

Virtual Linguistic Landscape in Saudi Arabia: A Sociosemiotic Analysis of Three Entertainment Events

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Abstract—Given the widespread use of social media where communication can take different shapes, this study explores the virtual linguistic landscape of three entertainment events held in Saudi Arabia: Riyadh Season, Diriyah Season, and Jeddah Season. Using a sociosemiotic approach, the study quantitatively and qualitatively analyses 210 images of promotional materials posted on the X accounts of these events. It examines the choice of languages, the prominence given to the selected languages, and the form of language presentation, including the order of languages, font size, amount of information, and translation of texts in the bi/multilingual signs. The analysis reveals a coexistence of Arabic and English, with Arabic being more preferred in bi/multilingual signs and English predominating in monolingual signs. Chinese has a minimal presence, which suggests a growing appreciation or demand for it in accordance with current trends in the country. The study provides insight into how linguistic practices adapt to social changes and trends nationwide.

Index Terms—virtual linguistic landscape, images of promotional materials, Saudi Arabia, Saudi Seasons, multilingualism

I. INTRODUCTION

The virtual linguistic landscape (VLL) is a recently developed concept that captures language representation within digital communities (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009). It is an extension of the linguistic landscape (LL) that refers to the visibility or invisibility of languages on public and business signage in specific locations (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). In VLL studies, the focus is on illustrating how linguistic diversity and multilingualism are expressed within cyberspace. In contrast to studies on the LL that focus on language use in determinate physical places, VLL studies involve a more dynamic system in which linguistic signs are continually reassembled and language communication can be clearly observed (Jiang et al., 2024). This distinction is due to the fact that social media platforms grant their users more freedom to draw on a range of linguistic resources to communicate and express identity. Their online interactions can therefore exhibit a variety of linguistic features of the real world, such as multilingualism (Almoaily, 2019). As Almoaily (2019) states, the VLL is unrestricted by any geographical borders, and anyone from anywhere, whether they are individuals, organisations, or governments, can browse the VLL and post content. The large audience that can be reached through the VLL makes a comprehensive examination of its content essential.

Languages displayed on social media sites can lead to social stratification based on language power. Languages not only communicate meaning, but also play a role in determining who has privilege within a community, affecting social structure based on linguistic identity. Almoaily (2019) argues that linguistic (in)equality can be observed in the languages used in public, such as shop names, street signs, information billboards, or online posts. The languages selected for use in these contexts must be interpreted through the lens of the power relations of the speakers of the chosen languages, which in essence are products of the sociopolitical, economic, and historical context (Maseko & Siziba, 2023). These dynamics are significant in formulating and reinforcing perceptions towards languages, since linguistic tensions are manifested in virtual space (Shohamy, 2006).

One field in which such tensions unfold is tourism, which has recently witnessed rapid growth. This evolution in tourism in Saudi Arabia increased after the announcement of Vision 2030 in 2016. Saudi Vision 2030 is a transformational plan that has several aims and includes various reform strategies to ensure sustained economic prosperity. These reforms extend to different industries, including tourism (Saudi Vision, 2024). As has been documented, language and tourism are closely interlinked (Frank, 2016), since linguistic practices can play a role in shaping a tourism-oriented atmosphere and illuminate the symbolic function of an area (Ruzaitè, 2017).

This research focuses on the languages displayed on social media accounts of three Saudi touristic events that operate under the umbrella of Saudi Seasons: Riyadh Season, Diriyah Season, and Jeddah Season. These events are supervised and organised by several official and trusted entities within the state, including the General Entertainment Authority that organises Riyadh and Jeddah Seasons. Diriyah Season is coordinated by the Diriyah Company in collaboration with the Diriyah Gate Development Authority. All these authorities seek to contribute to the implementation of the Saudi Vision by targeting not only local citizens but also international visitors. The aim is to work hand in hand with the Ministry of Tourism, one of the objectives of which is to reach 150 million visits (Ministry of Tourism, 2024). As indicated in the

General Entertainment Authority's website, Saudi Arabia 'has become a destination for those looking for exceptional entertainment options from around the world, making the kingdom one of the most important global entertainment destinations, helping to achieve the vision of an ambitious nation' (General Entertainment Authority, 2024). Given these circumstances, Saudi populations are currently witnessing the effect of globalisation as the vision is being achieved (Alotaibi & Alamri, 2022). It is therefore vital to illustrate the degree to which foreign languages are presented along with Arabic (the official language of the country) within Saudi Seasons' VLLs and reveal language preferences in their online signs.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some research conducted in Saudi Arabia can provide essential context about language practices, preferences, and sociocultural dynamics. Al-Athwary (2022) examines the LL of Najran, a city in southern Saudi Arabia. An analysis of 450 shop signs indicates that Najran is a multilingual city. Not only are Arabic and English prevalent, but other foreign expatriate languages are also evident, such as Bengali, Malayalam, Tamil, and Hindi. In a similar vein, Alotaibi and Alamri (2022) investigate the LL of 184 bilingual shop signs in Riyadh and Jeddah. The study reflects a dual language presence of Arabic and English in signboards. This bilingualism demonstrates Saudi Arabia's shift towards multilingualism, affected by globalisation and economic advancement, while still respecting and maintaining Arabic as the official language. The LL studies have also extended to religious settings in the country. For example, Alsaif and Starks (2019) explore the LL of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Their study reveals the predominance of Arabic due to its religious significance, but other languages also exist, such as English and languages of major Muslim populations such as Urdu, Indonesian, Farsi, and Turkish. The multilingual display serves both communicative and symbolic objectives, accommodating multilingualism while reinforcing Arabic's central role in Islamic practice.

Recent theories on LLs have begun to expand beyond the physical environment to include virtual spaces, reflecting the importance of cyberspace in today's technology-driven world (Maseko & Siziba, 2023). Since the establishment of the VLL subfield in 2009, the online content industry has advanced substantially (Almoaily, 2019). As more individuals and governments around the world increasingly use the internet to disseminate information, the scope and visibility of the VLL has grown significantly. Researchers have therefore turned their attention towards the study of VLL in contexts beyond Saudi Arabia, where studies on language contact in VLL remain scarce. Outside the Saudi context, an extensive body of research has examined the VLL. Koskinen (2013) explores how the European Union uses social media as a means of facilitating public engagement and interaction. The analysis indicates a shift from multilingualism towards a language policy in which English holds a predominant status. In a similarly critical examination of language policy, Berezkina (2018) explores how language policy in the digital public domain has developed over time in Norway. The study illustrates a linguistic homogenisation within Norway's VLL, broadly resulting from the exclusion of immigrant languages from state websites. Simultaneously, English and local languages are being used more frequently, which makes it harder for immigrant communities to access information in their native languages. Similarly, Maseko and Siziba (2023) examine the gap between language policy and actual language use in the online environment of a South African university. The study reveals some inconsistency between the university's language policy that promotes multilingualism and the actual practice in their virtual spaces, where indigenous languages are less visible while English remains dominant.

To the best of my knowledge, only two studies have examined the VLL phenomenon in the Saudi context. One study, conducted by Almoaily (2019), explores the language choices of Saudi entrepreneurs in their digital enterprises by analysing 400 online business logos, names, and descriptions presented on business platforms. The analysis shows that the linguistic choices of the business owners were inconsistent. The enterprise names were predominately duplicating – that is, presented in English and Arabic – while descriptions were mostly monolingual Arabic. In contrast, business logos were mainly English, showing a noticeable preference for English monolingualism. The other study conducted in the Saudi context is Koka et al.'s (2023) investigation of language dynamics on social media platforms. Their study focuses on the interplay between Arabic and English, the cultural manifestations of memes and hashtags, and their roles in social engagement and the formation of social groups. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study highlights the prevalent use of Arabic in social media, which reinforces national identity and reflects its capacity to cultivate a sturdy sense of selfhood. Moreover, the study reveals that the importance of English is increasing, specifically among young people, which in turn facilitates global communication. These studies collectively provide insights into the multilingual nature of Saudi Arabia's digital spaces, demonstrating the coexistence of Arabic and English in online interactions. Together, these studies reveal that linguistic diversity in Saudi Arabia is not merely a practical adaption to multilingualism but a sophisticated, culturally rooted reaction to globalisation. The choice to use Arabic alongside English in the VLL and LL indicates a deliberate effort to maintain cultural heritage while appealing to a wider, multicultural population, including expatriates and international pilgrims, which reflects a dynamic interplay between local identity and global connectivity.

Previous research has emphasised the existence of English in public spaces either monolingually or in combination of other languages. This finding is not restricted to the Saudi context. The dominance of English is a recurrent finding even in Athens in Greece, a country where Greek is overwhelmingly dominant as the official and primary language used in nearly all aspects of life (Nikolaou, 2017). According to Nikolaou's (2017) study of 621 shop signs, there is clear interaction between Greek and other languages, especially English, which is depicted to be the most powerful linguistic

player. These findings suggest that the multilingual feature of public signs is not essentially informational but plays a symbolic role, projecting a fashionable and cosmopolitan image.

This review reveals a gap in the literature, as no research has been conducted on the VLL of Saudi Seasons. This study aims to address this gap in sociosemiotic research of VLL. To understand this study, it is essential to consider the language policy in Saudi Arabia. From the early 20th century to the present, Saudi Arabia's language policies have sought to empower the status of Arabic as the official language that is central to national identity and Islam (Al Zumor, 2019). As Al Zumor (2019) demonstrates, the rationale of the language policy has always been to cope with social, political, economic, and educational changes while maintaining the religious and cultural identity of the state. The integrity of the state's religious and national identity serves as a key guiding factor in most language policy and planning efforts. Under Saudi Vision 2030, there has been an emphasis on modernisation and international engagement (Saudi Vision, 2024), which has further elevated English in different domains (Khawaji, 2022). Nonetheless, Arabic maintenance remains a priority, and policies encourage its use.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

The VLL of Saudi Seasons has not been addressed to date. This research aims to address specific questions regarding the VLL of the Saudi Seasons. As indicated earlier, the events cater to both residents and audiences worldwide. This can encourage multilingualism in touristic signs to foster cross-cultural understanding and accessibility, while English is often used as a common bridge. Thus, from a VLL perspective, this study seeks to answer the following two questions: What are the languages displayed in the VLL of Riyadh Season, Diriyah Season, and Jeddah Season? Which language is favoured on bi/multilingual signs?

B. Theoretical Framework

Sociosemiotic assumes that semiotic systems both reflect and construct the social world. It posits that sign-making is an outcome of sign-makers' available resources, their goals in a given situation, and their positioning in wider societal ideologies, values, and practices (Adami, 2020). The study recognises that all elements of signs such as colours, fonts, and objects are not only passive decoration but active participants in meaning-making. A key feature of sociosemiotic theory is the interrelationship between forms and function (Wanselin et al., 2022). That is, decisions about how content is expressed influence the content itself, where the sign whether an image or a word is the fundamental unit of meaning (Kress, 2010). The choice of form in a particular sign affects the message itself and the audiences' perceptions of it, thereby necessitating the application of sociosemiotic analysis to elucidate the communicative roles and the social meaning embedded within linguistic signs.

C. Research Instrument

To determine code presence, a quantitative survey was carried out by counting the occurrences of all languages visible in the texts. Based on this, the texts in the images were classified into language displays following Isleem (2015), according to which signs can be (a) monolingual, which display only one language such as Arabic, English, or any other language; (b) bilingual, which concern dual language use; or (c) multilingual, featuring more than two languages. This study analysed all text elements presented on an image, including the main text, such as an activity's name and promotional slogans, and secondary texts, such as the numbers and logos of sponsors.

To examine the code preference in the bi/multilingual visuals, four main analytical elements developed by Cenoz and Gorter (2006) were used. According to this methodology, preference is related to the order of languages in the signs, font size of the languages, amount of information provided, and translation of texts. With regard to the order of languages, the code that is represented at the top is considered predominant. Since Arabic and English have different writing systems – Arabic is written and read from right to left, while English is the opposite – the right position is assumed to be exclusive for Arabic and the left for English, and the failure to represent that distinction can carry an implied connotation. Font size can affect these representations, as codes that are written in larger fonts are regarded as indicated the preferred language. This methodology also considers other features related to fonts that can affect the image's functionality, such as colour. The large volume of text in a particular code in a sign signifies the prominence of this code over the other. Moreover, the use of translation in the images is surveyed. Translation in the images is categorised as word-to-word translation, partial translation, sense translation, and no translation. In addition to these considerations, the study also considers transliteration, which plays a role in understanding language interactions.

D. Data Collection Procedures

Following the sociosemiotic framework, a total of 210 images of promotional materials taken from the online social media platform X were collected. The study investigates three accounts for Saudi Seasons: Riyadh Season, Diriyah Season, and Jeddah Season. The Saudi Seasons initiative commenced in 2019 to encourage tourism and glorify the diverse culture and heritage of the country. This initiative is part of the Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to minimise the economic reliance on oil and calls for a diversified economy by different means, one of which is tourism growth (Khawaji, 2022). As mentioned earlier, these events, or seasons, are hosted by state-authorized trusted institutions that host different festivals

and entertainment activities such as sports, music, gaming, and cultural celebrations that take place in different cities in Saudi Arabia. As their names indicate, the three seasons selected in this study are among the largest events that take place in the main destinations in the country. Riyadh Season is a festival that occurs in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. Diriyah Season is another cultural event that takes place in the original capital of Saudi Arabia a few kilometres from the centre of Riyadh. Lastly, Jeddah Season takes place in Jeddah, which is known for its historical importance, as it is the largest city in Maccas Province and a main port in the country. These annual seasons are usually announced and photographed online through their X accounts: @RiyadhSeason, @DiriyahSeason, @JEDCalendar. These accounts are followed by considerable numbers of people and can be used as a reference for many other events. Riyadh Season has the highest number of followers at 1,400,000, while Jeddah and Diriyah Seasons have fewer, at 304,700 and 108,700, respectively.

Following the classification of Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), the virtual images surveyed in this study are classified as top-down signs, as they are sponsored by a governmental authority. The signs include photographs of the physical location of the events as well as promotional posters advertising the activities, both of which were posted on X from March to August 2024. The main purpose of these images is to announce entertainment events to attract national and international tourists. The two types of images provide a fertile multimodal linguistic environment for the examination of multilingualism and linguistic creativity.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Language Choice

The language identification process revealed a reasonable linguistic diversity on the X accounts of the three Saudi entertainment seasons, with three languages being detected at different frequencies in the posts over 6 months. These languages are English, Arabic, and Chinese. As Table 1 shows, English is the most prominent language, as it occurs in 97.61% of the entire dataset, either independently or in conjunction with the other languages. English also appears on its own in 34 images. The extensive use of English in the data can be attributed to the de facto high status that English enjoys in Saudi Arabia, where it used to be the sole foreign language taught in schools before the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman announced the inclusion of Chinese in the Saudi education system in 2019 (Li, 2020). The inclusion of Chinese in the education system has not affected the reputation of the English language as a lingua franca in business, commerce and trade, diplomacy, and tourism (Liton, 2013). As the images are intended not only for local tourists, but also for international ones, it is unsurprising that English is frequently chosen to communicate the images' messages.

TABLE 1
LANGUAGE OCCURRENCE IN THE SAUDI VIRTUAL LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Languages	Frequency of appearance	Percentage
Arabic	175	83.33%
Arabic only	5	2.38%
Bilingual with English	168	80%
Multilingual	2	0.95%
English	205	97.61%
English only	34	16.19%
Bilingual with Arabic	168	80%
Bilingual with Chinese	1	0.47%
Multilingual	2	0.95%
Chinese	3	1.42%
Bilingual with English	1	0.47%
Multilingual	2	0.95%

The second most commonly used language in the data is Arabic, which is displayed in 83.33% of the whole corpus. Most of the Arabic usage is mixed with English (80% of the whole set of data), while only 2.38% of images are pure Arabic. This finding is unexpected, since Arabic is the official language of the country and the native language spoken by Saudi people. The data indicate that Arabic can hardly stand alone, while English is constantly vying with Arabic to provide international understanding. The dominance of English in monolingual signs can be ascribed to the informational and symbolic functions it serves. The informational function of English in the signs is mainly to communicate effectively with a wide audience, ensuring that the messages reach international tourists. English also has a symbolic function for the Saudi people, as it is linked with globalisation, entertainment, prestige, and modernity. The symbolic use of English aligns with the findings of Al-Athwary (2022) and Alomoush (2023), who observed that the English language in Najran and Jordan, respectively, is mainly used in a symbolic way to denote positive attributes such as progress and elitism (see also Piller, 2003). Arabic, in contrast, is used in bilingual images as a marker of social cohesion and national identity. The use of Arabic, which is the official language of the country, promotes the cultural heritage associated with the language, which may be perceived as fundamental to national history or pride.

The third language that appears in the images is Chinese, which has a peripheral position compared with the other two, as it accounts for only 1.42% of the dataset. The emergence of Chinese as a code of communication in the images, although infrequent, may be a harbinger of new upcoming trends in the country, where the Chinese language has recently gained interest and has been introduced in schools under an expanding linguistic programme.

The analysis shows that bilingualism is an eminent feature of the images. As Table 2 shows, 169 (80.47%) of the images are characterised as bilingual, whereas 39 (18.57%) are monolingual, and only two (0.95%) are multilingual.

TABLE 2
MULTILINGUAL PHENOMENA IN THE SAUDI SEASONS' VIRTUAL LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Language type	Riyadh Season	Diriyah Season	Jeddah Season	Total
Monolingual items				
Arabic	0	4	1	5 (2.38%)
English	28	1	5	34 (16.19%)
Total	28	5	6	39 (18.57%)
Bilingual items				
Arabic + English	9	62	39	110 (52.38%)
English + Arabic	29	3	15	47 (22.38%)
Arabic = English	4	0	7	11 (5.23%)
English + Chinese	0	0	1	1 (0.47%)
Total	42	65	62	169 (80.47%)
Multilingual items				
Chinese + English + Arabic	0	0	1	1 (0.47%)
English + Chinese + Arabic	0	0	1	1 (0.47%)
Total	0	0	2	2 (0.95%)
Total				100%

Note. The language before a plus sign is the most distinguished one, and the equality sign is used to indicate parity in the use of languages.

Most of the bilingual images are displayed in Arabic and English, while only one image is presented in English mixed with Chinese. These three languages (Arabic, English, and Chinese) constitute the multilingual scene of the signs, despite being scarce with this regard since only two images include multilingualism. The multilingual situation in the Saudi Seasons may be likened to the case in Najran, where Al-Athrwary (2022) finds that the LL of the city features significant linguistic diversity, with diverse languages in use, including English and Arabic, in addition to the languages spoken by expatriate workers: Malayalam, Hindi, and Bengali. When there is no room for multilingualism in the images analysed in the present study, either English or Arabic is used exclusively with a percentage of 16.19% and 2.38%, respectively.

B. Code Preference

The focus of this section is the code priority in bi/multilingual images. The display of one language in relation to another provides additional insights into the significance attributed to each language. In bi/multilingual signs, languages are typically regarded as dominant when their writing systems are emphasised. This emphasis, according to Cenoz and Gorter (2006), can be explored through the examination of the four measurements: order of languages in the signs, font size of the languages, amount of information provided on signs, and translation of texts in bi/multilingual signs. The analysis indicates that whenever a language is prominent in an image, the first three measurements collectively represent language prominence, but this is not always the case for the translation of texts, which varies from one text to another. An examination of these measurements shows that Arabic enjoys greater significance than English and is the preferred code for communication in the bilingual signs of the seasons under examination. Table 2 gives a holistic view of which language is prominent in bilingual images.

As Table 2 shows, Arabic predominates in 110 (52.38%) images, 62 of which are for Diriyah Season while nine and 39 are for Riyadh and Jeddah Seasons, respectively. The reason for this disparity in figures might be that Diriyah Season is more cultural-oriented than the other two, since it is a historical city. As such, the Arabic identity of the city is reflected in the posts by making Arabic more prominent to invite Arab and non-Arab visitors to explore this culture. Figure 1 is an example that shows Arabic first, with English, which translates the Arabic, appearing at the bottom of the image. The Arabic language thus occupies the most salient position of the image. This finding can also be observed in the font size of the two languages, with the Arabic written in a larger font than the English.



Figure 1. Arabic Prominence for Diriyah Season

Another example that gives the code priority to Arabic is shown in Figure 2. In this image, the main text is written in Arabic in the centre of the sign in a large font. The meaning of the Arabic text is provided in English in the logo shown in the right corner at the bottom of the image. Comparing the position of the Arabic and English versions and the size of each one indicates that Arabic is more prominent. English is assigned a second position, as it appears in the background on storefront signs, which performs what Landry and Bourhis (1997) term a 'symbolic function' (p. 27). This term refers to the presence of a foreign language in public spaces to signal the prestige and status of a certain language or linguistic group. In Figure 2, the English language is not included to provide information as much as to immerse the readers in the setting, making them feel as if they are experiencing the place firsthand. That is, the English language seems to be presented as an allusion of entertainment and 'fun', as indicated by the name of the place and the English word 'smile' in the top.



Figure 2. Arabic Prominence for Jeddah Season

Juxtaposing Riyadh Season with the other two seasons reveals that English is the preferred code for Riyadh Season, with 29 images prioritising it over Arabic (see Table 2). In contrast, only 15 images in Jeddah and three in Diriyah do the same. It appears that the locations of these events play a role in the language preferences of the texts. As Riyadh Season takes place in the capital city and Jeddah Season in the second-largest city after Riyadh, their language choices are more culturally open to the world. This does not mean that Diriyah Season's conservativeness in using English implies that it is directed only at Arabic speakers. However, the Arabic language might be used to symbolise the atmosphere of the event that showcases the rich cultural legacy of Diriyah. In this instance, Arabic appears to be used to reflect the history of the city and to welcome non-Arabic speakers to discover this culture.

Figure 3 shows an English preference in a bilingual image produced for Riyadh Season. Here, English is positioned above Arabic in a colourful and larger font, which makes English more prominent. The amount of information provided in English also reflects its salience in the image. This includes the name of the event and the names of the wrestlers. However, the use of Arabic seems not entirely separate from English. Arabic is used to tell the reader about the day of the event ('Friday'). This is mixed with the Gregorian calendar and English numbers to indicate the date and time of the event. Since an Arabic audience can easily recognise English months and numbers, it can be inferred that the English language is used as the preferred code to associate the event with globalisation, while Arabic is used to establish a closer connection between the sponsor and Arabic readers. The findings of this study resonate with those of Alomaily (2019) and Koka et al. (2023), who also identified the recurrence of Arabic and English in the Saudi VLL.



Figure 3. English Prominence for Riyadh Season

In terms of translation in bi/multilingual images, the results show that in most instances some sort of translation is evident, with just 7.14% of the images not being translated (see Table 3). Of all the images, 47.14% are considered partial translations. Most of these images show translations of secondary texts, such as logos, names of sponsors, or some instructions related to booking, while leaving the rest of the text untranslated.

TABLE 3
TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION OF TEXTS IN BI/MULTILINGUAL IMAGES

Translation	Riyadh Season	Diriyah Season	Jeddah Season	Total
Word-to-word translation	3	19	9	31 (14.76%)
Sense translation	0	15	0	15 (7.14%)
Partial translation	30	21	48	99 (47.14%)
No translation	9	1	5	15 (7.14%)
Transliteration	0	11	42	53 (25.23%)

Note. Some of the bi/multilingual images are counted more than once, since they include more than one type of translation or transliteration.

The second most commonly used translation is word-for-word translation (14.76%), which refers to the transferring of each word into its closest equivalent in the target language. For instance, Figure 4 displays Arabic and English equally in a creative way, with the two scripts being mixed. The Arabic letters represent the word 'جدة', and the Latin alphabets show its English equivalent 'Jeddah'. Blending the two scripts in this way conveys a sense of glocalisation, where the sign producer adapts global ideas and ambitions that can fit the local conditions and cultures. The other text in the image also involves direct translations, which are meant to be read by Arabic and English readers.



Figure 4. Word-for-Word Translation for Jeddah Season

Another form of translation is sense translation, which occurs in 7.14% of the images. The focus of this strategy is on transmitting the meaning of the overall message rather than conveying the meaning of each word literally. In Figure 5, the English text conveys the sense of the Arabic text in an idiomatic and natural way. A direct translation of the Arabic language would be 'flavours that embody our heritage'; however, the image producer avoids a literal translation but is still faithful to the meaning of the source text (i.e. Arabic).



Figure 5. Sense Translation for Diriyah Season

As well as translation, another notable strategy used in the images is transliteration, the process of transmitting text from one writing system to another according to how a word is articulated rather than its meaning. Transliteration appears in 25.23% of the images. Transliterations in the data are of two kinds: Arabic transliteration to English and English transliteration to Arabic. The first type is more common in Diriyah Season's images, whereas the second is repeatedly used in Jeddah Season's images. Transliteration from Arabic to English can be observed in terms like *Sheta* 'winter', *minzal* 'home', *layali Diriyah* 'Diriyah's nights', *souq almawsim* 'the season's market', *sada alwady* 'echo of the valley', *Ardah* 'Saudi dance', and *nuzul* 'hostel'. These terms reflect the symbolic function of Saudi Seasons' VLL, as they index the local culture and simultaneously make the pronunciation of these Arabic terms accessible to speakers of English.

Transliterations from English to Arabic can be clearly observed in the names of locations that host or sponsor some of Jeddah Season's events, such as *جدة بروميناد*, *سياتي ووك*, and *سيان واٹر بارک*. These transliterations are frequently accompanied by English phrases: 'city walk', 'Jeddah Promenade', and 'Cyan water park', respectively. Furthermore, some of the events' names are presented in English with its Arabic transliteration such as *ببلي* 'bubbly' and *ووندر وول* 'wonder wall',

while others display the transliterated form unaccompanied by the English version, such as *متروبوليتان سيتي*, a term that can be transliterated to English as ‘metropolitan city’.

V. CONCLUSION

The results indicate that the VLL of the Saudi Seasons is largely bilingual, with fewer instances of monolingual or multilingual patterns. Two languages play a major role, English and Arabic, with only little use of Chinese. The two major languages are used for both primary and supplementary texts. They present essential information about the events, such as activities’ names and locations, and additional details such as booking specifics.

In summarising the language prominence in Saudi Seasons, Arabic is plainly the most preferred language in the VLL, followed by English, while Chinese holds only a minimal presence. This study shows some contradictions in terms of frequency of language occurrences and code preference. English occurs more frequently than Arabic across the whole dataset, with a larger number of monolingual images in English than in Arabic. In regard to language preference in bilingual images, however, Arabic appears as the preferred language. This approach enables the sign designers to express diverse aspects of the local identity and values, balancing a respect for tradition with a welcoming and progressive engagement with global tourism.

Despite the finding that the Chinese language constitutes only a small portion of the sample, its inclusion highlights emerging trends with regards to Chinese status in Saudi society. Chinese has recently gained the attention of Saudi officials, and it was introduced in education as part of a broader initiative to reinforce economic and cultural ties between the two nations. This change came after the Kingdom’s Vision 2030, which aims to diversify the Saudi economy beyond oil and enhance strategic global partnerships. The Saudi government recognises China’s significance as an international economic power, and promoting Chinese language skills among young generations of Saudis could support future tourism, business, and diplomatic endeavours.

Translation and transliteration play a considerable role in the images. The image producers use Arabic and English interchangeably for translation, switching between the two languages to perform symbolic and informational functions. The transliterations in the images are indicators of glocal identities. The English version is meant for an audience who know English, probably international tourists. The Arabic scripts give Arabic readers access to the English expressions while promoting cultural heterogeneity.

The absence or marginal presence of languages other than Arabic and English in the promotional materials of the Saudi Seasons suggests room for enhancing linguistic inclusivity. Expanding multilingual patterns could improve audience engagement worldwide, especially with tourists from non-English speaking areas, thereby broadening the appeal and global reach of the Saudi Seasons. Incorporating other languages would demonstrate a dedication to cultural diversity and inclusivity, which can enhance Saudi Arabia’s image as a welcoming country. Moreover, this approach could bolster economic expansion through diversified tourism markets.

This study’s analysis of the VLL of Saudi Seasons paves the way for future research on the tangible LL of different Saudi Seasons, which could evaluate the situations in their real locations. Other research may also examine the impact of language diversity on identity by conducting fieldwork in Saudi society to analyse signs for language hierarchy and survey the perceptions of residents regarding language use in public spaces or the VLL.

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