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Abstract

This research addresses public transportation challenges in Saudi Arabia, where private car ownership is predominant. The study aims to identify factors diminishing the appeal of public transport, hindering its adoption despite the urgent need for sustainable urban mobility. The proposed qualitative research methodology involves 30 semi-structured interviews, targeting individuals with and without prior public transport experience. The expected outcomes include a nuanced understanding of barriers to public transport utilization and proposed solutions. Anticipated implications encompass informing policy changes, improving public transport infrastructure, and promoting a modal shift from private cars. This research is pivotal in advancing knowledge in transportation planning, offering insights applicable to Saudi Arabia and other regions grappling with similar challenges. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to developing environmentally friendly and accessible urban transportation systems, aligning with the broader goals of Saudi Vision 2030.

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1. Introduction

In Saudi Arabia, cars are the most frequently used means of transportation, posing various challenges and problems (Al-Fouzan, 2012). The situation results in a build-up of traffic, a shortage of parking space, and causes considerable harm to the environment due to pollution. Mitigating these concerns is crucial, and providing public transport can help. Saudi Arabia's transportation system was established early on by implementing a railway system. The country has also implemented several other public transport services, such as the bus services operated by the Saudi Public Transport Company (SAPTCO) and the King Abdulaziz Project for Riyadh Public Transport, to improve transportation solutions. This is synchronized with Saudi Vision 2030, leading to further development in many areas and making Saudi Arabia a global destination. Therefore, the urgency to resolve this issue will increase. Our study aims to address challenges related to public transportation by exploring the factors that decrease the desire to use it in Saudi Arabia.

2. Background information to the study

Public transport in Saudi Arabia needs to be developed more. There is a limited network of buses and trains, and service could be more frequent and reliable. Additionally, public transport is often perceived as being uncomfortable and inconvenient. As a result of these factors, many Saudis prefer to use private cars. This has led to a significant increase in traffic congestion and pollution. In Riyadh, for example, traffic congestion costs the economy an estimated 10 billion Saudi riyals (\$2.6 billion) annually.

3. Problem Statement

This research delves into the factors that diminish the attractiveness of public transport in Saudi Arabia. The private mode is more preferred despite the evident need for a sustainable

urban mobility solution comprising public transport faces underutilization. The research focuses on bridging the critical gap in this field by seeking a comprehensive understanding of the specific factors contributing to the reluctance in adopting public transport. The issue under focus includes perceived convenience of private cars, limitations in the coverage and efficiency of public transportation networks, and the impact of cultural norms and weather patterns (Queiroz et al., 2020). The study seeks to achieve actionable insights to advance academic knowledge and provide practical recommendations for urban planners and policymakers. These recommendations can help bolster public transportation systems and address the identified challenges towards a more sustainable and efficient transportation infrastructure within the country.

4. Aim of The Study

The aim of this study is to assess the factors that make public transport in Saudi Arabia less attractive. The research focus is to discern and analyze the specific reasons on why individuals in Saudi Arabia are reluctant to use public transportation reasons of why public transportation fails to impress residents of Saudi Arabia. The research will also investigate the factors that motivate people to opt for public transportation, and consequently, minimize their reliance on private vehicles. In addition, it will determine what motivates individuals to switch to public transportation. By doing so, this study intends to gain a better understanding of the variables associated with this phenomenon. Are area that needs specific attention includes perceived convenience associated with private car ownership or mode of transportation, and the influence of cultural norms and general weather in these cities. The study seeks to provide actionable insights from the academic point of view and practical recommendations for urban planning and policy formulation. These recommendations can play a major role in enhancing

effectiveness of public transportation systems, mitigate the identified challenges, and thereby contribute to the development of a more sustainable and efficient transportation infrastructure in Saudi Arabia. This study will employ qualitative and aims to identify people's thoughts and beliefs about public transportation (Creswell, 2012).

5. Literature Review

The Mode of Transport in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's choice of transportation modes is intricately shaped by a blend of factors extensively discussed in the literature. Central to the nation's transportation landscape is the prominence of private car ownership. The affordability of car ownership, characterized by minimal taxes, registration fees, and cost-effective fuel, has rendered it accessible to a broad spectrum of income groups. Notably, Riyadh, the capital city, has garnered a reputation as an urban environment dominated by cars, where a significant proportion of daily journeys is executed through private vehicles. To illustrate, statistics highlight that approximately 85% of Riyadh's daily trips rely on cars, while a mere 2% opt for public buses (Al-fouzan, 2012; Alqahtani et al., 2012). This entrenched preference for private cars has become a habitual practice among the local populace, fostering resistance to the adoption of alternative transportation modes.

The adoption of public transport in Saudi Arabia encounters substantial impediments, as unveiled by the presented information. The key factors contributing to the populace's reluctance to transition from private cars to public transit modes, notably the proposed metro system, are deeply entrenched within the cultural, economic, and geographical context of the nation. The available data and scholarly works underscore the notably low cost associated with private car usage in Saudi Arabia, stemming from minimal taxes, registration fees, and

economically viable fuel expenses. Consequently, a significant portion of the population, encompassing lower-income households, readily opts for private cars to fulfill their daily travel requirements. This inclination towards private car usage has evolved over multiple decades, with Riyadh, in particular, being characterized as a car-centric urban center, where the preponderance of daily journeys is facilitated by private vehicles (Al-fouzan, 2012; Alqahtani et al., 2012). This entrenched reliance on private cars, coupled with the favorable economic landscape, stands as a substantial deterrent to the widespread adoption of public transport.

Additionally, the cultural and behavioral dimensions of public transport utilization present notable challenges. In Saudi Arabia, even when rail travel may represent the more cost-effective alternative, many commuters persist in favoring private cars due to non-financial impediments. These non-financial barriers encompass deeply ingrained habits, a significant reliance on cars, and prevailing perceptions that may not align with public transport preferences (Blainey et al., 2012). This underscores the necessity of initiatives aimed at promoting public transit, which must not only address practical concerns such as cost and accessibility but also address entrenched cultural and behavioral norms favoring private car usage. Furthermore, the arid and sweltering climate of Saudi Arabia, particularly in Riyadh, characterized by temperatures regularly exceeding 38°C and low humidity, discourages outdoor activities like walking or cycling (Dunn et al., 2012). These harsh weather conditions can further contribute to the inclination towards private car use, as the prospect of walking to access a metro station becomes less appealing within this climate.

Overcoming the prevailing preference for private cars in Saudi Arabia presents a multifaceted challenge. While tangible barriers like costs, land-use configurations, and accessibility can potentially be mitigated through meticulous metro system design, the intangible

and complementary barriers are deeply intertwined with the cultural and geographical fabric of the society (Queiroz et al., 2020). Existing literature indicates that even when public rail transport might be the most cost-effective choice for a specific journey, many travelers in Riyadh and across the country persist in selecting alternative modes, particularly private cars. This highlights the existence of non-financial impediments, including entrenched habits, overreliance on cars, and deeply ingrained, albeit inaccurate, perceptions about public transport (La Paix et al., 2021). Consequently, effecting a transition in the preferred modes of transport in Saudi Arabia necessitates a comprehensive strategy that addresses both practical and cultural aspects, accompanied by well-considered policies aimed at promoting more sustainable and efficient transportation alternatives.

6. Research Methodology

A qualitative research approach is proposed for this study to gain a more profound understanding of the matter. The data, which may consist of interview transcripts and field notes related to public transport in Saudi Arabia, will be analyzed to obtain answers to the research question.

Target Population

This research will depend on the extent of previous experience with public transportation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This provides accurate information about the previous impressions of residents of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the target group will be split into two sections: the first will consist of individuals with prior experience with public transportation. In contrast, the second section will comprise those who have yet to try it.

Research Procedures

The study will target at least 30 interviews of both genders via semi-structured interviews. This type of interview was selected because it offers a balance of structure and flexibility to allow interviewees to express themselves (Alotaibi & Potoglou, 2018). All interviews will be transcribed and expected to range from 15 to 30 minutes. The interviews will be conducted informally with open-ended questions using a conversational style. The main questions in the interviews will be: What are the obstacles for you to use public transportation as the primary method, and what are your perspectives about the state of public transportation in Saudi Arabia?

7. Contributing to Field/Significance and or Impact of Proposed Research

This study will contribute to the field of transportation planning by providing a better understanding of the factors that make public transport less attractive in Saudi Arabia. This information can be used to develop policies and programs that improve the attractiveness of public transport and reduce reliance on private cars. The findings of this study may also be of interest to policymakers in other countries that are facing similar challenges with public transport.

8. Relevance of The Study to The Department

This study offers significant relevance as it provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with public transport adoption in Saudi Arabia. The research highlights the complex barriers, encompassing economic, cultural, and behavioral factors, that hinder the appeal of public transit. The findings furnish essential knowledge that can guide strategies for improving public transport infrastructure, stimulating modal shifts from private cars to public transit, and ultimately advancing sustainable and efficient transportation solutions in the region. The outcomes of this study can assist the department in formulating

targeted policies and initiatives aimed at addressing the identified barriers, thus aligning with the department's mission of promoting accessible and environmentally friendly urban transportation systems in Saudi Arabia.

9. Research Plan and Timeline

The research plan for this study is as follows:

1. **Literature review:** We will conduct a review of the existing literature on public transport in Saudi Arabia. This will help us to identify key factors that have been found to affect public transport use.
2. **Data collection:** We will collect data through qualitative interviews with public transport users and non-users. This will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that make public transport less attractive to Saudis.
3. **Data analysis:** We will analyze the interview data to identify key themes and patterns. This will allow us to develop a better understanding of the factors that make public transport less attractive in Saudi Arabia.
4. **Recommendation development:** We will develop recommendations for improving the attractiveness of public transport in Saudi Arabia. These recommendations will be based on the findings of our research.

- The timeline for this study is as follows:
- Literature review: 2 weeks
- Data collection: 4 weeks
- Data analysis: 4 weeks
- Recommendation development: 2 weeks

Total: 12 weeks

Time Plan

Months/Activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Define Research Objectives																
literature review																
Data Collection																
Data Analysis																
Identification of Solutions																
Policy and Stakeholder Analysis																
Drafting the Research Report																
Review and Feedback																
Finalizing the Research Report																
Dissemination and Policy																

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