

Chapter 14

Modernization without Westernization: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Nailah Ayub

King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

Norizan M Kassim

King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

Mohamed Zain

King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines various radical and incremental changes and innovations (physical, economic, educational, societal, and cultural) introduced by the government of Saudi Arabia in view of the slogan “modernization without westernization.” The slogan highlights the government efforts to encourage incremental change to integrate development or modernization with the traditional values. However, the authors aim to confirm whether this is an incremental change accepted by the public or a radical change where the tradition is being replaced by westernization, that is, whether it is modernization with or without westernization. The approach taken in this study is to examine the literature in order to find some evidence that supports or refutes the slogan. The authors also conducted a questionnaire survey involving 237 respondents in order to determine their perceptions toward this slogan. The results provide strong support for both modernization and westernization since these two practices have brought about many positive changes to Saudi Arabia. Thus, if one were to include certain Saudi values into the concept of modernization, particularly those related to culture and religion, one could safely say that the slogan or motto, “modernization without westernization,” is true or acceptable only up to a certain extent. In other words, the findings suggest Saudi society is more accepting of both “modernization” and “westernization” as long as they do not go against the basic tenets of Islam.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4749-7.ch014

Modernization without Westernization

We are a part of this world and we cannot be disconnected from it. We cannot be mere spectators while the rest of the world is progressing towards a global system. (King Abdullah (then Crown Prince), May 2003

No to change, yes to development...Whatever exists in the kingdom is already well-established; however, there is a scope for development—development that does not clash with the principles of the nation (Prince Nayef, Minister of Interior, March 2003)[Excerpts from Vietor and Forrest, 2010]

INTRODUCTION

While the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) aspires to educate, socially and politically motivate, and economically mobilize the citizens of the country, there is a slogan “Modernization without Westernization” which has received much attention in many countries, including Saudi Arabia (e.g., see DinarStandard, 2010; Thoman, 2013). We are using this slogan to examine how far has the country modernized and has been able to resist the temptation of westernization. The slogan basically indicates a motive to modernize or develop the country without negating traditional Saudi values. It is an interesting slogan especially in this era of globalization and diversity. A cursory look into the country will show an observer that the country has surely changed (i.e., it has moved towards modernization, but has the country also not westernized?). Lifestyles have clearly changed from those of a couple of decades ago. The buildings, clothes, food, and the topics of conversation have also changed. Is this modernization without westernization? Has Saudi Arabia modernized with the prevalent change or westernized? First, we were interested to investigate how Saudi Arabia has modernized thus far. Second, we targeted studying the Saudis’ understanding of the modernization and westernization concepts—how

they perceived Saudi Arabia to be modernizing versus westernizing.

To our knowledge, there is no previous study offering any observation on this topic or one comparing modernization and westernization, especially from the perspective of Saudi Arabia. We believe now is the correct moment to study this topic as the country’s King has introduced over recent years several crucially radical changes and many incremental innovations in the country. Therefore, we were interested in studying the various radical and incremental innovations (physical, economic, societal, educational, and cultural) which have been introduced by the Saudi government in the country in recent years. In addition, the topic of modernization versus westernization has been discussed theoretically, but the extant literature does not offer any quantitative or empirical study measuring these variables. This chapter introduces the facts from Saudi Arabia and also informs readers on the perceptions of the people as to how they perceive what is occurring or the subjective reality of the changes that have been made and are occurring in the country which have direct or indirect relationships to the slogan, “modernization without westernization.” We also discuss how this slogan seems to reflect on incremental changes or societal innovations that have taken place in the country that can hopefully help answer the question whether or not the slogan holds true in Saudi Arabia.

This study is expected to forward some interesting facts that may help readers to visualize the current scenario related to the slogan in Saudi Arabia. It can assist the government and institutions, among others, in the country to move forward in a given direction in a more informed way. It may also help the citizens realize and align their thoughts as well as act accordingly.

Kuran (2005) elaborates on reasons for rejecting financial modernization by an Islamic state such as Saudi Arabia which are summarized as restrictions in Islamic law for commercial partnerships, the Islamic inheritance system, Islamic

18 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/modernization-without-westernization/90406

Related Content

Evaluation of Celebrity Endorsements on Consumer Perception and Brand Equity in Indian Market

Ankita Sen Negi and Payel Das (2018). *Holistic Approaches to Brand Culture and Communication Across Industries* (pp. 36-52).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/evaluation-of-celebrity-endorsements-on-consumer-perception-and-brand-equity-in-indian-market/193397

Sport Marketing: Cyber Strategies for Clubs and Events

Manuel Alonso Dos Santos (2017). *Advertising and Branding: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1070-1082).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/sport-marketing/175264

E-Memory Choice Architecture: Modeling the Use Diffusion of Twitter Archiving System

Hsia-Ching Chang and Chen-Ya Wang (2019). *International Journal of Online Marketing* (pp. 24-37).

www.irma-international.org/article/e-memory-choice-architecture/218179

Do Spanish Family SMEs Make Appropriate Use of Their Organizational Websites?: An Analysis of Family Firms' Brand Promotion and Website Quality Level

Rubén Martínez-Alonso, María J. Martínez-Romero and Daniel Rodríguez-Rodríguez (2021). *Advanced Digital Marketing Strategies in a Data-Driven Era* (pp. 172-191).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/do-spanish-family-smes-make-appropriate-use-of-their-organizational-websites/284288

A Mobile Market: Opportunities and Strategies in Higher Education

Thomas J. Hayes and Mary M. Walker (2012). *International Journal of Technology and Educational Marketing* (pp. 55-69).

www.irma-international.org/article/mobile-market-opportunities-strategies-higher/69184