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EDITORIAL

Heritage, in general, is a key element for tourism. It represents, with all its tourist attractions whether cultural sites, museums, or natural scenery, the most important element of tourism that seekers of new tourist destinations across the world look for. Driven by their passion for discovery, love of knowledge, and desire to spend holidays in an atmosphere of comfort and entertainment, tourists usually look for captivating destinations. The relationship between heritage and tourism will always remain highly intertwined, especially since most world heritage sites are included on the list of the most popular tourist destinations for tourists and global tourist offices.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has recently witnessed the launch of tourist visas for people wishing to visit the Kingdom and learn about its tourist areas. Multiple entry visas extending for an entire year will be available for people from all over the world for the purpose of tourism, allowing them to reside in the Kingdom for ninety days over the period of a year. To this end and to facilitate the tourist visa application, the "electronic tourist visa portal" has been recently launched.

This new system represents an important step in promoting tourism in the Kingdom and receiving tourists from various countries around the world, seeking to explore its rich cultural heritage, experience its vibrant culture, and enjoy its hospitality and enchanting natural gardens. Tourist attractions in the Kingdom rich with archeological sites from various historic ages are countless and varied, including natural landmarks with breathtaking scenes in the mountainous region of Asir in the south and the beaches of the Red Sea in the west. The central part is rich with archeological sites, cultural heritage, date palm farms and tourist attractions in Al-Qassim, Ad Diriyah and others. Furthermore, there are also the sand dunes of the Empty Quarter and the beaches of the Eastern Region. Farther to the north, lie the Aja and Salma mountains in Hail, Al Ula, the Dumat Al-Jandal and Al-Rajajeel Site in Al-Jouf, and many other archaeological and heritage cultural sites that attract tourists. On top of all these, tourists enjoy visiting the holy cities of Makkah and Medina.

The Kingdom has recently enjoyed the registration of five sites inscribed on the UNESCO list, including Al-Diriyah, the first historical capital city of Saudi Arabia, the historic city of Jeddah on the Red Sea in the west, Mada'in Saleh in the northwest of the Kingdom, the Oasis of Al-Ahsa in the east of the Kingdom near the Arabian Gulf, and the sites of Jubbah and Shuwaymis in the northern Hail Region.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the home of ancient civilizations that flourished on its soil during successive historical periods, making Saudi Arabia rich in diverse cultural heritage, with its significance and scientific weight. This cultural heritage helps researchers to understand the history and study of cultures related to ancient civilizations that dominated the Arabian Peninsula in general and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular. It is worth mentioning that Saudi Arabia occupies three quarters of the area of the Arabian Peninsula; the original home of Arabs.

Cultural tourism has currently become one of the most important elements of tourism policies. According to the estimates of the World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism represents about a third of the total international tourism market. Moreover, it grows annually at an exponential rate due to the expansion of activities developing tourism and utilizing cultural attractions in tourism marketing. The concept of cultural tourism today is no longer limited to visiting archaeological sites, historical monuments and museums, learning about traditional industries and attending art exhibitions or festivals. Instead, new elements have been introduced by launching various cultural events and festivals to diversify tourism products to attract new segments of tourists and visitors, and to build a sustainable cultural tourism industry.

Since the inception of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, it has carried out important work in the care of, maintenance, restoration and registration of archaeological and touristic sites. It has also taken administrative measures to protect and preserve them from tampering. It has also allowed many international archaeological missions, with the participation of academics from the Kingdom, to excavate for archaeological sites and work in the restoration of many cultural heritage sites that could become tourist attractions for visitors from inside and outside the Kingdom.

Development of the tourism industry requires the provision of a civilized tourism environment, an infrastructure that rises to the aspirations of the government. It further requires careful attention to visitor centers in archeological and tourist sites, and the renovation of those centers to become developed museums that attract tourists. In addition, training courses should also be organized on a large scale in various regions of the Kingdom to qualify national cadres to work in the various supportive services related to tourism. Workers in tourist sites need to be trained to provide the highest quality services and to ensure that tourists visiting the Kingdom become a promotional element when they return to their homelands. This would not be achieved unless tourism services be provided in the best way possible to compete with the services provided by countries with advanced experience in tourism industry.

Needless to mention that countries, that represent desirable tourist destinations, and possess rich and valuable cultural heritage sites, must provide creative management of cultural heritage sites. They need to prepare to accommodate tourist groups while protecting and preserving those sites. They also need to provide all services that would develop their employment as tourist attractions, and at the same time preserve their authenticity and cultural heritage components.

Activating the tourism movement in the Kingdom of Saud Arabia requires access to tourist groups in various countries of the world, especially tourists interested in visiting the Kingdom. It also requires access to tourists looking for similar tourist areas, whether in terms of the Kingdom's weather in months with mild temperatures, or tourists who love visiting archaeological areas of different historical eras. In addition, modern media should be employed internally and externally to market tourist areas in the Kingdom and to promote them in a contemporary professional way, similar to that used by countries with a developed tourism industry.

Holding archaeological conferences and cultural heritage exhibitions in activities specialized in tourism will play an important role in marketing the tourism trend, and increasing the demand of visitors to tourist areas in the Kingdom. This needs deliberate plans, and cooperation with the colleges of tourism and archaeology in Saudi universities.

Attracting more tourists during the coming years would definitely require an integrated system of planning, providing support services and revamping services in the sites of tourist destinations in the Kingdom. This would also require developing services to meet the needs of tourists in terms of accommodation, food, entertainment and shopping services. In addition, attracting more tourists would need developing traditional and cultural artifacts that visitors look for during their visit to tourist areas. Developing tourist service would create thousands of various jobs in the tourism sector, which is a major challenge that requires unity of effort from various relevant official agencies to qualify these workers and prepare them to become important elements in the national tourism industry.

People around the world generally love tourism and seek places that they have never visited before, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would be a desired and encouraging destination for them to experience for the first time. However, this would not be realized without successful promotional campaigns and programs, with cultural and tourist content encouraging them to choose the Kingdom as their upcoming destination.

The importance of tourism for national income in countries with an advanced tourism industry cannot be overemphasized, whether in terms of income, stimulating the economic cycle, or in terms of creating job opportunities. Indeed, this is what motivates the Kingdom to reinvigorate the tourism industry to become an important resource for the national economy, for the government and for the people who will be working in this sector.

It is undoubtedly important to ensure diversity in the tourism sector, while at the same time respecting the environment, preserving social values, and preserving natural resources. It is also important to develop local areas that are rich in cultural heritage with peculiar qualities and attractive natural components.

Starting this year, Adumatu Journal launched an annual award for the best research paper and student research poster in the Seminar for Arabian Studies held in Leiden, Netherlands, under the name of: "Adumatu Journal Award". The award has been dedicated for the three best research papers and the three best student posters presented at the Seminar. The conference organizing committee has been contacted, and this proposal has been widely received and accepted. During the Arabian Seminar held this year in Leiden, the Netherlands, the award was distributed to the winners of the competition in its first session. The award aims to enhance the journal's participation in research activities for archaeologists around the world, introduce young researchers to the journal, and to invite their publications. The award has been received with a great welcome by the Arabian Seminar management, as well as the archaeologists participating in the Seminar, especially from the youth participants. Participants of all ages have come to realize what Adumatu is doing in the field of scientific publication of archaeological research and studies related to the archaeological sites in the Arab World..

Editor -in-Chief