

Aldhobaib, Meshal Abdulaziz

## Article

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Essay

# The New Era of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Key Highlights and Future Research Agenda on Organizational Strategy

Meshal Abdulaziz Aldhobaib 

College of Business, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh 13318, Saudi Arabia;  
maaldhobaib@imamu.edu.sa

**Abstract:** Although the Middle East is often perceived as politically, economically, and socially unstable, Saudi Arabia offers a different narrative. Inspired by the country's vision (Vision 2030) and the growing body of research exploring its socio-economic transformation, this article examines how organizational strategy theories and practices can be advanced by inviting researchers to focus on Saudi Arabia's evolving context. To achieve this, the article addresses three pivotal questions: (a) Why should academics consider conducting research in Saudi Arabia? (b) What research topics could significantly advance organizational strategy theories and practices? (c) What are the primary barriers to conducting research in Saudi Arabia? Using a comprehensive review of existing literature, socio-economic analysis, and an evaluation of Vision 2030 targets, the article identifies three key themes: (1) socio-cultural dynamics and their influence on organizational strategies, (2) economic diversification and its impact on strategic resilience, and (3) the strategic alignment of foreign direct investment (FDI) with expatriate mission success. These findings lead to distinct research agendas linked to relevant theoretical frameworks, including Cross-Cultural Theory, Institutional Theory, and the Resource-Based View. The article concludes by inviting scholars to explore these themes and generate findings that contribute to existing organizational strategy theories and practical solutions, fostering a deeper understanding of organizational strategy within Saudi Arabia and the broader global landscape.

**Keywords:** diversification; emerging economy; family firms; competitive advantage; diversity management; multinational firms; startups; Saudi Vision 2030



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## 1. Introduction

A quick glance at the research literature on organizational strategies shows that crafting a strategy that aligns an organization's capabilities with a market's unique characteristics is akin to finding the "Silver Bullet" of achieving international competitive advantage (Kotiloglu et al., 2021; Rao & Mattarelli, 2024). While this may seem straightforward, it can pose significant challenges that require strategic thinking. Most importantly, prior research shows that an organization's strategy largely depends on the judgments of strategic actors, who may be influenced by biases from past experiences, over-rationalization, or emotional commitments (Hoon & Jacobs, 2014). Conversely, even if strategic actors were unbiased, flawed inputs can lead the firm to pursue an incorrect direction. This scenario is particularly relevant in the context of the Saudi Arabia (SA) market (Hamlin et al., 2024; Rao & Mattarelli, 2024).

SA is well known for its significant global role in oil supply and price stability through its state-owned oil company, Saudi Aramco (Alkhathlan et al., 2014). While oil is one of the primary factors external observers associate with the country, SA's influence extends beyond

this phenomenon. Over the past decades, the nation's economic, geopolitical, religious, cultural, and regional stability impacts on the global stage have been increasing, especially after the launch of its Vision 2030 initiative (Vision 2030, 2016). These developments position SA as one of the promising emerging markets targeted by global corporations (Hamlin et al., 2024; Rao & Mattarelli, 2024; Schindler et al., 2023).

However, despite SA's significance, the country has been underrepresented in business literature (see M. Aldhobaib, 2017; Budhwar et al., 2021; Hamlin et al., 2024). A key characteristic of SA is that it does not make separation between state and religion, resulting in the integration of religious and social activities into daily life. These factors profoundly influence workplace behavior in SA and have not been sufficiently explored using *traditional, rigorous* academic methodologies. This gap challenges organizational scholars to address the country's unique context, leading to a better understanding of strategic organizational theories and practices (Ghemawat, 2008). It also affects investors—especially global ones—who may struggle to develop effective strategies and navigate the complexities of operating in the country.

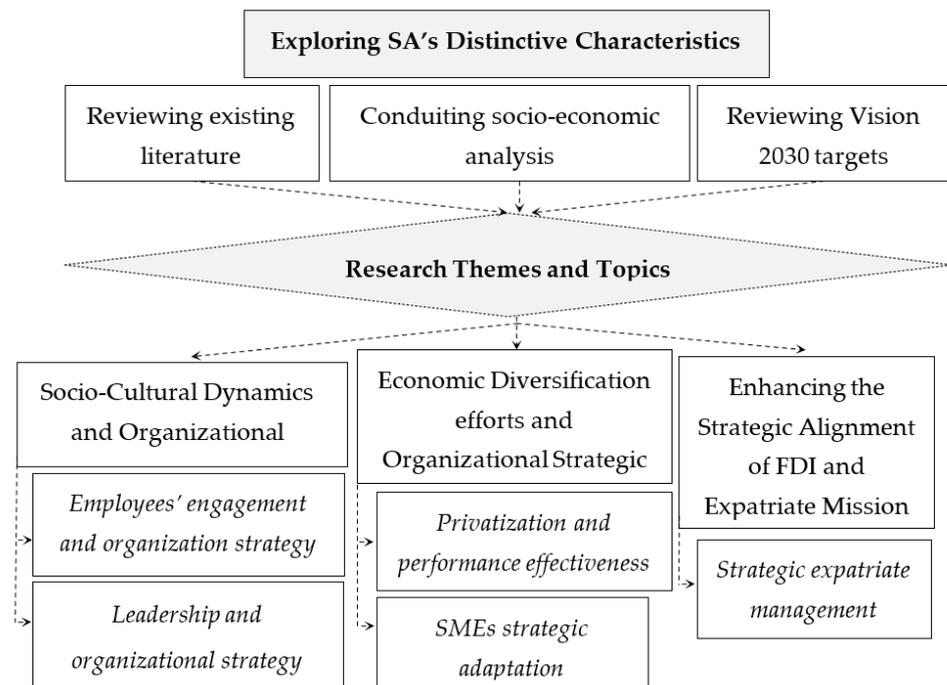
Thus, the question remains: Why has the country been underrepresented in business literature? There are various interrelated issues likely to contribute to the limited research on SA (see Albeladi, 2024; M. Aldhobaib, 2017). Most significantly, many publications inaccurately portray the Middle East as having homogeneous norms and social systems, implying shared issues like poverty, illiteracy, and terrorism across countries, including SA (Elbanna et al., 2020; Zahra, 2011). This oversimplifies the region's diversity, where Middle Eastern nations significantly differ in political systems, economic development, prosperity, and social structures (Budhwar et al., 2019; Budhwar et al., 2021; Hamlin et al., 2024). Although regional similarities exist, the assumption of uniformity is unfounded.

Another issue is the difficulty in obtaining statistical data beyond economic figures, either due to limited access to official documents (Albeladi, 2024; M. Aldhobaib, 2017), the fact that many studies are published in Arabic, or because the data are stored in inaccessible databases (George, 2012). Similarly, prior research in SA often relies heavily on secondary sources such as media and governmental reports. While these sources play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and disseminating information (Emery, 1995; Fioramonti, 2014), their reporting methods frequently lack the methodological rigor of academic research. Alhuntushi and Lugo-Ocando (2020) highlight critical gaps in journalists' use and interpretation of numerical data, which can potentially lead to misleading conclusions.

Therefore, this article extends the discussion by answering three key questions: (a) Why should researchers consider conducting research in SA? (b) What research topics could significantly advance organizational strategy theories and practices? (c) What are the primary barriers to conducting research in SA? To answer these questions, the article draws on three main sources: a review of existing literature, a socio-economic analysis highlighting SA's most distinctive characteristics—many of which are underexplored or inadequately addressed in existing studies—and an examination of the Saudi Vision 2030, a transformative socio-economic plan relevant to the discussion. These sources provide essential guidance in shaping the article's research agenda and topic selection.

The article employs specific techniques to achieve its aims (see Figure 1). By utilizing these three sources, the article is structured to systematically explain the selection of organizational strategy research themes and topics. It begins by offering an overview of SA's political, legal, economic, and social systems. This section is crucial as it underscores the article's alignment with Vision 2030 and its focus on organizational strategy research themes. Additionally, it highlights the characteristics that distinguish SA, particularly within the Middle Eastern region, from other contexts. Furthermore, this section provides

future researchers with basic yet reliable information about the country, supporting more effective organizational strategy research.



**Figure 1.** A summary of the research methodology and key findings (Source: Author).

The subsequent section explores the significance of conducting organizational research in SA, mainly arguing that prior Western studies often implement a positivist/functionalist paradigm that excludes socio-cultural issues and their implications for organizational strategy. Consequently, these studies may fail to adequately validate theories across diverse cultural contexts, especially SA. This section further emphasizes the unique characteristics of the Saudi market and the critical need for in-depth investigation into its socio-cultural values and norms.

Such investigations are highly recommended to adopt research paradigms and methodologies capable of capturing subjective organizational activities related to its strategies, such as ethnographic case studies (see, for example, [Abalkhail & Allan, 2015](#); [M. Aldhobaib, 2017](#); [M. A. Aldhobaib, 2024](#)). While this is highlighted, it does not imply that the article provides a detailed ontological, epistemological, and methodological research discussion. Researchers are instead encouraged to undertake independent explorations that align with the specific socio-cultural contexts and organizational phenomena in SA, ensuring their work contributes meaningfully to both local and global discourse on strategic organization.

Building on these arguments, the third section introduces three primary themes believed to offer new perspectives on organizational strategy theories and practices (see Section 4). The discussion of these themes generates various topics related to organizational strategy, each linked to specific theories, concepts, and practices that future researchers may find useful for advancing their work. While a variety of issues are emphasized, this section primarily highlights the gaps in organizational strategy literature related to SA, which remains extremely limited and suggests theories to be utilized when conducting research in the country. Indeed, the findings of this article demonstrate how organizational strategies in SA can be shaped by key theoretical frameworks.

For example, Institutional Theory provides essential capabilities in exploring and explaining the influence of socio-cultural dynamics such as gender diversity on leadership approaches and workforce strategies ([DiMaggio & Powell, 1983](#); [Scott, 2013](#)). These

insights are particularly relevant in addressing the socio-cultural dimensions highlighted in the third section, where gaps in organizational strategy research in SA are explored. Similarly, the Resource-Based View highlights how organizations leverage unique internal resources, such as human capital and economic diversification opportunities, to gain a competitive advantage in an emerging economy (J. Barney, 1991; J. B. Barney & Hesterly, 2019). This perspective aligns closely with Vision 2030's emphasis on economic resilience and sustainability, which are key elements in the themes discussed in the third section. These theoretical frameworks provide the foundation for understanding the interplay between socio-cultural, economic, and strategic dimensions that are elaborated upon in subsequent sections, particularly in relation to SA's unique market characteristics and Vision 2030 goals.

Following this section, and before arriving at the conclusion, the article addresses the challenges of conducting research in SA and offers methodological guidance to scholars interested in the region, supporting initiatives to empower early-career researchers in pursuing impactful work (see Wierenga et al., 2024). Finally, the conclusion summarizes the purpose of research, key findings, and implications. Most significantly, it demonstrates that the article not only advances the theoretical aspects of organizational strategy research but also provides foreign investors with insights into operational factors that can foster competitive advantages in the Saudi market.

The conclusion also highlights that the challenges and opportunities discussed are not exclusive to SA. Other countries, such as the UAE (Antwi-Boateng & Al Jaber, 2022), India (Pandey et al., 2022), Kenya, and Thailand (Schindler et al., 2023), face similar issues with integrating traditional cultural values into modern organizational strategies. However, the article acknowledges the limitations in directly generalizing the findings, given the distinct political and socio-economic landscape of SA. Therefore, future research is encouraged to explore these themes across diverse emerging markets to assess the broader applicability of the insights presented (Awoa & Ondo, 2024).

## 2. A Brief of SA

SA, the largest country in the Middle East and the fifth largest in Asia, was founded in 1932 by King Abdulaziz Al Saud, unifying various tribal regions into the third Saudi state (Niblock, 2015; Sorby, 2006). Before unification, the area was governed by different tribal leaders and partly influenced by the Ottoman Empire [1299–1922]. Unlike many Middle Eastern nations, SA was never colonized, which sets it apart from its neighbors (Bowen, 2024; Wynbrandt, 2010). Known for its rich cultural heritage rooted in Islamic traditions, it is home to Islam's holiest cities, Makkah and Al Madinah. It operates as an absolute monarchy under the Al Saud royal family, with Islamic law (Sharia) underpinning its legal, economic, and social systems (M. Aldhobaib, 2017; Ministry of Justice, 2023).

The population of SA has grown dramatically, from just over 7 million in 1974 to 32.1 million in 2022 (see Table 1 for further population key statistics). This growth is largely due to significant improvements in health and economic conditions, with about one-third of government spending allocated to health and education (Nurunnabi, 2017; Rafiki, 2020). Another contributing factor is the previous limitation on women's employment, which led to earlier marriages and higher birth rates (M. Aldhobaib, 2017).

Socially, most citizens of SA are of Arab origin and share common cultural values rooted in both tribal traditions and Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, this does not imply a fully homogeneous society (Al-Farsy, 1990; Vassiliev, 2013). Upon closer examination, Saudi society includes both rural populations and urban city dwellers, as well as tribal and non-tribal communities, each with unique customs and norms. These cul-

tural factors significantly influence the Saudi work environment (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; M. Aldhobaib, 2017).

**Table 1.** Population key statistics (sources: General Authority for Statistics, 2022a, 2024; World Bank, 2024).

Item	Description	Item	Description
Population	32.175 million	Male-to-Female ratio <sup>1</sup>	61.2%/38.8%
Percentage of immigrants	41.6%	Fertility rate (Saudis) <sup>2</sup>	2.8
literacy rate	98%	Average age of the population (Saudis)	29
Marital Status (Saudis)	39.7% Single	Life Expectancy	Male 75 years
	53.2% Mared		Female 78 years
	3.6 Divorced		

<sup>1</sup> The gap in the ratio is due to the fact that the majority of immigrants are male laborers; <sup>2</sup> It is observed that the rate declined from 3.8 in 2011 to 2.8 in 2022. Notably, there was a significant drop between 2015 and 2022.

These demographic statistics provide a foundational overview of SA, offering essential insights into the socio-economic dynamics that shape organizational strategies. For example, the average age, high literacy rate, and fertility rate highlight a population well-prepared for workforce development, a crucial factor for advancing organizational strategy research with a stronger theoretical basis and practical implications. Moreover, the significant proportion of young people and immigrants underscores the potential for innovative, diverse, and globally competitive organizational strategies, as discussed in the first suggested research theme.

Economically, SA is known for its vast oil reserves discovered in 1938, and remains a leading global crude oil producer, holding about 25% of the world's proven oil reserves (OPEC, 2024). Despite efforts to diversify, oil has dominated its economy for decades, necessitating reforms to build resilience and sustainability (Nurunnabi, 2017; Farag, 2019; Rafiki, 2020). Launched in 2016, Vision 2030 represents a transformative framework aimed at reducing this reliance by fostering growth in private and non-oil sectors, such as technology, entertainment, and tourism, to position SA as a diversified and globally competitive economy (Vision 2030, 2016, 2024). These reforms have directly influenced the country's economic indicators, as demonstrated in Table 2.

Building on these economic shifts, Vision 2030 further emphasizes a comprehensive approach to diversification, innovation, and social inclusion, reshaping organizational strategies across sectors. For example, it promotes social inclusion by increasing female workforce participation and improving access to education and healthcare. These initiatives directly impact organizational strategy (as discussed under theme topics such as Leadership Dynamics, Gender Diversity, and Small and Medium Enterprise [SME] Adaptation) by reshaping leadership approaches, promoting greater gender inclusivity, and addressing the strategic challenges SMEs face in adapting to the economic diversification agenda.

This transformation also strengthens SA's role in international political and economic organizations, such as the G20 and OPEC, by demonstrating its commitment to sustainable growth and global competitiveness (Alkhathlan et al., 2014; G20, 2024; OPEC, 2024). Additionally, it reinforces the country's position as a global investment hub through regulatory reforms, PPP, and ambitious mega-projects like NEOM and the Red Sea Project (Public Investment Fund, 2024).

The following table provides key economic statistics that offer a basic understanding of SA's transition from an oil-dependent economy to a diversified and sustainable one, as

outlined in Vision 2030. These statistics are critical for organizational strategy research, offering a strong empirical basis to explore topics suggested in this article.

**Table 2.** Economic key statistics (sources: [General Authority for Statistics, 2022b, 2024](#); [International Monetary Fund, 2024](#); [Vision 2030, 2016](#); [Ministry of Investment, 2024](#); [Ministry of Finance, 2023, 2024, 2025](#)).

Item	Description	Note
GDP	USD 1.2 trillion (2024 budget)	Notably, SA's real GDP increased by 2.8% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2024, driven by a 4.2% rise in non-oil activities. This growth highlights the positive impact of Vision 2030 initiatives on the Kingdom's private sector and its ongoing economic diversification efforts.
Revenue	USD 312.5 billion (2024 budget)	Non-oil revenues reached a record high of approximately USD 126 billion by the end of 2024, demonstrating continued growth compared to 2023. This achievement reflects significant progress in the country's economic diversification efforts under Vision 2030.
Unemployment rate	3.4% (2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The overall unemployment rate in SA stands at 3.4%, but Saudi nationals face a significantly higher rate of 7.1%. Among them, Saudi women experience an unemployment rate of 13.6%, compared to 4.7% for Saudi men. While Vision 2030 initially aimed to increase female workforce participation from 16.8% to 24% by 2030, this target has already been surpassed, with female participation now reaching 35.4%.</li> <li>The percentage of women in senior government roles increased modestly from 5.46% in 2015 to 6.26% in 2020, while the private sector saw a sharper rise in women holding senior roles, from 20.02% to 32.28%. This trend highlights the private sector's alignment with Vision 2030's focus on gender diversity and inclusive leadership, emphasizing the importance of exploring its broader implications.</li> </ul>
Inflation	2.3 (2024)	This indicates economic stability, a crucial factor for organizations planning long-term strategies and fostering foreign investment.
FDI net flow	USD 14.5 billion (for the first three quarters of 2024)	In the first quarter of 2024, the net inflow of FDI increased by 5.6% compared to the same period in 2023, when it totaled approximately USD 2.4 billion. This growth reflects SA's ongoing efforts to attract foreign investment as part of its Vision 2030 strategy.

### 3. Why Consider Conducting Research in/on SA?

The distinct socio-cultural values and norms of SA possess unique attributes that merit detailed study by organizational scholars. However, these distinctive characteristics may not be adequately captured by prevailing research approaches, particularly the positivist/functionalist paradigm, which primarily focuses on examining or adopting Western theories and models ([Barkema et al., 2015](#); [Ghemawat, 2008](#)). Such an approach limits study findings to the scope defined by Western theories, failing to represent the realities of distinct local phenomena and potentially leading to research outcomes that are biased or misleading.

Keeping this in mind, as well as the arguments discussed in the introduction, one might ask what additional factors could entice organizational scholars to delve deeper into this region. These factors lie in the Saudi market's growing attractiveness and its pivotal role in global value chains under its Vision 2030 initiative, as outlined in the following sections.

#### 3.1. SA's Unique Social and Cultural Values and Norms

The tapestry of SA is constructed with distinctive social and cultural values and norms deeply rooted in its history, religion, and traditions. The literature highlights the significant

influence of these elements on organizations operating in SA (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2022, 2024; Rao & Mattarelli, 2024). The country's strategic initiatives, as outlined in Vision 2030 (2016), also emphasize its Arab and Muslim social foundations.

However, despite extensive research on the impact of Islamic principles on economic and financial aspects (Iqbal & Mirakhor, 2011; Usmani, 2021; Warde, 2010), the effects of other principles—such as family structure, gender roles, respect for authority, and collectivism—on workplace dynamics and their relationship with organizational strategy remain underexplored in SA. For example, Islam is seen not only as a religion but as a comprehensive way of life, often cited as a key factor shaping Saudis' personalities and behaviors, particularly in regulating relationships between people and leaders (M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2022; Hamlin et al., 2024; Moran et al., 2014; Rafiki, 2020; Hunt & Al-Twajjri, 1996). Similarly, significant social phenomena with important implications for Saudi institutions and workgroups include family structure (Abalkhail, 2020; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; Subbarayalu et al., 2021). For instance, Abalkhail and Allan's (2015) study highlights that SA's social system leads women in managerial roles to respond differently to networking and mentoring compared to their counterparts in the UK.

Although such issues could offer unique insights into global research, they remain underexplored. Thus, these distinct socio-cultural characteristics are central to the topics suggested in this article. Since people are the heart of an organization and human resources function as a pivotal strategic support (Porter, 2011), the key section titled "What to Study in SA" encompasses a variety of topics related to the country's unique socio-cultural systems and recent economic transformation plan. It describes how employee integration, such as women's roles and the strategic management of expatriates in SA, might introduce new dimensions to organizational strategic theories and practices. Both local and global investors can appreciate and integrate these elements to achieve their organizational goals (M. Aldhobaib, 2017; Ghemawat, 2008; Rao & Mattarelli, 2024).

### 3.2. *The Recent Economic Transformation Plan*

Vision 2030 primarily aims to reduce reliance on oil and diversify its economy. While the plan is notable for its ambition and scope, it is unique in its construction (Nurunnabi, 2017; Schindler et al., 2023). A key method the government adopts to achieve the vision's goals, as summarized shortly, is evident in its shift towards the spatialization of industrial policy and infrastructure-led development, which occasionally encounters unforeseen obstacles (Lee, 2023). The targets of these initiatives are both local and global investors.

However, while Vision 2030 encompasses several initiatives across various industries such as entertainment, transportation, and logistics, the focus is on non-blueprint initiatives—specifically, the growth of the private sector efforts and FDI, which have tangible outcomes on the ground. These efforts not only provide a rationale for conducting research in SA but also present a unique quasi-experimental setting for management scholars to examine theories and frameworks, particularly those related to organizational strategies (Ghemawat, 2008).

#### 3.2.1. *The Growth of the Private Sector*

SA is now striving to diversify its economy by investing in non-oil sectors to foster a more resilient and sustainable future (Vision 2030, 2016). Key sectors targeted for investment include tourism, entertainment, technology, and renewable energy. To achieve this target, the government relies on different economic policy strategies, most importantly PPP, privatization, and the growth of SMEs (Nurunnabi, 2017; Schindler et al., 2023). Regarding the PPP, this strategic shift has led to the development of several companies, such as ACWA

Power, and the beginning of giga-projects projects like the Red Sea Project, Qiddiya, and NEOM, spearheaded by the PIF (Public Investment Fund) (see [Public Investment Fund, 2024](#)). The privatization strategy targets different sectors like energy, communication, education, and healthcare ([Alkhamis, 2017](#); [Khan & Nasrulddin, 2022](#)). One indicator of the success of these initiatives is the increase in the number of listed companies on SA's main stock market, rising from 176 in 2016 to 234 by May 2024 ([Saudi Tadawul Group, 2024](#)).

Additionally, the vision aims to boost SMEs' contribution to GDP from 20% to 35% by 2030, supported by various governmental management and financial programs ([Fintech Saudi, 2024](#); [Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority, 2024](#); [Small and Medium Enterprises Bank, 2024](#)). Reflecting these efforts, the number of companies listed on Nomu (the Parallel Market) increased from 46 in 2022 to 79 by the end of 2023, providing SMEs with a platform to go public under lighter listing requirements ([Capital Market Authority, 2024](#)).

These economic policy strategies open a variety of research opportunities—aimed at investigating not only the challenges in implementing these strategies but also issues related to the effectiveness of PPPs, state capitalism concepts, and organizational strategy theories and practices ([Schindler et al., 2023](#)). More particularly, examining how local SMEs and multinational corporations (MNCs) operate in the Saudi market and how they respond to these government strategies to increase their competitive advantage or ensure survival can reveal different perspectives from other markets.

Indeed, the research theme “Economic Diversification Efforts and Organizational Strategic Resilience” argues that the government's economic policy strategies highlight the necessity for research that examines the response of SMEs in SA to government programs. It emphasizes the importance of investigating organizational aspects such as innovation, digital transformation, and business modeling, and their impact on business strategy in a society with distinct characteristics ([Abed et al., 2015](#); [Alzahrani, 2019](#); [Rafiki, 2020](#)). This is believed to advance theories and practices associated with transaction cost economics ([Nagle et al., 2024](#)), PPPs and state capitalism ([Schindler et al., 2023](#)), and family business strategic modeling ([Zellweger, 2017](#)).

### 3.2.2. SA's Strategic FDI Initiatives

Vision 2030 has significantly transformed SA's FDI strategy, aiming to establish the country as a global investment hub. Reforms such as permitting full foreign ownership and simplifying business regulations have increased SA's attractiveness to international investors ([Hamlin et al., 2024](#); [Farak, 2019](#); [Schindler et al., 2023](#)). Additionally, the government has sought to boost FDI inflows by localizing industries through the establishment of special economic and logistics zones ([Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority, 2024](#)).

Reports indicate a significant increase in FDI in SA. In the first quarter of 2024, the Ministry of Investment issued 3200 licenses to MNCs—a 93% rise from the same period in 2023—across sectors like construction, manufacturing, vocational training, education, and technology ([Ministry of Investment, 2024](#)). This growth underscores the relevance of the questions addressed in this article and aligns with its objectives. Given the complex interplay of socio-cultural characteristics influencing SA's economic development, foreign investors find the proposed research agenda valuable for addressing potential strategic challenges ([Hamlin et al., 2024](#); [Quinn, 2012](#); [Schindler et al., 2023](#)).

An illustrative example comes from Jerry Inzerillo, CEO of the Diriyah Gate Development Authority. During a project presentation to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (as Chairman of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs), a foreign architectural designer included a mosque dome that did not align with traditional Saudi architecture. When the consultant dismissed its significance, stating it was just for layout purposes, the

Crown Prince firmly reminded him, “*This is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; everything matters*”, and left the meeting visibly displeased (MBC1, 2023).

Inzerillo’s account underscores two significant issues. First, insufficient socio-cultural understanding of Saudi business practices can cost MNCs dearly—a recurring challenge with limited research in international business (Dumetz et al., 2020; Sallon, 2024; Taher, 2019; Vinall, 2024). Second, the importance of expatriate mission success in SA’s business environment remains underexplored, offering opportunities to advance international business strategic theories and practices (Hamlin et al., 2024; Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2021). Therefore, the research theme “Strategic Expatriate Management” focuses on this issue and provides further research topics.

#### 4. What to Study?

Based on the preceding discussion, five topics within SA’s unique context and business environment merit further investigation. These topics are organized into three main research agenda themes (see Table 3). Each theme emphasizes areas linked to key strategic organizational theories and concepts, which are elaborated upon in the following sections.

**Table 3.** A summary of the suggested research themes and topics and their associations with strategic organizational theories and concepts (Source: Author).

Research Agenda Concept	Suggested Topics	Emphasis	Main Theories/Conceptual Framework Related
Socio-Cultural Dynamics and Organizational Strategies	Employees’ engagement and organizational strategy	- Role of women in Saudi workspace	- Institutional Theory - Organizational culture
	Leadership and organizational strategy	- Female leadership in Saudi organizations	- Identity Theory - Ambidexterity Theory
Economic Diversification efforts and Organizational Strategic Resilience	Privatization and performance effectiveness	- The effectiveness of the public–private partnership and organization strategy	- Transaction Cost Economics Theory - Agency Theory
	SME strategic adaptation	The influence of social capital (family ties) on the operations of SMEs and potential distractions	- State Capitalism Theory - Social Capital Theory
Enhancing the Strategic Alignment of FDI and Expatriate Mission Success	Strategic expatriate management	The effective engagement of expatriates at employee level	- International Human Resources - Cross-Cultural Management Theory - Social Exchange Theory

##### 4.1. Social-Cultural Dynamics and Organizational Strategies

The examination of SA’s work environment reveals several relevant topics within this theme (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Abalkhail, 2020; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2022; Hamlin et al., 2024; Subbarayalu et al., 2021). Among these, two areas take priority: employee engagement and leadership. Focusing on these areas has significant implications for interrelated strategic concepts such as organizational culture (M. Aldhobaib, 2020; Zheng et al., 2010), identity (Oliver & Vough, 2020; Ungureanu et al., 2020), and ambidexterity (Bo et al., 2024; Mueller et al., 2020).

#### 4.1.1. Employee Engagement and Organizational Strategy

The review of employee engagement in Saudi workplaces indicates a variety of interesting phenomena that remain underexplored (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2022; Hamlin et al., 2024; Subbarayalu et al., 2021). One notable phenomenon is that individuals within Saudi work environments utilize their interpretations of specific Islamic traditions to influence their performance, thereby affecting organizational efforts to achieve critical strategic goals. For example, M. A. Aldhobaib (2022, p. 8) documents a Saudi university's efforts to enhance the quality of its Islamic science program, which faced significant resistance in securing academic accreditation. To address this resistance, officials invoked Quranic verses and Prophet Mohammed's authentic hadiths that emphasize excellence and the transmission of Islamic sciences to future generations as a motivational tool for staff.

This phenomenon raises important questions about how interpretations of Islamic traditions influence employee engagement and performance in Saudi organizations. Additionally, it encourages a broader inquiry into how culturally driven engagement practices in Saudi organizations contribute to advancing organizational strategy theories and practices, particularly in the pursuit of strategic goals. The Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2013) provides an effective framework for examining how deeply ingrained religious and socio-cultural norms shape organizational structures and practices.

In this context, institutionalized Islamic principles hold legitimate influence over employee engagement and strategic decision-making. For instance, M. A. Aldhobaib's (2022) case study illustrates how the institutionalization of Quranic verses and authentic hadiths can act as a structural mechanism guiding organizational goals. However, Aldhobaib also highlights that while institutionalization ensures cultural continuity and strengthens internal legitimacy, it may simultaneously introduce rigidity, hindering adaptability in rapidly changing environments (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2013). The transformation of Saudi organizations under Vision 2030 offers an ideal context to examine the interplay between institutionalized religious values and the external demands of a dynamic environment. Using the lens of Institutional Theory, researchers can uncover how organizations balance tradition and innovation in pursuit of strategic objectives. This approach could provide valuable insights into how Saudi organizations adapt to global competitiveness while maintaining their socio-cultural identity.

Additionally, findings of other research outline certain individual behaviors that emerge from social backgrounds and influence work performance. Budhwar et al. (2019) highlight that "respect for age and seniority", "trust between superiors and subordinates", and "consultative decision-making" may influence workplace behavior and strategic processes. Nonetheless, while other research endorses these findings (M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2024; Hamlin et al., 2024) and identifies additional phenomena that may impact the achievement of organizational goals, these studies have only superficially explored how deeply these phenomena are ingrained and how they influence employees' underlying assumptions.

Further research is encouraged to investigate how individual interpretations of social norms uniquely shape employee engagement within Saudi organizations and how these influences facilitate or impede the organization's ability to form and achieve its strategic goals. Identity Theory (Hogg & Terry, 2014; Stets & Burke, 2000) offers an alternative lens for exploring how employees' self-concepts, shaped by these socio-cultural dynamics, influence their engagement and alignment with organizational strategic goals (Oliver & Vough, 2020; Ungureanu et al., 2020). For instance, employees may interpret their roles and responsibilities through the lens of their personal and social identities, which can either enhance or complicate efforts to achieve strategic cohesion.

In relevance to the last discussion, some research provides women role in Saudi work environment and their alignment with the organizational performance as an urgent phenomenon that needs investigation (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Abalkhail, 2020; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2024; Subbarayalu et al., 2021). For example, M. Aldhobaib (2017, pp. 166–167, 178–182) identifies subgroups of female employees—juniors, mothers, and divorced women—who respond differently based on their career stage and marital status. Additionally, some may interpret concepts like feminism and liberalism uniquely.

While these findings are significant, they do not explain how to manage these group interactions to better align organizational strategy and improve performance. For instance, it shows that marriage may lead some female employees to reduce work duties or leave their jobs. Another study observes that female employees perform better than males in quality assurance and academic accreditation within segregated environments, emphasizing that this phenomenon remains unexplored (M. A. Aldhobaib, 2024).

Hence, it seems necessary to conduct focused research that answers questions like the following: How do subcultural conflicts influence innovation and creativity within Saudi organizations, and what conflict resolution mechanisms are most effective? Also, how do different female subgroups within Saudi organizations perceive and interact with organizational culture-strategy issues, and what tailored support systems can enhance strategic alignment and organizational effectiveness?

Answering these questions may require certain theoretical frameworks. Organizational Culture Theories, particularly Schein's Model of Organizational Culture (Schein, 2010), offer a significant lens for examining how cultural norms, values, and underlying assumptions shape these dynamics. For instance, the observed phenomenon that marriage may lead some female employees to reduce work duties or leave their jobs reflects deeply rooted societal norms that influence organizational culture at the underlying assumption level. Similarly, the finding that female employees excel in quality assurance and academic accreditation within segregated environments (M. A. Aldhobaib, 2024) highlights how cultural artifacts may create environments conducive to certain behaviors and performance outcomes.

Another dimension future research recommends exploring is how to manage subgroup interactions to better align organizational strategy and increase productivity. The Ambidexterity Theory (Bo et al., 2024; Mueller et al., 2020) offers a valuable framework for addressing this challenge. The theory can examine how employees' self-concepts, shaped by these socio-cultural dynamics, affect their engagement and alignment with organizational goals. For instance, employees may prioritize specific cultural or familial obligations over organizational objectives, which may create conflicts requiring tailored strategies to foster collaboration and connectedness.

#### 4.1.2. Leadership and Organizational Strategy

Building on earlier discussions, examining Saudi leadership and organizational strategy is crucial for advancing leadership-strategy theories and practices (De la Rey, 2005; Miller & Sardais, 2011; Tuncdogan et al., 2023). Saudi socio-cultural values and the increasing participation of women in the workforce present unique challenges in leadership and management that require further investigation. Abalkhail (2020) highlights the complexity of female managers leading female employees, emphasizing that both socio-cultural and organizational cultures influence these relationships. It has been reported that senior female leaders often neglect junior female employees, which may suggest a generational gap similar to what M. Aldhobaib (2017) highlights.

This observation raises a key research question: How do intersecting identities (e.g., age, education, marital status) affect the experiences and effectiveness of female leaders

in Saudi organizations? To answer this, the Identity Theory provides an effective lens for exploring how these intersecting identities shape leadership dynamics and outcomes. For example, junior female employees may perceive senior female leaders differently based on generational and cultural expectations, which can influence their engagement and alignment with organizational goals. Investigating these dynamics through the lens of Identity Theory could uncover actionable insights for improving leadership strategies and fostering a more cohesive organizational culture that supports strategic objectives.

Another challenge arising from SA's distinct socio-cultural characteristics is the acceptance and interaction of male employees with female managers, given the society's traditionally high masculinity index (M. Aldhobaib, 2017). Abalkhail and Allan (2015) found that Saudi female managers perceive mentoring and networking differently compared to their British counterparts, attributing these differences to cultural variances. Specifically, women in SA often associate mentoring and networking more with male family relationships than with professional networks, which can limit their access to broader professional opportunities.

This raises another critical research question: What leadership and management strategies are needed to effectively manage and integrate diversity and inclusion within these organizations? Schein's Model of Organizational Culture could offer valuable insights into how cultural norms and values embedded in Saudi workplaces influence leadership dynamics. For instance, the observed differences in mentoring approaches between Saudi and British female leaders may reflect underlying cultural assumptions that shape leadership styles and effectiveness. Using this framework, researchers could investigate how organizational strategies adapt to reconcile traditional norms with the inclusive goals of Vision 2030. This approach would highlight pathways for aligning leadership practices with broader organizational objectives in a culturally sensitive manner.

A related research question is the following: How can leadership strategies balance the demands of cultural continuity with the need for innovation to meet organizational goals? Applying the Ambidexterity Theory here can enable future research to identify leadership strategies that effectively manage this balance. The theory highlights the importance of organizations simultaneously pursuing innovative leadership practices—such as inclusive mentorship programs—and leveraging existing cultural strengths, such as family networks, to maintain alignment with strategic goals. The Ambidexterity Theory emphasizes the dual capability of organizations to explore new opportunities while exploiting existing resources. Consequently, further research could examine how Saudi organizations adapt mentorship programs to respect traditional family structures while fostering broader inclusivity, aligning these efforts with the transformative objectives of Vision 2030.

#### *4.2. Economic Diversification and Organizational Strategic Resilience*

This theme stems from the government's economic diversification initiatives, focusing on two key strategies: PPP and support for SMEs, as outlined earlier. While it can inspire various topics, especially regarding contemporary State Capitalism and debates on the Wall Street Consensus (Alami & Dixon, 2020; Schindler et al., 2023), this article calls for further research on two key issues: privatization and performance effectiveness, and the strategic adaptation of SMEs.

The focus is on how companies respond to these strategies to enhance their competitiveness and survival (Davis & DeWitt, 2022; Wang et al., 2024). This research advances PPP theories, particularly in relation to Transaction Cost Economics (Nagle et al., 2024), which examines how partnerships between public and private entities minimize costs and improve efficiency. It also aligns with theoretical frameworks perceiving privatization as

a multidimensional process (Mercille & Murphy, 2017) and concepts of State Capitalism, including neoliberalism and the Wall Street Consensus (Schindler et al., 2023).

#### 4.2.1. Privatization and Performance Effectiveness

Despite numerous privatization initiatives in SA, the literature on these efforts remains limited (Rahman et al., 2020; Khan & Nasrulddin, 2022; Akoum, 2009; Alkhamis, 2017). While existing research contributes significantly to the literature of privatization discourse, it reveals critical research gaps. A major issue is that most studies rely on secondary sources and lack empirical data collection and analysis (Alhuntushi & Lugo-Ocando, 2020; Alkhamis, 2017; Rahman et al., 2020). Although these studies align with the concept outlined by Mercille and Murphy (2017, p. 1041)—that privatization processes, whether small or large, may involve one or more of four categories (outsourcing contracts, corporatization, PPP, and divestiture/asset transfer)—they fail to adequately test hypotheses, evaluate successes and failures, or explore opportunities and challenges. Consequently, organizational literature may miss valuable insights into recent or ongoing developments, where the experiences of key participants remain underexplored, potentially obscuring hidden struggles not captured in official documents.

Applying Transaction Cost Economics offers a compelling framework for addressing these gaps. It emphasizes minimizing inefficiencies and maximizing cost savings in partnership arrangements (Williamson, 1979, 2002). For instance, applying Transaction Cost Economics to corporatization or outsourcing in sectors like telecommunications and education could uncover how operational costs and governance complexities influence strategic outcomes, such as cost efficiency and service delivery. By incorporating key variables such as governance structures, resource interdependencies, and coordination challenges, Transaction Cost Economics provides actionable insights into optimizing privatization strategies and enhancing organizational resilience.

Another valuable theoretical lens for examining privatization, particularly through PPP, is Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). Since PPPs are a cornerstone of Vision 2030, this theory may provide insights into how trust, transparency, and shared goals between public and private entities influence performance effectiveness. For example, assessing how collaborative mechanisms address accountability challenges could reveal key factors driving or impeding PPP success.

However, the literature review reveals a notable gap in the inconsistent focus on the healthcare and water sectors, while other industries, such as telecommunications (Al-Adaileh & Al-Atawi, 2011), education (Alshammari, 2022), transportation (Chaouk et al., 2019), postal services (Ramady, 2010), and agriculture (First Milling Co., 2024), remain significantly underexplored. This lack of cross-sector analysis restricts a comprehensive understanding of strategic effectiveness across diverse industries. Agency Theory (Fama & Jensen, 1983; Laffont & Martimort, 2009) provides a valuable framework for examining these challenges, particularly by addressing conflicts between government principals and private-sector agents. Misaligned incentives, unclear governance structures, and inadequate regulatory oversight often emerge as critical issues in privatization processes. Analyzing how these factors impact outcomes in privatized sectors could uncover systemic inefficiencies and highlight mechanisms to enhance performance. From the perspective of Agency Theory, deeper exploration of accountability, incentive alignment, and governance clarity could offer actionable insights to mitigate conflicts and improve privatization success across underexamined industries.

Another theory that may offer a valuable lens for analysis is State Capitalism, which is particularly relevant to the context of SA (Schindler et al., 2023). This framework is instrumental in understanding how privatization strategies are influenced by the coexistence

of government control and market-driven reforms. For instance, privatization efforts in heavily state-regulated sectors, such as agriculture, often highlight tensions between traditional economic structures and the transformative goals of Vision 2030. By examining these dynamics, State Capitalism provides critical insights into how privatization initiatives align with governmental strategic objectives while simultaneously fostering economic resilience and adaptability. This perspective underscores the double challenge of maintaining state influence while pursuing market liberalization, a balance that remains underexplored in existing research (Alami & Dixon, 2020; Musacchio et al., 2015).

However, despite progress, further research is needed to explore power struggles, ambiguity, and subjective cognitive dynamics highlighted in contemporary organizational studies (M. Aldhobaib, 2020; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). For instance, M. A. Aldhobaib (2024) examines how power struggles over quality assurance within higher education institutions hinder the privatization process. Similarly, Chaouk et al. (2019) highlight that Tibah Airports' profitability outcomes fell short of projections due to unexpected regulatory interventions by GACA. These examples underscore the importance of studying hidden dynamics—such as political influences, interpersonal conflicts, and institutional rigidity—that affect privatization efforts.

#### 4.2.2. SMEs Strategic Adaptation

Strategic issues of SMEs in SA have garnered considerable scholarly attention (Alkhorraif & McLaughlin, 2018; Alzahrani, 2019; Rafiki, 2020). Research generally categorizes factors shaping SME strategies as formal and informal. A key formal factor is the integration of e-commerce and digital marketing with organizational strategy (Alaskar & Alsadi, 2023; Alzahrani, 2019). Although e-commerce has been a significant research focus in international business since the new millennium (Li et al., 2024; Mohdhar & Shaalan, 2021; Schneider, 2015), prior studies lack contextual and multi-layered analyses. For example, the insufficient examination of transaction types—such as business-to-government (B2G), consumer-to-consumer (C2C), business-to-consumer (B2C), and business-to-business (B2B) interactions—limits understanding of SME challenges and opportunities in SA.

Applying the Resource-Based View (J. Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993) offers critical insights into the strategic adaptation of SMEs in SA. With the government's focus on advancing technological infrastructure, it is essential to explore how SMEs leverage internal resources—such as human capital, technological capabilities, and organizational flexibility—to implement e-commerce strategies that enhance competitive advantage in SA's unique socio-economic environment. Alzahrani (2019) highlights that digitalization of the economy and services has driven SMEs in SA to adopt e-commerce as a strategic approach, strengthening stakeholder relationships and fostering innovation. However, contradictory findings from limited studies on Saudi SMEs' reliance on technology and innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic (Akinwale, 2020; Alharbi, 2023; Alaskar & Alsadi, 2023; Nurunnabi, 2020) reveal significant gaps in understanding. These discrepancies emphasize the need for empirical research to explore how SMEs navigate technological adoption barriers, optimize resource utilization, and align their strategies with broader goals of Vision 2030.

Informally, SME network relationships, or Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986/2010; Coleman, 1988; Stasa & Machek, 2022), remain underexplored in SA. Globally, social capital—connections with stakeholders like suppliers, customers, and venture capitalists—plays a critical role in SME success (Ellis, 2000; Kontinen & Ojala, 2011; Lindstrand et al., 2011). However, most studies focus on Europe and North America (Kachlami & Yazdanfar, 2016; Stasa & Machek, 2022), underscoring the necessity for localized research in SA (Rafiki, 2020).

Given SA's unique socio-cultural dynamics, researchers should investigate how family ties influence the success of SMEs. Saudi societies have distinctive practices, such as Al-Majlis (المجلس), a traditional gathering where family members and outsiders discuss various topics, including business matters. Al-Majlis serves as a forum where family members, and occasionally outsiders, gather to discuss various topics, including business matters. These discussions often encourage young family members to start SMEs, offering support through advice, networking, and financial assistance. Some family funds, such as those by the Al Rajhi (Al Rajhi Family Affairs Office, 2015) or Alzamil families (Alzamil Family Fund, 2024), formalize this support. Consequently, companies like Al Rajhi Bank, Jarir Marketing Company, and Tanmiah Food Company—founded by brothers, cousins, or both—have expanded their domestic markets.

Applying Social Capital Theory to SMEs in SA could shed light on how traditional gatherings like Al-Majlis facilitate resource acquisition, strategic growth, and resilience. These interactions are akin to unlocking a black box that remains largely unexplored. Analyzing narratives from Saudi entrepreneurs in media platforms, such as the *Business Talk* podcast (Thmanyah, 2024) and the interview listings in Table 4, provides valuable starting points. Additionally, researchers should examine the challenges associated with family ties, which can sometimes threaten family businesses, as seen in the case of Maan Al-Sanea (Schmidle, 2017).

**Table 4.** Interviews with successful Saudi entrepreneurs, sharing the narratives of their business journeys (Source: Author).

Entrepreneur	Main Industry	Source
Abdulmohsen Al Haqbani	Sport	(Shahid, 2024a)
Hamad bin Saeedan	Real Estate	(Shahid, 2024b)
Abdul Rahman Al-Jeraisy	Group	(Shahid, 2024c)
Khaled Al Shathri	Group	(Shahid, 2024d; Thmanyah, 2023)
Abdullah bin Sulaiman Al Rajhi	Banking	(Rotana Khalejia, 2023)
Lubna Olayan	Finance	(Rotana Khalejia, 2022)
Abdullah Al-Othaim	Grocery Stores	(Rotana Khalejia, 2021)

#### 4.3. Enhancing the Strategic Alignment of FDI and Expatriate Mission Success

The final theme explores SA openness to FDI and its unique contextual factors, offering a valuable research opportunity to advance the understanding of organizational strategy. Recent reviews (Ali et al., 2019; Hamlin et al., 2024) highlight significant gaps in studies on SA, emphasizing the country's distinct political and socio-cultural systems. These gaps underline the importance of addressing SA-specific dynamics in organizational and international HR strategies. Effective expatriate management emerges as a critical component of FDI-driven strategies, given the essential role expatriates play in multinational corporations (MNCs) and local firms.

However, the challenge is determining which expatriate-related issues to prioritize, such as expatriates' families (Dang et al., 2022), compensation (Maley et al., 2020), or others. Given SA's unique market, focusing on the macro-level interactions of expatriates with the country and their adaptation to MNCs or local firms' strategies at the micro-level may be more effective (Perri & Peruffo, 2016; Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2021). This approach could advance international HR theories and support MNC success as outlined in international business management concepts (Henisz, 2004; Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2021; Perri & Peruffo, 2016; Salomon, 2006).

## Strategic Expatriate Management

Studies indicate that expatriates in SA often face significant challenges in adapting to local socio-cultural contexts (Alanezi et al., 2020; Hamlin et al., 2024; Rao & Mattarelli, 2024). These challenges frequently arise from a lack of cultural awareness, creating ambiguity regarding acceptable behaviors (Eden & Leviatan, 1975) and undermining trust and mutual understanding between expatriates and local employees (Arain et al., 2020; Hamlin et al., 2024). Such issues are particularly pronounced among expatriates in leadership roles, as illustrated by the experiences of the CEO of the Diriyah Gate Development Authority.

For effective research, applying Cross-Cultural Management Theory (Hofstede, 2011; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000) could offer an effective lens for analyzing these challenges. This theory provides insights into how cultural dimensions—such as individualism versus collectivism or power distance—affect expatriates' integration and collaboration within Saudi organizations. For instance, expatriates from low power-distance cultures may struggle to navigate hierarchical structures common in SA, leading to misalignment with organizational expectations and strategic goals.

Alternatively, the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) could help examine the dynamics of trust and reciprocity between expatriates and local employees. Understanding how mutual perceptions of fairness and support influence workplace relationships can offer actionable strategies to enhance expatriate-local collaborations. This perspective is particularly relevant to addressing trust deficits highlighted in prior research (Arain et al., 2020).

However, it is noted that current research primarily focuses on expatriates in managerial roles, overlooking the experiences of expatriates as team members (Arain et al., 2020; Clarke et al., 2019; Hamlin et al., 2024). While managers wield greater influence, failures among non-managerial expatriates can also disrupt team dynamics and hinder organizational performance. Furthermore, existing studies often prioritize expatriates' perceptions over their actual behaviors (Hamlin et al., 2024), limiting the development of empirically grounded solutions. Additionally, limited data collection due to research challenges in SA (Albeladi, 2024; M. Aldhobaib, 2017) constrains the scope of current findings.

Future research should adopt a holistic approach to understanding the experiences of expatriates in SA, including both managers and employees. The Cross-Cultural Management Theory could uncover how cultural dimensions shape expatriates' experiences and adaptation processes. For example, examining onboarding practices through the lens of cultural compatibility could reveal how organizations tailor their strategies to bridge cultural gaps while supporting expatriates' integration.

Additionally, research should explore actionable dimensions, such as communication quality, and factors influencing expatriate success or failure. Empirical studies focusing on behavioral data rather than perceptions could provide deeper insights into effective adaptation strategies. For instance, the case of the Roshn CEO (Fattah & Martin, 2024) underscores the need to understand the behavioral drivers of expatriates' strategic contributions within a culturally complex environment.

## 5. Research Limitations

While the article provides a critical analysis of organizational strategies within the context of SA's socio-economic transformation, certain limitations must be highlighted. Recognizing these boundaries is essential to ensure a balanced interpretation of the findings and to identify opportunities for more in-depth investigations into the evolving organizational landscape of SA. Although many of these limitations were mentioned either explicitly or implicitly in the discussion, such as the lack of empirical evidence and primary data, two areas merit particular emphasis.

The first limitation lies in the article's focus on SA's unique socio-economic transformation driven by Vision 2030. Consequently, the conceptual frameworks discussed may not fully align with organizational strategies in countries undergoing less centralized or slower-paced reforms. Hence, the article acknowledges these limitations in directly generalizing the findings, given SA's distinct political and socio-economic context. However, it is important to note that many of the challenges and opportunities identified are not exclusive to SA. For instance, countries such as the UAE (Antwi-Boateng & Al Jaber, 2022), India (Pandey et al., 2022), Kenya, and Thailand (Schindler et al., 2023) face similar issues in integrating traditional cultural values into modern organizational strategies. These comparisons suggest that, while the insights presented here are context-specific, the proposed frameworks and strategies could still be adapted and tested in comparable emerging market settings to assess their broader applicability.

The second limitation relates to the lack of an extensive exploration of sector-specific challenges. For example, the energy sector's transition to renewable energy and the retail sector's adaptation to e-commerce trends present unique difficulties that are not fully addressed. Similarly, grassroots organizational dynamics, such as the role of employee-led initiatives in fostering workplace innovation, remain underexamined. Furthermore, regional disparities—such as the differing economic opportunities and resource distribution between urban centers like Riyadh and Jeddah and less-developed regions—are not comprehensively discussed, despite their significant potential to influence the implementation and outcomes of organizational strategies.

Future research should address these gaps through targeted studies. For sector-specific challenges, research could focus on industries like the energy sector, examining the transition to renewable energy, and the retail sector, exploring adaptations to e-commerce trends. Grassroots organizational dynamics, such as employee-led initiatives and the role of leadership in fostering innovation, also warrant further investigation. Additionally, studies could examine regional disparities, including barriers faced by less-developed regions and the effectiveness of policies addressing inequalities. Comparative studies in emerging markets would help test and adapt strategies from SA, providing actionable insights to enhance understanding of organizational strategies under Vision 2030.

## 6. Challenges on Conducting Research in/on SA

Conducting academic research in SA presents significant challenges (Albeladi, 2024; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2022, 2024; Farag, 2019; Zahra, 2011), which can be categorized into three main areas. The first challenge is gaining access to organizations. The literature suggests that researchers often struggle to access these entities due to a lack of familiarity with research processes, concerns about revealing sensitive information, or the sensitive nature of certain research topics (Albeladi, 2024; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2022). For example, the author has frequently faced obstacles when studying the engagement of Saudi women in the workplace, possibly due to organizational leaders' concerns about exposing internal workforce issues.

The second challenge is the preference for quantitative research methods over inductive qualitative approaches in SA. Qualitative methods, particularly ethnographic approaches, are less familiar and often underutilized (Albeladi, 2024; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; M. A. Aldhobaib, 2022). The author's experience suggests that organizational officials generally recognize and accept only surveys and questionnaires as valid research tools, which limits the scope for in-depth qualitative exploration.

The final challenge involves the scarcity of research resources. The lack of comprehensive reports and academic literature in both Arabic and English about Saudi organizations forces researchers to rely on media reports, which may lack academic rigor (Albeladi,

2024; M. Aldhobaib, 2017; Farag, 2019; Zahra, 2011). This limited availability of reliable data hinders the ability to conduct thorough scholarly investigations. A potential solution is to adopt snowball sampling strategies to gather more reliable data, facilitating more effective analysis.

## 7. Conclusions

This article highlights the significance of SA as a unique and underexplored context for advancing organizational strategy theories and practices. SA's socio-cultural norms and values, combined with its economic transformation under Vision 2030, present an attractive landscape for both theoretical innovation and practical application. The integration of socio-cultural dynamics, economic diversification strategies, and the strategic alignment of FDI were identified as key areas deserving further scholarly attention.

The findings reveal critical opportunities for expanding existing theories and identify three interconnected areas for future research. The first is socio-cultural dynamics, focusing on the impact of family structures, gender roles, and Islamic principles on organizational behavior and strategy. This includes exploring the integration of women into leadership roles and how these dynamics influence organizational performance. Institutional Theory provides a strong lens for understanding how deeply ingrained norms shape organizational practices and leadership strategies in this context.

The second area is economic diversification, which requires further analysis of the effectiveness of PPPs, privatization, and SME adaptation strategies in fostering organizational resilience. This also encompasses the role of digital transformation and innovation in supporting Vision 2030's diversification agenda. Applying the resource-based view can help investigate how organizations in SA leverage internal resources to adapt to these rapid economic transformations and maintain a competitive edge.

The final area is strategic expatriate management, which calls for addressing the challenges expatriates face in SA, with an emphasis on cultural adaptation, team integration, and alignment with organizational objectives. The Cross-Cultural Management Theory offers a valuable framework for examining how expatriates navigate the cultural dimensions of the Saudi workplace, while the Social Exchange Theory can provide insights into building trust and fostering collaboration between expatriates and local employees.

To address these areas effectively, researchers must adopt interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies that capture the subjective factors influencing organizations and their strategies. Qualitative and ethnographic methods are highly recommended, as they offer deeper insights into the cultural and social intricacies shaping organizational practices. While these methods present challenges, collaboration with local institutions can help overcome data access barriers and ensure cultural relevance. Comparative studies with other emerging economies can further contextualize findings, enriching both theoretical contributions and practical implications.

Finally, it is critical to emphasize the transformative potential of studying SA. By aligning scholarly efforts with the nation's Vision 2030 goals, researchers can contribute not only to the advancement of organizational theory but also to the practical success of organizations operating in the Saudi market. This integration provides a foundation for actionable insights and a clear roadmap for future research, offering a meaningful contribution to global organizational studies.

However, while the article focuses on SA's unique socio-cultural and economic context, the findings have broader implications for other emerging economies undergoing significant transitions. The challenges and opportunities discussed are not exclusive to SA. For example, countries like the UAE (Antwi-Boateng & Al Jaber, 2022), India (Pandey et al., 2022), Kenya, and Thailand (Schindler et al., 2023) face similar issues with integrating tradi-

tional cultural values into modern organizational strategies. These comparisons suggest that the frameworks and strategies proposed in this article could be adapted and tested in comparable settings. Nevertheless, the study acknowledges the limitations in directly generalizing the findings, given the distinct political and socio-economic landscape of SA. Future research is encouraged to explore these themes across diverse emerging markets to assess the broader applicability of the insights presented here (Awoa & Ondo, 2024).

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