

Bedouin Marketing: Its Role in Promoting Economic Growth in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The study's primary purpose was to examine the role of Bedouin marketing in promoting economic growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with a focus on camels. The study was qualitative, involving fifteen participants who were purposively selected for the study. The participants selected for the study were camel herders, marketers, or tourism promoters knowledgeable about marketing camel products and related activities. The study found that camels form a significant part of the Bedouin heritage in Saudi Arabia. The study further found that camel products, such as meat and milk, contribute significantly to the economy. The contribution towards the economy has been in the context of value-added products such as yogurt and cream, which can be sold internationally. Equally, activities such as camel caravan and racing and specific events such as the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival have been important tourist attractions and have contributed to tourism. To promote economic growth, the study found that Bedouin marketing should focus on specific selling points, such as the health benefits of camel dairy products and the associated cultural value. The study finds that Bedouin marketing is a key driver of economic growth in Saudi Arabia through the artistic value of camels, local entrepreneurship through value-added camel products, and tourism through camel-related events and activities.

Keywords: Bedouin marketing, camels, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Camels have been recognized as iconic symbols of Bedouin culture, especially in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia. This is evident in the context of their cultural value and economic benefits to society. Sala (2022) described camel milk in Saudi Arabia as always being marketed as a premium product due to its health benefits. Sala (2022) further adds that through camel meat, people have been able to diversify their dietary options due to its lean protein. In recognition of camels' unique role and contribution to the Saudi economy, 2024 was named the '*Year of the Camel*' (AlWahibi et al., 2024). The recognition indicated the government's support of the camel economy, which is also evident in establishing specific departments for research and marketing camel products.

Camel products are highly used in Saudi Arabia to promote tourism and cultural practices. For instance, the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival is one of the events that played a critical role in attracting global attention and bolstering local economies through tourism. According to Hassan (2024), such efforts can be aligned with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which mainly insists on economic diversification. On the other hand, camels have mainly been positioned as a symbol of Saudi identity through Bedouin marketing strategies. As described by Aloulou and Alarifi (2022), through Bedouin marketing strategies, the country has been able to strengthen local entrepreneurship. In addition, it has created opportunities for international cultural exchange and sustainable economic growth.

1.2 Rationale

The economy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has traditionally primarily relied on oil and oil reserves. Scholars have expressed the need for diversifying the economy away from oil revenues (Salman, 2024). One way to diversify the economy would be through the existing social and cultural systems. AlWahibi et al. (2024) observe that Saudi has a rich Bedouin heritage, which could be tapped to promote economic growth. The rearing of camels is a significant factor in the Bedouin heritage. Recent statistics indicate that close to two million camels contribute over \$500 million to the Saudi economy annually (Saud, 2024). Despite this significant growth, there

is still a need to examine how camels can contribute to sustainable economic growth. The study focused on how Bedouin marketing could leverage camels to promote domestic and international economic development. In promoting economic growth, the study examined appropriate ways of marketing the Bedouin culture and enhancing camel-related tourism.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The study's main aim is to examine Bedouin marketing's role in promoting economic growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Bedouin lifestyle in this study was reviewed in the context of camels and their roles in promoting economic growth in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the study sought to meet the following objectives:

- 1) To examine the role of Bedouin marketing in enhancing local entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 2) To examine the cultural significance of camels and their role in promoting economic growth in Saudi Arabia
- 3) To explore how the Bedouin marketing of camels could be used to promote tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

1.4 Research Questions

- 1) What are camels' cultural significance and contribution to the economy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- 2) How does Bedouin's marketing of camel-related activities enhance local entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- 3) What are the possible challenges in marketing camel-related activities internationally?

In what ways would camel-related activities be used to promote tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

1.5 Significance

The study will have a significant impact on research as well as different aspects of the economy. Researching the study will enhance knowledge of how camels can enhance Saudi Arabia's economy. Scholars such as AlWahibi et al. (2024) have examined the cultural relevance of camels and the prospects for tourism. The current study will contribute to existing scholarship by evaluating how the role of camels in economic development could be enhanced within the context of Bedouin marketing. Salman (2024) has observed a high overdependence of the Saudi economy on oil. Economically, the study will be relevant in outlining how the Bedouin heritage could be used to minimize the overreliance on single sources. The study will also highlight whether the camel economy can be used for sustainable growth. At the same time, the strategies for Bedouin marketing discussed in this study will be ideal for informing policies regarding the cultural promotion of Bedouin heritage.

1.6 Research Paper Structure

The current paper is structured into five major sections. In the first section, the context of this study involves exploring the Bedouin marketing strategies and camel production in Saudi Arabia with specific objectives and importance across the different domains. The section also contains a review of the existing literature and identifying gaps from the literature. The second section discusses the material studied, area descriptions, methods and/or techniques, describing the approach and tool for the data collection and analysis. The third section provides the interview findings, and the fourth section involves the discussion of the interview findings linking them to the existing literature. The fifth section provides the conclusion of the study discussing limitations and future directions of the study. The sixth section presents an acknowledgement to those involved in the research.

1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 Significance of Bedouin Marketing in Enhancing Local Entrepreneurship

Bedouin marketing ensures that local businessmen and women can integrate their product marketing in a correct cultural manner. Bitar (2020) indicates that marketing strategies based on Bedouin tradition mainly rely on using shared cultural narratives to build authenticity and trust among consumers. In a similar study based on Bedouin marketing and regional entrepreneurship, Biernacka et al. (2018) conducted interviews on women entrepreneurs observed that the culture could enhance favorable emotions between the business and the customers and thereby potentially create customer loyalty. Because of cultural constraints, Biernacka et al. (2018) discovered that women were restricted to small-scale trading of products like wool and skin from interviews they conducted with women entrepreneurs. Biernacka et al. (2018) found that adherence to social codes and values limited women within informal sectors. Despite these social-cultural limitations, Alrawadieh and Alrawadieh (2018) and Biernacka et al. (2018) agree that the Bedouin lifestyle has efficiently created markets and opportunities for local

entrepreneurship at different levels. From this context, it would be essential to examine whether local entrepreneurs can efficiently apply the concepts of Bedouin marketing to support economic growth.

Entrepreneurs have exploited Bedouin marketing by commercializing traditional products such as milk and handicrafts. In Saudi Arabia, camel milk and meat are premium products in domestic and international markets due to their nutritional significance. As Kerdoun and Djafer (2024) described, the two products have been contributing to food security and opening avenues for small-scale entrepreneurs to take part in value-added markets. Ahmed et al. (2024) agree with Siegel (2024) that promoting these products through Bedouin marketing assists entrepreneurs in aligning with cultural preservation and economic diversification goals. Equally, Bedouin marketing is culturally rich; therefore, it has been possible to promote entrepreneurship in tourism-related ventures. As a result of Bedouin marketing, tourism events provide local entrepreneurs with opportunities to offer desert excursions and other activities, thereby contributing to economic growth.

Through Bedouin marketing, local entrepreneurs have developed niche markets such as traditional foods, camel milk, and artisanal crafts. According to Touri (2024), products made with cultural aspects have a higher likelihood of attracting local and international consumers. Touri (2024) further observes that Bedouin-themed marketing has supported the Saudi Arabian market in achieving Vision 2030 by promoting economic diversification and cultural preservation. In contrast, Saidel (2023) argued that while cultural attributes contribute to entrepreneurship, they are also likely to result in some beliefs, such as prioritizing cultural values and systems adoption of modern and innovative approaches. Such resistance to change could be a limiting factor in effectively marketing the attributes of the Bedouin lifestyle. Such differences indicate gaps in the literature on how Bedouin marketing could enhance camels' contribution to economic growth.

1.7.2 Bedouin Marketing in the Promotion of Tourism in Saudi Arabia

Entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia have been considering the Bedouin market as a strategic tool that can easily promote tourism. Alqahtani (2020) conducted a qualitative study with interviews to determine the perceptions of Saudi Arabian residents on the contribution of camels to the economy. Participants in Alqahtani (2020) had mixed perceptions, with a majority indicating that they did not find any benefit associated with tourism events. The arguments made by Alqahtani (2020) were that tourism activities would result in diluting existing culture. Similar observations were made by De Man (2022), who focused on the branding of tourism within the cultural context and equally confirmed that continued marketing and branding of the Bedouin lifestyle results in commodification, which would eventually result in cultural dilution. Findings by Alqahtani (2020) are, however, inconsistent with scholars such as Yehia (2024) and Alyoubi (2024), who agree that Bedouin marketing presents an ideal marketing opportunity for tourism in that they provide unique opportunities and experiences for outsiders. Unlike Yehia (2024) and Alyoubi (2024), Alqahtani (2020) conducted interviews with older populations above 40 who are likely to be more conservative and, therefore, likely to be concerned about cultural dilution. Within this context, there would be a need to conduct further reviews on how Bedouin marketing could lead to tourism.

In Saudi Arabia, camels mainly symbolize resilience and cultural heritage, and as a result, they can attract tourists who seek authentic experiences. The marketing efforts include recreational and cultural dimensions to enhance tourism appeal. Based on research conducted by Degen et al. (2024), Bedouin marketing allows entrepreneurs to offer unique camel products, such as meat and milk, mainly considered health-conscious. Through such products, tourist entrepreneurs can generate economic opportunities due to the provision of immersive cultural experiences to strengthen the country's tourism narrative. In different research conducted by Wippel (2023), the cultural and economic significance of Bedouin marketing is further elevated by beauty contests and exhibitions, especially in events such as Camel festivals. However, research by Wippel (2023) is inconsistent with Al-Mazrouei (2021), who argues that even though such initiatives can quickly bolster tourism, there is a considerable risk of diluting cultural authenticity. Mashreef (2020) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing community members in the Najran region in Saudi Arabia. The survey by Mashreef (2020) examined community members' perceptions and found low participation among women and youth due to the hierarchy of power within the Najran community. This aspect implies that the men are more responsible for organizing events related to camel tourism despite their attitudes and perceptions of the possible effects of tourism on the Bedouin culture. In this case, the fear of affecting the cultural and social values associated with camels makes it essential to draw clear limits regarding economic value.

The main target of Bedouin marketing is niche markets, especially eco-tourism and adventure tourism. Hassan and Hegazy (2023) conducted qualitative research to examine the relationship between Bedouin marketing and tourism attraction, and based on their findings, different experiences, such as camel treks, have resonated with

tourists who seek sustainable experiences. The findings by Hassan and Hegazy (2023) can be aligned with a study by Sampieri and Bagader (2024), who argue that experiences such as dessert safaris can quickly favor experiential and culturally enriching travel. Sampieri and Bagader (2024) conducted qualitative interviews in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and found cultural heritage to be the main contributor to tourism in the region. However, Qiao et al. (2024) disagree with research by Sampieri and Bagader (2024) by indicating that niche markets have been limiting the scalability of tourism initiatives. As a result, mass market tourists are permanently excluded. This attribute means that only specific groups of audiences could be targeted for tourism-related activities such as camel sports (De Man, 2022). Within this context, a gap remains in determining how local entrepreneurs could effectively engage in camel-related tourism and contribute to economic growth.

1.7.3 Cultural Significance of Camels and their Contribution to the Economy

In Saudi Arabia, camels mainly provide sustenance through their milk and meat. Based on research conducted by AlWahibi et al. (2024), camel milk has been gaining prominence globally due to its high nutritional value. AlWahibi et al. (2024) agree with Butler (2022) that through camel milk, tourists can easily have a sustainable alternative to other dairy products as it is rich in vitamins and minerals. Equally, camel meat offers lean protein content and cultural significance, and therefore, it is considered an essential commodity in domestic and international markets. According to Butler (2022), many entrepreneurs have commercialized camel products, which has created employment opportunities in farming and distribution. Through the support of government initiatives and private sector investments, there has been a significant rise in milk production in Saudi Arabia. Another qualitative research was conducted in Algeria by Djenane and Aider (2024) to assess the economic significance of camels in the red meat industry. The study used a partial adjustment model to estimate camel meat production and annual consumption. According to Djenane and Aider (2024), camels play a critical role in enhancing food security, which contributes to the national economy through the red meat industry. The findings of this study are an indication of the significance of camel meat production in meeting the country's meat demand. While entrepreneurs have been able to take advantage of the cultural value associated with camels, as described by AlWahibi et al. (2024) and Butler (2022), Guagnin et al. (2022) disagree with these scholars, arguing that cultural sensitivity may lead some individuals not relating with camel products. Such cultural perceptions may impact entrepreneurship, especially when local businesses cannot break the stereotypes while marketing their products.

Through Bedouin marketing, entrepreneurs have been able to capitalize on camels' cultural and symbolic value while attracting visitors. Based on research conducted by Yehia et al. (2022), the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival is one of the events that displayed how camels can serve as economic assets. Yehia et al. (2022) agree with Ibrahim et al. (2021) that such events play a critical role in contributing to the local economy through ticket sales and hospitality services. One of Saudi Arabia's visions for 2030 is the diversification of the economy through tourism and cultural goals (Alkhanbshi, 2024). While the artistic aspects of camels contribute significantly towards economic growth, as observed by Alkhanbshi (2024), Butler (2022) provides contradictory statements arguing that the use of camels for eco-tourism is likely to result in commercialization where the animals are only viewed from an economic perspective. These conflicting findings present a gap in the literature on whether the cultural value associated with camels would have an actual monetary value.

1.8 Literature Gap

Different scholars have provided significant knowledge on camels' cultural and historical significance; however, there is a gap in analyzing their economic potential in contemporary markets. The qualitative studies have primarily focused on cultural aspects (Biernacka et al., 2018) or economic aspects (Alqahtani, 2020) with limited focus on the interplay between these aspects within Bedouin marketing. Concerning the contribution of camels to the economy, scholars such as Alkhansbhi (2024) and Sampieri and Bagader (2024) have argued that local entrepreneurs contribute to economic growth in the sale of meat and dairy products. However, other scholars such as Butler (2022) and Qiao et al. (2024) have cited cultural elements, arguing that they limit the ability of entrepreneurs to engage significantly in economic growth. Equally, some scholars, such as AlWahibi et al. (2024), have mentioned the role of camel tourism in the economy, especially in the context of camel events and activities organized by the government. In contrast with findings by AlWahibi et al. (2024), Qiao et al. (2024) argue that camel tourism is not unique to Saudi Arabia, which implies that such activities may not uniquely contribute to economic growth. In the context of these contradicting findings, there remains a gap in showcasing how camels contribute to economic growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the role played by Bedouin marketing.

2. Material Studied, Area Descriptions, Methods and/or Techniques

2.1 Material Studied

This research investigates how Bedouin marketing activities drive Saudi Arabian economic expansion through the camel industry. This study interviewed participants who fit into three categories: camel herders, marketers, and operators working within the camel tourism industry—previous studies regarding Bedouin heritage, together with camel-based entrepreneurship and Saudi Arabian tourism, guide this research.

2.2 Area Descriptions

This paper seeks to evaluate the social contribution of Bedouin marketing to the camel market as well as the economic development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It uses interview information from camel herders, marketers, and tourism operators at the center of camel-related practices. Furthermore, the study relies on the literature reviewed on Bedouin heritage, camel-based entrepreneurship, and the tourism sector of Saudi Arabia.

2.3 Methods and Techniques

2.3.1 Research Philosophy

The study used an interpretivist research paradigm. The philosophy assumes that a research issue is best understood when examined from the perspectives or experiences of different individuals (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Equally, it indicates that a research issue can only be examined by evaluating the surrounding social situations. All these would be achieved through subjective interpretations of different meanings. As a result, scholars have associated the philosophy with qualitative research studies. The study further follows an inductive approach. In this approach, the researcher begins with specific observations and generalizations to achieve comprehensive findings (Azungah, 2018). Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) observe that interpretivism is associated with accessing the meaning of social phenomena from the experiences of individuals. In both interpretivist philosophies and inductive methods, the focus is on an in-depth understanding of an issue related to qualitative research methods. This is in line with the focus of the current study, which is to examine the extent to which Bedouin marketing contributes significantly to the Saudi economy.

2.3.2 Research Design

The study is qualitative in nature, adopting a phenomenology design. Sarfo et al. (2021) argue that the design focuses on the experiences of individuals towards some specific phenomenon. Sarfo et al. (2021) observe that the design is ideal in situations where participants are required to provide their thoughts, opinions, and experiences about some specific issues. The current study examines different stakeholders' perceptions of the relevance of Bedouin marketing in promoting economic growth, making the design appropriate for the study. Pilarska (2021) associates the design with collecting detailed information about the context under study. The design was applied by conducting interviews with the selected participants. The target population in this study were camel herders and individuals such as tourism operators involved in promoting the Bedouin cultural heritage. Such individuals were considered ideal in determining Bedouins' effectiveness and contribution to the Saudi economy, as well as ways of enhancing tourism. The study focused on a sample of 15 participants. The participants were recruited in person through organizations such as the Saudi Camel Federation and the Camel Clubs, where one is likely to have access to camel owners, breeders, and promoters of camel-related tourism activities.

The qualitative design was achieved through the use of interviews conducted with different stakeholders within the camel industry. The study consisted of ten interview questions. The interviews were structured following a specific set of questions covering various elements of the research objectives. The questions examine the interviewees' background and role within the camel ecosystem. At the same time, participants were required to outline the cultural significance of camels and the role played in the economy through local entrepreneurship. The questions also examine the contributions of camels to tourism. Lastly, the questions examine the challenges faced in Bedouin marketing, possible solutions, and the role of the Saudi government.

The design applied also made use of thematic analysis. The analysis entails selecting relevant themes from qualitative datasets, which were the interview transcripts. The study's analysis followed the procedure defined by Naeem et al. (2023). The analysis was conducted using NVivo. The codes were developed and later developed into themes. Table 1 shows the codebook and the relevant codes and themes utilized in the study.

Table 1. Codes and Themes

Theme	Codes
Cultural Significance	Culture, livelihood, social status, camel as a source of income
Local entrepreneurship	Camel dairy products, camel meat products, local economy
Tourism	Camel events, camel sports
Improving contribution to the economy	Challenges to Bedouin marketing, solutions to challenges to Bedouin marketing

2.3.3 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical issues were considered in this study. First, the researcher acquired permission to conduct the study from the university ethics committee and the relevant bodies and organizations. After acquiring permission, the researcher selected participants from the target population. All chosen participants were provided with information related to the study through a debrief sheet. Hasan et al. (2021) find this step important in ensuring that individuals engage in the study willingly. In the same context, this study only included participants who will provide some written consent. Hasan et al. (2021) observe that qualitative studies are often affected by issues of confidentiality and anonymity. The above was avoided by ensuring that no personally identifiable information was provided. Lastly, the study considered issues related to the safety of the collected data. All information collected in the survey will be safely stored to prevent unauthorized access. The study will also be stored for at least two years after submission per the university guidelines.

3. Results

3.1 Introduction

Out of the fifteen participants involved in the study, a majority, 10 of 15, were in marketing or cultural promotion of the Bedouin lifestyle with an average of two years in the industry, while five were directly involved in camel rearing. For those engaged in camel rearing, the average size of their herd was 50 camels. Thematic analysis in this study resulted in the following four themes.

3.2 Cultural Significance of Camels

The respondents' answers suggested that camels are culturally significant in Saudi Arabia. Respondent 1 shared:

“Camels hold a great cultural significance for us and the entire Gulf region. They are symbolic, like the Australian Kangaroo or the French Rooster. They hold great significance because they were subject to the popular *Mua'llagah*, a common type of Arabian poetry. Also, our literature is rich with stories about camels.”

The observations by Respondent 1 above focused on the general cultural significance of camels. This is different from Respondent 2, who concentrates on camels as sources of livelihood, stating that:

“Camels have always made livelihood in my community easier. From time immemorial, we have used camels as the main mode of transportation across the desert to search for food and water.”

Inconsistent with Respondents 1 and 2, Respondent 3 focused on sources of transportation within Saudi society, noting that:

“Camels can travel long distances without water or food, making them highly effective for travel and trade. Did you know that they can carry up to 600 pounds on their back? This means that people can use them to trade goods effectively.”

The main idea from the findings is that camels have a cultural significance in the context of their use for transportation and as a source of livelihood for Saudi residents.

3.3 Contribution of Camels to Local Entrepreneurship

Camels have significantly contributed to Saudi local entrepreneurship. Based on the respondents' comments, one of the significant ways that camels contribute to local entrepreneurship is through the production and sale of camel milk. Respondent 5 stated:

“Did you know that Saudi Arabia is currently ranked as one of the biggest producers of camel milk globally? Many people are venturing into milk sales and making the business lucrative in the transformation of the Saudi economy.”

The observations by Respondent 5 are consistent with Respondent 6, who noted that:

“I must pass by the butchery twice a week to buy camel meat. I cannot consume any other red meat. As a

person in the medical field, I always recommend camel meat for consumption because it is low in cholesterol, has large amounts of fatty acids and proteins, and contains more minerals like potassium and magnesium than other red meats.”

The responses above focused on camels as sources of meat and milk, which local entrepreneurs use as sources of their day-to-day livelihoods. While the sale of these products impacts the economy, some participants had different perceptions, citing the high costs associated with camel products compared to meat and dairy products from other animals. For instance, Respondent 4 observed that:

“Right now, I have many responsibilities that require finances, which do not allow me to consume camel milk, which is significantly expensive. Why should I stress myself with purchasing camel milk when I can get the same nutritional value from cow’s milk, which is much cheaper?”

In agreement with Respondent 4, Respondent 7 highlighted that:

“Camel meat is quite expensive in our country. You are not even guaranteed its availability in the market. Actually, I gave up on consuming it three years ago. However, based on my experiences, I can say that camel milk is saltish and tastes unusual. Even if camel meat was always available, I would always prefer chicken, beef, or goat meat.”

Despite the potential for local entrepreneurship in camel milk and meat sales, not all locals in Saudi support entrepreneurs. People have different preferences regarding consuming products, including camel milk and meat. To attain the required benefits to the economy, the attitudes of local entrepreneurs on the economic value of camels should be addressed. Therefore, the main idea within the findings is that camel dairy and meat products contribute to local entrepreneurship.

3.4 Contribution of Camels to Tourism

Most respondents agreed that camels in Saudi Arabia have significantly contributed to international tourism. Camel Sporting was reported as being instrumental in boosting the country’s tourism. Respondent 9 shared:

“Camel sports, including beauty pageants and racing, showcase the physical prowess and elegance of camels. Such sports significantly contribute to the growth of sports tourism in our country. Have you ever heard of the Crown Prince Camel Festival in Taif? In fact, it is ranked as the global largest camel sports event, which has assisted in making Taif one of the most preferred tourist destinations.”

The camel sporting activities mentioned by Respondent 9 above have the potential to draw tourists into the country. However, in contrast, Respondent 2 believes that despite the attractiveness of such sporting events, the government is not fully prepared to address the economic attributes associated with these tourism activities:

“I feel like our country is yet to unlock the full potential of its camels to drive economic growth through tourism. I believe this is mainly caused by poor marketing and promotion. For instance, there are few digital marketing campaigns showcasing unique camel experiences and promoting the country as a camel tourism destination.”

Although camels contribute to Saudi Arabia’s international tourism through rich cultural experiences and sports, the country can ensure the animals significantly contribute to tourism by employing targeted strategies that highlight their unique offerings, such as utilizing social media platforms to promote the country as a camel tourism destination and having international tourism partnerships.

3.5 Improving the Contribution of Camels to the Economy

In determining ways of improving the contribution of camels to the economy, it would be essential to begin by evaluating some of the challenges identified by study participants. For instance, Respondent 10 observed:

“Camels and camel-related activities may not always resonate with international audiences, especially those that are not accustomed to consuming camel products.”

In such cases, Respondent 10 recommended:

“I think it is upon us to market the unique selling points, such as the health benefits of camel milk, especially to health-conscious populations globally. This could be tied to camel tourism in Saudi.”

Based on the above response, Saudi need to focus on specialized marketing that focuses on the health benefits of camel products. This could be ideal for enhancing absorption into international markets. The following challenges identified by participants in this study were access to global markets and associated distribution channels. For instance, Respondent 8 observed that:

“The cost of accessing international markets, especially regarding transportation, is particularly high. Most of us tend to sell locally.”

Observations by Respondent 8 are consistent with Respondent 12, who noted:

“The majority of farmers, especially those from deep interiors, have challenges with transportation and cold storage. For entrepreneurs, the costs are extremely high, which means that it may not make some economic sense to sell the products internationally. I wish we had easy access to airports.”

The above responses suggest that the government in Saudi Arabia should invest in appropriate roads and infrastructure to ensure that herders and traders quickly access airports and other destinations that facilitate exports. This would minimize the likelihood of spoilage before reaching desired destinations. The participants also emphasized the importance of marketing methods that ensure camel products reach the international markets directly. Respondent 12 argued:

“A good way of attracting tourists is by ensuring that camel products are well marketed in international expos and similar events.”

Equally on improving marketing, Respondent 5 stated:

“I suggest that the government, in partnership with the private institutions, can organize cultural expos aimed at showcasing the cultural and historical significance of camels to the global audience. These activities can be marketed across social media platforms as tools of tourist attraction.”

The above findings highlight the need to enhance brand recognition for camel products through direct marketing at events such as international expos. Health-conscious populations could be targeted with marketing that focuses on the unique elements of camel meat and milk, such as health benefits. At the same time, the government ensures that there is appropriate infrastructure to support the contribution of camels to the economy.

4. Discussion

4.1 Bedouin Marketing and Local Entrepreneurship

The study had three main objectives, the first of which was to examine the role of Bedouin marketing in promoting local entrepreneurship. The study found that local entrepreneurs primarily benefit from selling meat and dairy products. Similar observations have been made by Biernacka et al. (2018), who argued that camel milk and meat provide a significant part of household income in Saudi Arabia. The study also found that local entrepreneurs have benefited from the nutritional value associated with camel milk in their marketing. Equally, Kerdoun and Djafer (2024) believe that compared to cow milk, it is higher in protein and lower in lactose, making it appropriate for specific population groups. However, in contrast, Butler (2022) questions the contributions towards local entrepreneurship, citing limited brand visibility, making it difficult for small-scale businesses to consistently attract local and international entrepreneurs. The impact of this is that local entrepreneurs remain stagnant without any significant contribution to the economy. Therefore, for local entrepreneurs to contribute towards the economic growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the small-scale farmers should be supported in the context of having the relevant knowledge on the production and processing of camels to achieve some feasible margins.

The contribution towards the local economy is also evident in the context of value-added products such as yogurt and cream, which are exported and sold internationally. While camel products have higher health and nutritional value, as found in the study, scholars such as Butler (2022) have argued that the products are likely to be more expensive compared to dairy and meat products from other animals, such as cows. This affects local entrepreneurship, mainly when focusing on the mass markets. The findings imply that local entrepreneurs may have challenges positioning their products as substitutes and viable alternatives. Consistent with Degen et al. (2024), this study finds that for local entrepreneurs to contribute effectively towards economic growth in Saudi Arabia, they must find appropriate ways to market and compete with meat and dairy products from cattle, which are cheaper and more easily accessible compared to the camel products. The study's first objective was to showcase the impact of local entrepreneurship.

4.2 Cultural Value of Camels

From the findings, the contribution of camels to the local entrepreneurship and economy has been limited by the cultural value associated with camels, especially among those who view the animals as symbols of wealth and status. While this study found that cultural attributes are likely to be a limiting factor, some scholars, such as Sampieri and Bagader (2024), have found inconsistent results, arguing that most entrepreneurs can efficiently take advantage of cultural values in promoting economic growth. The findings by Sampieri and Bagader (2024)

are, however, in the context of the camel-related events and activities organized across the year, where Saudi entrepreneurs showcase their culture and heritage at large to tourists and potential clients. However, such events, which are in most cases organized by the government, are aimed at showcasing Saudi culture in general and may not necessarily relate to the aspects of camels. The cultural value aspects discussed in this study relate to entrepreneurs' ability to efficiently use cultural attributes as unique selling points in their research process. The study results, therefore, imply that most entrepreneurs cannot efficiently take advantage of such attributes in attracting local and international entrepreneurs. The results are consistent with those of Guagnin et al. (2022), who argued that the cultural value attached to camels is likely to hinder the commercialization of camel products and engagement in modern practices such as breeding. This implies that for entrepreneurs, especially those from very conservative backgrounds, camels are only seen for their cultural and social value rather than something that would contribute towards economic growth.

The findings could also be examined from a different context, where high local entrepreneurship is likely to result in the depletion of cultural values and a more focused focus on economic attributes, as Butler (2022) observed. The findings imply that commercializing events such as camel sporting to enhance local entrepreneurship would result in them losing their cultural value and relevance. The results of this study are also consistent with Alyoubi (2024), who argued that some camel herders may not be open to activities that prioritize economic returns beyond normal livelihoods. The impact of such traditional approaches would be the unwillingness of some individuals to commit to innovative approaches to camel rearing and production. Therefore, while local entrepreneurship of camel products and events is essential in enhancing economic growth, ensuring a balance between achieving economic benefits and retaining cultural value would be crucial. In outlining the cultural value associated with camels and their contribution towards economic growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the study has met the study's second objective.

4.3 Bedouin Marketing of Camels and Tourism

The study also examined how the Bedouin lifestyle contributes to the economy through tourism. Study participants pointed out the rise of camel-related events, such as sporting activities to attract tourists. To attract more tourists, the government has organized specific events, such as the Crown Prince Camel Festival and the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival, bringing together individuals from across the globe. Similar observations have been made by Degen et al. (2024), who argued that the events provide an opportunity for tourists to efficiently experience the Bedouin lifestyle, thereby contributing to the economy. Equally, Sampieri and Bagader (2024) noted that events such as the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival allow tourists to experience the Saudi heritage and culture entirely. As a result, such platforms have become ideal for marketers to showcase camel-related products. While the study has found the events to be largely successful, it is essential to take note of their seasonality, given that they only occur annually. At the same time, some tourism events, such as camel sporting activities, are also seasonal, indicating that their impact on the economy might not be consistent. The results suggest that more could be done from the marketing side, and both marketers and local business people in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should take advantage of the opportunity to market their destinations better.

While the findings in the current study have indicated that tourism associated with camel-related activities contributes efficiently towards economic growth, some scholars have doubted the contribution towards economic development, for instance, inconsistent with the current study, Qiao et al. (2024) found that camel-related tourism is not unique to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, citing other countries such as Egypt and the UAE, which equally have similar activities. This implies that marketers and entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia are likely to face stiff competition, which indicates that they need to be unique to significantly affect the economy. At the same time, scholars such as Sampieri and Bagader (2024) have found that camel tourism has been on the rise in the kingdom. However, this study has found that camel-related activities are underpromoted mainly, which impacts Saudi entrepreneurs' ability to compete effectively in the global market. These findings imply that beyond investing in the annual events and festivities, the government in Saudi Arabia should also invest in the relevant infrastructure to ensure that tourists can reach relevant destinations without significant barriers. In outlining the contribution of camels to tourism as above, the study has met the third objective described.

4.4 Improving the Role of Camels in the Economy

To achieve the intended economic benefits, the study recommends that Bedouin marketing should focus on unique selling points, such as the health benefits associated with camel dairy products. Participants further the need to increase the cultural expos and events targeted to international audiences. While such events have been successful, scholars such as Yehia et al. (2022) point out the need to invest more in social media marketing to reach more audiences internationally. Equally, such marketing would also be ideal in targeted marketing,

especially in reaching specific groups such as health-conscious populations. Such kind of particular marketing has also been mentioned by Alyoubi (2024), who equally argued that due to the unique value associated with camels and their role in Saudi society, it would be necessary for marketing efforts to efficiently capture these attributes as part of attracting specific groups of audiences. This means that beyond the health-conscious populations, some particular events, such as camel sporting activities, could also be marketed to some specific groups of audiences. Lastly, given that the consumption of camel products is primarily tied to Saudi heritage, marketing should focus on specific cultural attributes to appeal directly to consumers.

However, challenges have been identified, such as economic viability, as establishing camel-based industries requires significant investment in market development and infrastructure. Without adequate technology, such as specialized equipment for camel husbandry, participants may experience challenges in commercialization efforts. Equally, as noted by Butler (2022), camels are considered traditional assets in some communities, and as a result, commercialization could end up conflicting with conventional lifestyles and values. In addition, increased camel populations can easily cause overgrazing in fragile ecosystems, especially when there is a lack of adoption of sustainable grazing practices. Different concerns have also been raised regarding zoonotic diseases, which are highly associated with camels. Such diseases may end up affecting public perception and demand for their products. Therefore, camels can easily play a prominent role in the economy; however, there should be a balanced strategy for respecting traditional practices, addressing environmental concerns, and promoting sustainable development. Through the above, stakeholders will ensure that camels are valuable assets in the diversification of economies, especially in communities most suited to their unique capacities.

4.5 Recommendations and Implications

The recommendations for this study would be for the government to invest more in ensuring that infrastructure that would enable entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia to access international markets quickly. For instance, the study has shown that despite the benefits associated with camel dairy products, entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia still have challenges in accessing health-conscious populations in international markets. In creating the relevant infrastructure, the government should invest further in research and development to significantly improve the camel-value chains. In this context, the findings also imply that government institutions can engage in educational campaigns to inform the general public on how to take advantage of the economic value of camels. The findings equally have implications for marketers focusing on Bedouin culture's unique attributes in attracting global clients and tourists.

5. Conclusion

The study has found that camels are a significant part of the Bedouin lifestyle and are essential in supporting the Saudi economy. The study further found that local entrepreneurs have been able to leverage the cultural value of camels to earn income, answering the first research question. The second research question was about the contribution of camels to local entrepreneurship, which was responded to by showcasing those local entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia benefit significantly from selling meat and dairy products from camels. Equally, the nutritional value associated with camel dairy products has become a huge selling point, especially to the health-conscious populations. Local entrepreneurs could exploit these unique benefits by attracting regional and international clients.

The study answered the third research question by outlining challenges such as transportation and logistics, which makes it difficult, especially for herders in interior regions. From the findings, the government could solve this by investing in relevant infrastructure to diversify the economy away from oil. Equally, the marketing of camel products and events has experienced challenges internationally, especially for those who do not share the Bedouin lifestyle. The challenge could be best solved by focusing on the unique selling point to specific groups of audiences. Similarly, the study answered the fourth research question by outlining how camel-related events and beauty pageants attract local and international tourists, contributing to economic growth. The government's contribution towards tourism has also been enhanced through activities such as the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival. Lastly, the financial impacts of camels in this study were based on the different stakeholders' perceptions. The arguments provided could be subjective and biased based on the sources. As a result, future studies would be necessary to quantify the effects of camels by collecting precise data from relevant institutions and conducting quantitative analysis. Such studies could also be longitudinal to follow the impacts over time.

5.1 Limitations

There are several limitations associated with the current study. Among them is a small sample size of only 15 participants. The study required a diverse perspective from stakeholders, such as marketers, tourism operators, and government agencies, which would not have been efficiently achieved using the small sample size. Using a

smaller sample size was in line with Staller (2021), who observed that rather than aiming for statistical generalizations, qualitative studies focus on in-depth data, which implies that a sample of 15, such as in the current study, would be ideal. The study only included conversations from shepherds and camel herders within this context, which would not be considered generalizable. Another possible limitation relates to the subjectivity associated with the methods. Pollock (2020) argues that the bias will likely result in skewed findings, which alter the course of the study. The limitation was addressed through a structured interview guide, which may have enhanced the possibility of replicating the findings.

5.2 Future Directions

The current study has demonstrated the economic value of contributing to tourism and local entrepreneurship. Future studies should consider the sustainability of camel rearing, especially regarding how camel rearing and production could be made sustainable while at the same time maintaining the associated value and authenticity. At the same time, future studies should consider how Bedouin marketing could be achieved in a way that could be used to balance achieving commercial benefits for camels and ensuring that cultural authenticity is not lost. Regarding sustaining the economic impacts of camels, future studies should consider how new technologies, such as genetics, could enhance productivity and, ultimately, profitability to achieve the intended economic impacts. Lastly, it would be necessary for future studies to consider comparing the perceptions of younger and older generations in Saudi Arabia on the contribution of camels to local entrepreneurship and the economy.

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No additional data are available.

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