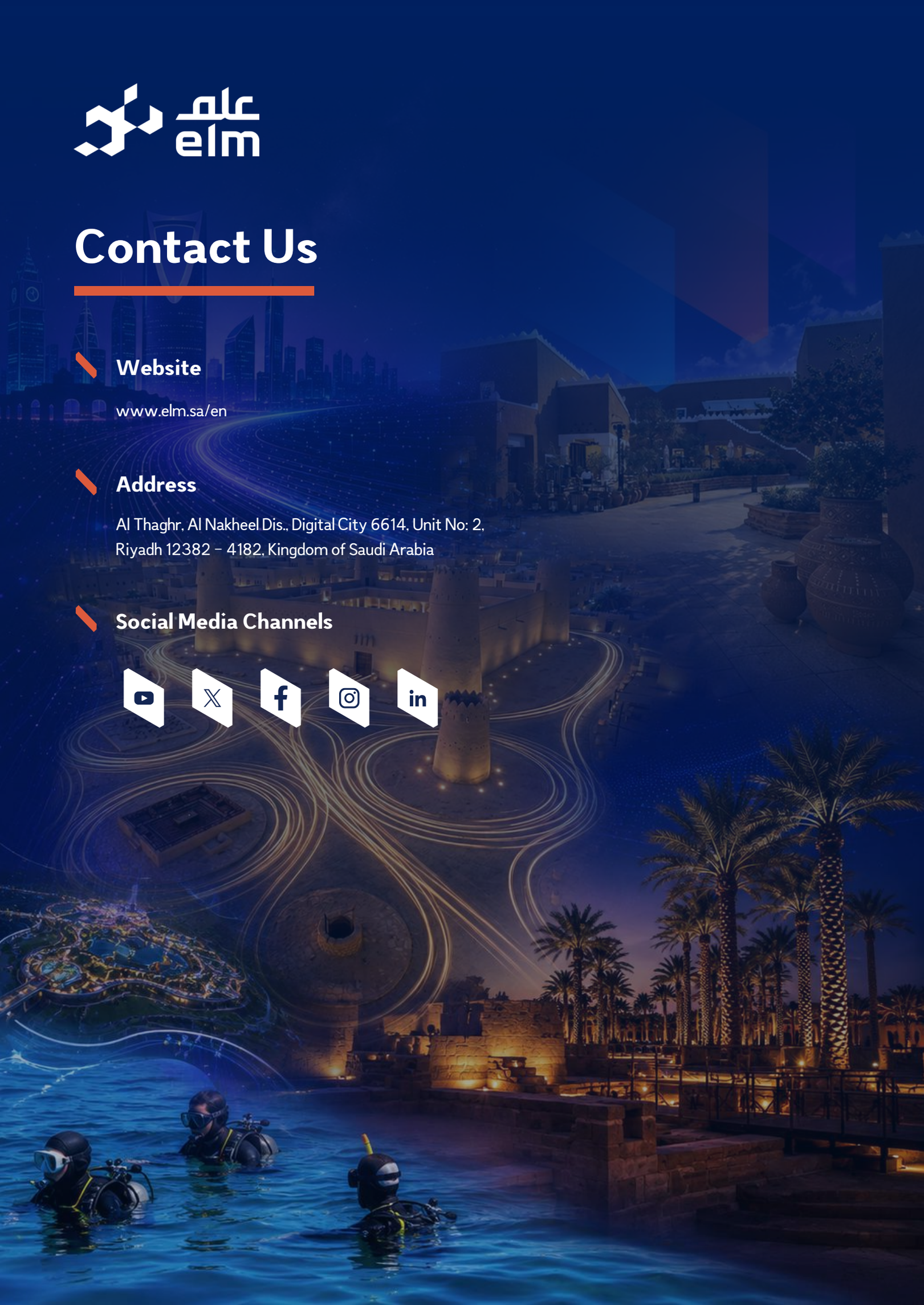
Website

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Address

Al Thaghr, Al Nakheel Dis., Digital City 6614, Unit No: 2,
Riyadh 12382 – 4182, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Social Media Channels



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