Language, Tourism Marketing, and Economic Growth: Determining the Role of English in Saudi Arabia.

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- **Abstract:** Saudi Arabia recorded an international tourist foot fall of 15.3 million in 2018 (Amna, 2020). This figure was slightly lower than the total for the previous year, 16.2 million. Not only this, in September 2019, the kingdom opened its borders to the world to fulfill the ambitious target stated in Vision 2030 to bring in as many as 100 million international tourists to the country. With tourism taking the center stage as an important revenue generating sector, catering to the international clientele whether in terms of hospitality, health, or outreach calls for the industry to be equipped with the international language of communication, English. The current mixed methods study attempts to determine the role of English language in marketing tourism in Saudi Arabia using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview protocol to collect data. The study comprises two hundred and forty-two participants (n=242) to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The results indicate that (i) tourism development will enhance economic growth of Saudi Arabia; (ii) appropriate English language proficiency is a prerequisite to effectively market rich Saudi historical and cultural attractions, attract and successfully interact with international tourists; (iii) Saudi tourism workforce is deficient in English language proficiency to serve international tourists. The study recommends that collaborative efforts be pressed into action to bring the English proficiency of the Saudi tourism workforce to the desired levels. The present employees and aspirants of the tourism sector can be provided with tailor-made English for Tourism courses so that they may be able to play their role in achieving tourism targets set in Saudi Vision 2030.