

The Interplay of Globalization, Localization, and Translation in Shaping the Linguistic Landscape of Saudi Arabia

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المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في التفاعل الديناميكي بين العولمة والتوطين والترجمة في المشهد اللغوي في المملكة العربية السعودية، مع التركيز على اللافتات التجارية في مدن مثل الرياض وجدة وأبها. وتهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيفية تأثير ممارسات الترجمة على استخدام اللغة في الفضاءات العامة، مما يؤثر على التمثيل الثقافي وسهولة الوصول. تبرز الدراسة كيف أن المملكة العربية السعودية توازن بين التأثيرات العالمية وهويتها الثقافية بما يتماشى مع رؤية السعودية 2030 من خلال تحليل أنماط الترجمة مثل الترجمة الحرفية، والتمثيل الصوتي (transliteration)، واللافتات اللغوية الهجينة. تعتمد المنهجية على توظيف نظرية المشهد اللغوي إلى جانب التحليل السيميائي والموضوعي لتقييم أكثر من 300 لافتة تجارية. تم تصنيف بيانات اللافتات إلى خمسة أنماط ترجمة: الترجمة الحرفية، التمثيل الصوتي من الإنجليزية إلى العربية، التمثيل الصوتي من العربية إلى الإنجليزية، اللافتات بالغة الإنجليزية فقط، واللافتات متعددة اللغات. كما تقيم الدراسة السياسات اللغوية ذات الصلة، بما في ذلك الإرشادات الواردة ضمن رؤية السعودية 2030، لوضع النتائج في سياق الأهداف الأشمل للسعودية في الحفاظ على الثقافة وتحديثها. تشير النتائج إلى أن التمثيل الصوتي من الإنجليزية إلى العربية والترجمة الحرفية هما أكثر الأنماط شيوعاً في لافتات المحلات، حيث تشكلان أكثر من 70% من الإجمالي. أما الفئات الثلاث الأخرى، فتظهر بوتيرة أقل بكثير. وتحدد الدراسة التمثيل الصوتي من الإنجليزية إلى العربية كأداة رئيسية لتحقيق التوازن بين العولمة والمحلية، حيث يسمح للعلامات التجارية العالمية بالحفاظ على هويتها الصوتية مع جعلها في متناول المتحدثين بالعربية. تعكس هذه الممارسة نهج المملكة العربية السعودية في التحديث دون المساس بارتباطها الثقافي. علاوة على ذلك، توفر الدراسة رؤى حول كيفية خدمة ممارسات الترجمة في المشهد اللغوي لأغراض وظيفية وأيديولوجية على حد سواء، حيث تجسد هوية سعودية تتبنى الانخراط العالمي مع الحفاظ على جذورها المحلية. يمكن أن تسهم هذه النتائج في توجيه صانعي السياسات وأصحاب الأعمال والباحثين نحو تطوير استراتيجيات تدعم التكامل الثقافي وإمكانية الوصول العالمي في الفضاءات العامة السعودية.

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Abstract

This study investigates the dynamic interplay of globalization, localization, and translation within Saudi Arabia's linguistic landscape (LL), focusing on commercial signage in cities like Riyadh, Jeddah, and Abha. It aims to explore how translation practices influence language use in public spaces, affecting cultural representation and accessibility. The study highlights how Saudi Arabia balances global influences with its cultural identity in alignment with Saudi Vision 2030. This is demonstrated through the analysis of translation patterns such as direct translations, transliterations, and hybrid language signs. The methodology combines an LL approach with semiotic and thematic analysis to assess over 300 shop signs. Shop sign data were categorized into five translation patterns: direct translation, English-to-Arabic transliteration, Arabic-to-English transliteration, English-only signage, and mixed-language signs. The study also evaluates relevant language policies, including the guidelines under Saudi Vision 2030, to contextualize the findings within Saudi Arabia's broader goals of cultural preservation and modernization. The findings indicate that English-to-Arabic transliteration and direct translation are the most commonly used patterns in shop signs, comprising over 70% of the total. The other three categories appear far less common. English-to-Arabic transliteration is identified as a key tool for reconciling globalization and localization, allowing international brands to retain their phonetic identity while making them accessible to Arabic speakers. This practice reflects Saudi Arabia's approach to modernizing without compromising its cultural heritage. Moreover, the research offers insights into how translational practices in the LL serve not only functional purposes but also ideological ones, symbolizing a Saudi identity that embraces global engagement while preserving its local roots. These findings can inform policymakers, business stakeholders, and researchers in developing strategies that support both cultural integrity and global accessibility in Saudi public spaces.

Keywords: *linguistic landscape; globalization; localization; translation/transliteration; Saudi Arabia*

Introduction

Over the past two decades, linguistic landscape (LL) studies have grown significantly, driven by an increasing interest in how language use in public spaces reflects cultural, social, and political dynamics. Foundational research by Landry and Bourhis (1997) introduced LL as “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings” (p. 25). These displays mirror a region's linguistic diversity and sociopolitical context. Today, LL is recognized as a site shaped by global, local, and translational forces.

Global influences on LLs are evident in the visibility of dominant languages like English and symbols linked to international brands. Multinational corporations, tourism, and cultural exchange contribute to this trend, highlighting global interconnectedness (Cronin, 2003; Rodríguez, 2016). At the same time, local languages, dialects, and scripts reflect cultural identity and heritage (Jiménez-Crespo, 2020; 2024). Local businesses often use LL to assert their identity and resist homogenizing global trends.

Globalization and localization are intertwined processes, particularly in how local communities sustain their native languages in an increasingly globalized world. Buchstaller (2008) notes that globalization enables creative adaptations of language, resulting in localized linguistic practices. Furthermore, Chang et al. (2022) emphasize that both local and global LLs elicit emotional engagement, with “tourists' perception consistency and understanding playing a mediating and moderating effect” (p. 618).

Building on this dynamic, localization serves as a translation-oriented process. It involves adaptation to cultural and linguistic norms, focusing on user-centered communication, and plays a key role in global marketing and software development. According to Kristensen (2002), localization is a novel form of linguistic transfer that combines new procedures and ethics with traditional ones, requiring a reconsideration of translation and culture. This process, often termed “translocalization” (Han & Wu, 2020, p. 27), involves the movement of linguistic resources from one locality to another, adapting to new norms and customs, and resulting in distinct LLs. This phenomenon highlights the dynamic interplay between language, space, and identity, as seen in various urban environments. Translators should stay attuned to developments in technology and culture as they navigate the opportunities and challenges posed by localization.

Translation, in this context, bridges global and local influences. Translational practices in LL facilitate communication across language barriers, making spaces accessible and inclusive for both locals and visitors. Transliterated and translated signs allow for the inclusion of multiple languages, enabling people of diverse linguistic backgrounds to navigate and connect with public spaces (Koskinen, 2012; Malinowski, 2019). This enhances accessibility while respecting local norms, helping communities navigate shared spaces.

Translation significantly shapes a city's identity and reflects its cultural priorities. Cities are inherently multilingual, with signs and scripts contributing to the sensory experience of urban life. As Simon (2021, p. 15) explains, cities are not just places where multiple languages coexist; they are also sites of translation that reveal language hierarchies and participation in public discourse. Thus, translation practices affect the formation of groups, communities, and identities, such as national cultures, genders, social/political movements, and linguistic

minorities (Dizdar & Rozmysłowicz, 2023), and the choice between translation and transliteration in LLs often reflects broader sociopolitical and demographic trends, such as globalization and immigration patterns (Gu & Almanna, 2023).

In Saudi Arabia's LL, translation and transliteration play crucial roles in making global content both accessible and culturally relevant. This research explores how these translation practices influence the interplay between globalization and localization in Saudi LLs, producing a landscape that reflects both modernity and tradition. Translation appears across various platforms such as advertising, foreign media, private and public signage, and educational materials, helping stakeholders engage with global trends while maintaining cultural identity. This balancing act is essential, particularly in light of Saudi Vision 2030, a transformative national initiative that seeks to position Saudi Arabia as a forward-looking, globalized nation without compromising its cultural roots. Using Arabic alongside English and other foreign languages enables an inclusive LL that appeals to both local and international audiences. This study, therefore, aims to demonstrate the dynamic interaction between local, global, and translational forces in commercial and private shop signage across Saudi cities.

Review of Literature

Theoretical background

Although still considered a relatively young field of research, there have been a tremendous number of studies conducted on the various aspects of LL around the world.

One major area explored in the literature is multilingualism and language visibility in public spaces. These studies investigate how languages appear and interact in the LL, reflecting social hierarchies and language identities (Al-Athwary, 2017; Backhaus, 2007; Gu & Coluzzi, 2024). Another principal focus is the role of translation and transliteration in navigating global and local influences. These studies show how translation practices and script adaptation, such as rendering English into Arabic, serve as tools for cultural negotiation and linguistic innovation (Gu & Almanna, 2023; Gu & Manan, 2024; Malinowski, 2019). Transliteration, in particular, reveals how global languages are reshaped to fit local norms and scripts. Language use in commercial signage and its commodification also receives attention. Research in this area explores how linguistic choices in shop signs and advertisements project modernity and prestige, with English often used for symbolic value (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2014; Buckingham & Al-Athwary, 2016; Han & Shang, 2024). Some studies also examine localization, glocalization, and identity construction in the LL. They show how global languages are adapted to local contexts, negotiating global influence with cultural identity (Kim, 2022; Manan et al., 2017; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022). These works further highlight the role of LLs in promoting critical awareness of language and multilingualism, particularly in educational settings. Some other LL studies, influenced by critical sociolinguistics, analyze public spaces as arenas of contestation, resistance, and negotiation, where marginalized or minority languages assert their presence against dominant linguistic norms (Al-Athwary, 2022; Karolak, 2020; Yuan, 2019; 2022). Finally, an inherent aspect of LL refers to the notion of semiotics and the understanding of signs and symbols in public spaces where LL functions as a semiotic resource, conveying social, cultural, and political meanings (Banda & Jimaima, 2015; Chang et al., 2022; Hopkyns & Al-Athwary, 2023).

The recent development in LLs is the increasing use of transliteration on public signage. Transliteration by definition involves rendering the writing system of a source language using the letters or symbols of a different script (Beesley, 1998; Halpern, 2007). In the LL context, this process allows speakers of different languages to pronounce and recognize place names, instructions, and other text on signs more easily. This approach not only broadens accessibility for non-native speakers but also reflects the multilingual and multicultural dynamics of modern public spaces.

Gu and Manan (2024) proposed a theoretical framework suggesting that English is increasingly represented in non-Latin scripts, such as Perso-Arabic and Devanagari, raising questions about whether such instances constitute new varieties of local languages or new forms of World Englishes. They called for expanding the scope of World Englishes research to include how English is indigenized and integrated into local LLs through phonetic transliteration. Their study analyzed authentic signs from South Asian communities, illustrating how English is adapted into local scripts in everyday contexts. Central to their argument is the concept of “transliterated globalization” (p. 1187), which explains how English adapts to non-Latin scripts in multilingual societies like those in South Asia. This practice results in a hybrid form that reflects both global and local identities. Examples from Pakistan, India, and Nepal demonstrate a preference for transliteration over translation, even when local equivalents are available; a phenomenon they describe as “self-colonization,” where English symbolizes both modernity and cultural adaptation. An examination of these signs allowed the paper to explore several ways in which transliteration may influence local identities. First, transliteration facilitates the integration of English into local languages and scripts. This enhances cultural identity by allowing speakers to express their linguistic heritage while engaging with global English. This blending fosters a sense of belonging and cultural pride among individuals who navigate multiple languages. Second, the use of transliterated English contributes to the formation of hybrid identities. It enables individuals to align with both their local culture and the global culture represented by English. This dual identification reflects the complexities of globalization. Third, transliteration increases the visibility of English in non-Latin script contexts. It challenges traditional notions of language dominance and promotes English as an integrated component of local LLs. Finally, transliteration can serve as a form of resistance against linguistic dominance. It empowers speakers to assert their agency by adopting English in ways that reflect their own linguistic norms. In doing so, they renegotiate power dynamics between dominant and non-dominant languages. These factors collectively illustrate how transliteration can reshape the LL and influence individual and collective identities in multilingual societies.

Similarly, Han and Shang's (2024) study on Hong Kong's LL provided relevant insights for understanding the dynamics of globalization and localization. In Hong Kong, globalization has led to a noticeable increase in English usage within commercial areas, symbolizing the city's international connectivity and its role as a hub for business and tourism. Simultaneously, Cantonese remains prevalent in government signage and local businesses, reinforcing Hong Kong's cultural identity and solidarity within the local population. This dual presence of English and Cantonese reflects a careful balance between global engagement and local identity—an idea that connects with Saudi Arabia's approach to its LL under Saudi Vision 2030.

In the context of Gulf States, Gu and Almann (2023) is a significant study that examined Dubai's LL from a bilingual translation perspective, focusing on Arabic-English interactions in public signage. In Dubai, English often dominates, with Arabic transliterations that prioritize phonetics over meaning. This trend underscores Dubai's superdiversity and status as a global city. Their research highlighted the symbolic use of Arabized English, which enhances Dubai's image as a global hub. However, it did not show how localization strategies and translation practices shape broader sociolinguistic trends. Jamoussi and Roche (2017) is another important contribution to applied linguistics and language planning in multilingual contexts. The author provided a detailed and methodologically rigorous analysis of inconsistencies in the romanization of Arabic road signs in Oman. The study effectively highlighted the tension between transcription and transliteration, arguing for a phoneme-based transcription system to improve clarity and usability. A major strength of the paper is its extensive dataset and clear identification of structural, phonetic, and policy-driven factors contributing to variation. However, while the study offered practical guidelines, it lacked engagement with the sociolinguistic implications of romanization, particularly issues related to identity and power dynamics.

Previous Research on the Saudi LL

In the Saudi context, several studies have examined the LL in Saudi Arabia, focusing on language use in public spaces. This section highlights their key findings and identifies gaps relevant to the present research. The studies by Al-Athwary (2022), Al-Hussami et al. (2020), Alotaibi and Alamri (2022), Alsaif and Starks (2019; 2021), Hazaea et al. (2024), and Lacsina and Yeh (2022) offered valuable insights into specific aspects of Saudi Arabia's LL, yet they left a significant gap regarding the interplay of globalization, localization, and translation practices on a national scale.

Alsaif and Starks (2019; 2021) focused on the Grand Mosque in Mecca, a unique religious and cultural space where Arabic dominates across functional domains. While this emphasized the role of Arabic in a sacred context, it did not investigate the broader dynamics between Arabic and English or the influence of transliteration in commercial and public areas outside of religious sites.

Al-Athwary's (2022) research on Najran's LL illuminated the influence of expatriate languages. However, it mainly reflected multilingualism and the role of Arabic as a symbolic marker, without examining how global branding or localization trends might shape these linguistic choices. Similarly, Alotaibi and Alamri (2022) analyzed bilingual shop signs in Saudi Arabia, focusing on transliteration errors and inconsistencies. While they suggested standardization measures, the study did not address the broader implications of these transliteration practices in the context of localization and globalization within the country.

Lacsina and Yeh's (2022) study of Jeddah's malls during the pandemic touched upon the bilingual use of Arabic and English, connecting with Jeddah's vision of becoming a cosmopolitan center. However, their research is limited to a particular time frame and setting, missing the broader impact of globalization and localization over time across different Saudi cities. In the same way, Hazaea et al. (2024) conducted a qualitative study examining the multilingual composition of public signs in the High City, a newly developed tourist site in

Abha, Saudi Arabia. Their analysis, based on purposively sampled bottom-up signage, highlighted the predominance of monolingual (Arabic or English) and bilingual (Arabic-English) signs, with no instances of multilingual signage. The study identified several linguistic strategies, including transliteration, hybrid representation, politeness, personification, and fragmentary usage, while noting the absence of more globally oriented strategies such as crisis communication. Findings suggest that the destination primarily caters to local and regional tourists, with limited attention to international audiences. As a result of its limited scope, the study was unable to explore the connection between global influences and local practices.

Finally, Al-Hussami et al. (2020) is the only study directly relevant to the current research. The authors conducted a semiotic analysis of coffee shop signage in Abha, Saudi Arabia, examining how coffee shop names reflect both cultural memory and modern influences on Arabic coffee. In Saudi society, coffee symbolizes more than just a drink; it is deeply linked to traditions and social values. The study pointed out the competition between traditional Arabic coffee and globally influenced coffee, a rivalry visible in the LL of coffee shops. The research focused on how coffee shop names express this competition and its linguistic and cultural implications, contributing to an understanding of how globalization affects local traditions in Saudi Arabia's LL. However, the study left a gap by primarily focusing on the semiotics of coffee shop names without deeply addressing how translation practices, particularly the influence of multilingualism and cross-cultural communication, shape the overall LL in a broader urban context.

Based on the discussion above, it is evident that none of the studies conducted on the LL of Saudi cities have highlighted the transformative role of translation and transliteration in negotiating global and local identities, a process which forms the backbone of this research. The studies, though well-conducted, miss their target in perceiving the impact of globalization, localization, and particularly translation concerning shop sign localization and its sociocultural implications. Therefore, this study will analyze in detail LL globalization, localization as well as translation practices in several Saudi cities and how these forces mold public signage to sustain local identity and cultural heritage within a linguistically conservative setting.

The study has also evolved in the light of Gu and Manan's (2024) framework, especially its discussion on matters of translation and transliteration. It becomes particularly useful for exploring Saudi Arabia's LL, where English acts as a global lingua franca with Arabic, a place of great value for investigating transliterated multilingualism. This perspective helps us better understand how Saudi LL works while fulfilling the task set forth by Saudi Vision 2030 about balancing global integration with the preservation of national identity and linguistic heritage.

Research Questions

Saudi Arabia, with its rich cultural heritage and increasingly globalized society, provides a compelling case study for analyzing the localization and globalization trends evident in shop signage and other LL components. The Kingdom's LL demonstrates a nuanced mix of local and global linguistic elements, creating a space where language functions both as a cultural symbol and a practical tool for communication. This study aims to investigate the translation and transliteration practices employed by Saudi businesses and to analyze the localization and globalization trends observed in shop signs across various cities in Saudi

Arabia. This research analyzes Saudi Arabia's LL translation and transliteration patterns to highlight the intersections of globalization, localization, and translation. It will also demonstrate how Saudi Arabia navigates cultural preservation alongside international engagement. The LL in Saudi Arabia thus becomes a dynamic site of negotiation, where global and local forces intersect and interact, reflecting the nation's aspirations and identity.

The study, therefore, attempts to address the following research questions:

1. How does localization preserve linguistic diversity and assert local cultural identities in Saudi Arabia's LL?
2. How does globalization affect language use and identity in public spaces of the country?
3. What is the impact of LL's translation practices on communication, inclusivity, and cultural representation?

This study will provide valuable insights into the relationship between language, culture, and advertising in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, businesses seeking to enter the Saudi market will benefit from understanding the localization process, ensuring that their shop signs resonate with local consumers. Finally, this research will contribute to the growing body of literature on translation studies, particularly in the field of advertising and branding.

Methodology

Data Collection

This research adopted an LL approach to collect and analyze data. Systematic procedures were followed to gather a large sample of shop signs from three cities in Saudi Arabia. A random sampling method was used to photograph these signs across all three targeted cities: Riyadh, Jeddah, and Abha. In each city, various commercial areas such as streets, markets, and shopping malls were selected without prior bias. Within these locations, signs were photographed at regular intervals or as they appeared, without targeting specific businesses or language uses. This approach ensured that the collected data reflected a broad and representative sample of the LL, minimizing researcher bias and enhancing the reliability of the findings (cf. Gu & Almann, 2023).

Shop sign data were collected from three Saudi cities, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Abha, resulting in a sample of over 300 linguistic signs. The rationale behind selecting these three cities can be explained as follows. First, the selected cities represent diverse geographic regions of Saudi Arabia: Riyadh in the central region, and relatively close to the eastern region, Jeddah in the western region, and Abha in the southern region. Second, these selected cities differ in their levels of exposure to global influences. Jeddah, as a port city, has a long-standing history of international interaction. Riyadh reflects centralized development and rapid modernization, while Abha presents a relatively more localized and traditional linguistic environment. Finally, the number of shop sign photographs taken in each city was roughly the same, as shown in Table 1. Thus, the sample was representative enough to reflect the different aspects of Saudi LL. This selection of cities provides a diverse cultural and regional backdrop, allowing for an in-depth analysis of language use, translation practices, and how global and local forces shape the LL differently across urban settings.

Public or top-down signs, such as road signs and official governmental signage, were excluded from the study. The sample focused exclusively on private or bottom-up signs,

specifically commercial signs. From a content perspective, data collection was restricted to specific types of shop signs that reflect diverse language practices within the LL. These included: (1) bilingual or multilingual signs that display two or more languages, showcasing the coexistence of local and foreign languages; (2) signs featuring transliteration, where text is converted between Arabic and foreign languages, facilitating pronunciation and comprehension across language groups; and (3) English-only or other foreign language-only signs, which reflect the influence of globalization and the prominence of international languages in commercial contexts. These categories were chosen to capture a comprehensive view of language use and the dynamics of translation and transliteration in Saudi shop signage

Table 1

Data Sampling

| City | No. of signs | Percentage |
|--------|--------------|------------|
| Riyadh | 126 | 38.65% |
| Jeddah | 103 | 31.60% |
| Abha | 97 | 29.75% |
| Total | 326 | 100% |

Language Policy

An additional methodological procedure involved analyzing official documents, and government policies such as the Council of Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA) (2016), and the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing (MMRAH) (2022) pertaining to the vision of national and cultural identity and the regulations of shop signage visibility and promotion. This approach offered valuable insights into the official stance on language policies, the preservation, and promotion of local culture, as well as the integration of global influences.

CEDA (2016, pp. 13, 17) emphasized the importance of national identity by encouraging pride in Saudi Arabia's rich cultural heritage and adherence to Islamic principles of moderation. It also placed a strong emphasis on upholding and promoting the Arabic language as a core element of national identity. By restoring and promoting national, Arab, and Islamic cultural sites, the vision sought to balance globalization and localization, a translation-oriented approach to international recognition and visitors. This approach integrated global engagement with the preservation of local traditions, ensuring that cultural identity remained a guiding force amid modernization.

The other official document was issued by MMRAH. The document mandated that all signs in Saudi Arabia be licensed and approved before installation, with specific spatial regulations to ensure they did not obstruct roads or buildings. Signs had to adhere to design standards, including size, height, and alignment with urban identity, and were categorized based on their location and type. Safety was a priority, with requirements for structural integrity, non-obstruction of emergency exits, and use of durable materials. Regular maintenance was mandated to keep signs in good condition and promptly repair any damage.

Thus, the primary goal of these procedures was to enhance the visual image of cities across Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the content of shop signs is a dynamic and flexible domain, shaped by the contributions of shop owners, sign designers, and translators. It is significantly influenced by the cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds of these stakeholders, which results in diverse expressions and interpretations. Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore the extent to which these factors affect the content and messaging of commercial signage, identifying their impact on the overall communicative and translational effectiveness and visual coherence in different cultural contexts.

Data Analysis

The shop sign data were analyzed using thematic and semiotic analysis, with a focus on identifying recurring patterns of translation, cultural references, and linguistic markers. Key themes such as cultural identity, brand identity, and linguistic adaptation were explored to understand how businesses communicated their identity and values within both global and local contexts. For instance, cultural identity examined how signs incorporated local language, symbols, or traditional motifs to reflect respect for the local culture and audience. Brand identity focused on how signage choices, such as language, transliteration styles, and imagery, helped businesses fit themselves with global branding trends or maintain a strong local presence. Moreover, linguistic adaptation revealed how businesses navigated bilingual or multilingual contexts by using translation/transliteration strategies that were culturally and commercially appropriate.

A comparative analysis was conducted across various LL elements, such as the use of English versus local languages, cultural references, and branding styles, to reveal trends or divergences in how businesses approached globalization and localization. This analysis looked at whether businesses prioritized a global identity, using internationally recognized language and symbols, or focused on a local identity by emphasizing traditional or community-specific elements. Signs that adopted a hybrid approach, combining both global and local strategies, were also examined to understand how businesses balanced international appeal with local cultural resonance.

Results and Discussion

The collected dataset was primarily analyzed according to the translation practices on the shop signs. Table 2 reveals the role of five translation categories within the LL of Saudi Arabia: direct (semantic) translation (mainly from Arabic to English), English-to-Arabic transliteration, Arabic-to-English transliteration, English-only signage, and hybrid or mixed language signs. The most common practices are English-to-Arabic transliteration (36.20%) and translation (34.97%), reflecting the dual forces of localization and globalization. Direct translation from Arabic to English reflects Saudi Arabia's intent to make local content accessible to international audiences, aligning with global engagement goals like those in Saudi Vision 2030. The high occurrence of bilingual signs in the first category illustrates the mediation between local culture and global accessibility. This strategic bilingualism is not merely functional; it is also ideological, symbolizing a Saudi identity that is open to the world but rooted firmly in its own linguistic and cultural traditions. By maintaining the visual and symbolic prominence of Arabic, these signs communicate that while Saudi Arabia may embrace global modernity, it does so on its own terms. Arabic-to-English translation in public

signage not only helps tourists and expatriates navigate but also enables local brands and cultural concepts to resonate internationally, blending Saudi identity with a global reach. Meanwhile, English-to-Arabic transliteration allows for a phonetic representation of English terms in Arabic, preserving brand identity and appeal while still making them legible to Arabic speakers as detailed in the analysis below.

Arabic-to-English transliteration, English-only signs, and hybrid signs serve different purposes, but all indicate the influence of global forces on local identity. English-only signage, often associated with international brands, emphasizes a modern, cosmopolitan image in urban centers, catering to tourists and expatriates and signaling Saudi Arabia's openness to global culture. In contrast, Arabic-to-English transliteration adapts local concepts for a wider audience, projecting Saudi cultural elements internationally. Mixed language signs balance both Arabic and English, symbolizing the hybridization of Saudi identity in public spaces. Together, these translation practices demonstrate how Saudi Arabia negotiates global and local forces, accommodating global influence while upholding and projecting national identity in its public and dynamic LL.

Table 2

Classification of Shop Signs by Translation Patterns

| No. | Category | Number of occurrences | Percentage |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. | Translation | 114 | 34.97% |
| 2. | English to Arabic transliteration | 118 | 36.20% |
| 3. | Arabic to English Transliteration | 33 | 10.12% |
| 4. | English only | 36 | 11.04% |
| 5. | Language mix/ Hybridity | 25 | 7.67% |
| Total | | 326 | 100% |

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify patterns, trends, and effects. The illustrative examples below will be analyzed to show how translation/transliteration practices facilitate the localization and globalization processes in Saudi advertising shop signs.

Globalization Trends

Transliteration as a Globalization Agent

Transliteration is a common practice in the public space of urban areas and cities (Gu and Almann, 2023; Gu and Manan, 2024; Lee, 2020). Transliteration, especially from English into Arabic, plays a significant role in the public space of Saudi Arabia, which is indicated clearly by the highest occurrence as shown in Table 2. Examples of English-to-Arabic transliterations are illustrated in Table 3 and Figure 1.

Gu and Manan's (2024) study on transliterated multilingualism in LLs provides a framework to examine how English integrates into local language environments through transliteration. They argue that transliterated globalization in the LL refers to the phenomenon where English, as a dominant global language, is represented in non-Latin scripts through

phonetic transliteration. This trend is particularly evident in multilingual urban settings, where local languages and scripts intermingle with English, often leading to a complex interplay of identity and cultural representation. Applying this concept to the shop signs in Saudi Arabia’s LL reveals a nuanced relationship between global brand identity and local adaptation. This adaptation is evident in the transliteration of brand names into Arabic script while retaining their original English phonetic quality, suggesting a deliberate negotiation between global presence and cultural familiarity.

Table 3

Examples of English-to-Arabic Transliteration

| No. | The English content of Shop signs | The Arabic transliteration |
|-----|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | American Eagle Outfitters | أمريكان إيجل أوتفترز |
| 2. | Bath & Body Works | باث & بودي وركس |
| 3. | Pinkberry frozen yogurt | بنكبري فروزن يوغرت |
| 4. | dip n pie | ديب ن باي |
| 5. | Brands For Less | براندز فور لس |
| 6. | Monkey Cookies Cafe | مونكي كوكيز كافيه |
| 7. | Women'Secret | ومن سيكريت |
| 8. | Black Velvet | بلاك فلثت |
| 9. | Back Comfort | باك كمفورت |
| 10. | Polar Colors | بولار كلرز |
| 11. | Happy Chicken | هابي تشكن |
| 12. | Kahve Duniyasi (Turkish) | كافيه دنياسي |
| 13. | La Vie en Rose (French) | لا في إن روز |

The first shop sign in Figure 1, “American Eagle Outfitters” (أمريكان إيجل أوتفترز), exemplifies this process. Phonetic rendering of the English name in Arabic script allows the brand to retain its distinctive sound, making it familiar to both English and Arabic speakers. This combination of phonetic representation and Arabic script allows English to “pass off” as part of the Saudi LL without overtly disrupting local language norms, a phenomenon Gu and Manan describe as “transliterated multilingualism.” Here, English adopts a locally intelligible form while retaining a distinctly foreign association, subtly reinforcing English’s global status in the cultural fabric of Saudi Arabia’s LL.

The LL of Saudi Arabia also demonstrates transliteration as a bridge between diverse linguistic heritages. For instance, the last two examples in Table 2 (see also the last sign in Figure 1), “La Vie en Rose” (لا في إن روز) and “Kahve Duniyasi” (كافيه دنياسي) integrate elements of French and Turkish through Arabic script, subtly signaling the brands’ multicultural appeal.

The retention of French and Turkish phonetic identities allows these brands to embrace their linguistic origins while adapting to a script familiar to Arabic-speaking audiences. This strategy reinforces the idea of “transliterated globalization” as a pathway to cosmopolitan inclusivity within Saudi Arabia’s LL, where foreign cultural elements are visually translated into local forms. This form of hybridization allows global brands to resonate with Saudi consumers while attracting a sense of international sophistication associated with foreign names.

Brands like “Pinkberry Frozen Yogurt” (بنكيري فروزن يوغرت) and “dip n pie” (ديب ن باي) in the second and third signs in Figure 1 further illustrate how transliteration can prioritize phonetic fidelity to English sounds over semantic translation, embedding these brands in the local LL without full linguistic adaptation. The choice to transliterate “frozen yogurt”, “dip,” and “pie” instead of using descriptive Arabic phrases reflects a deliberate preference for the sounds of English words, evoking a sense of global brand identity rather than direct communication of the product’s nature. This approach appeals to younger, cosmopolitan consumers who associate English with modernity, novelty, and Western lifestyle trends. In this way, transliteration operates as a subtle yet powerful tool for constructing Saudi Arabia’s urban identity as globally oriented yet locally anchored.

Figure 1

The Use of English-to-Arabic Transliteration



A notable feature of the transliteration process is the meticulous effort to preserve the exact pronunciation of the English terms on shop signs. Rather than assimilating certain English sounds into more common Arabic equivalents, the process introduces characters that better represent the original English phonetics. For example, instead of replacing the English voiceless /p/ with the Arabic /ب/ or the English voiced /v/ with /ف/, the less common characters /پ/ and /ڤ/ are used to approximate /p/ and /v/ accurately, as seen in examples 3, 8, and 13 in Table 3 and the second and fifth signs in Figure 1. This choice signifies an intentional effort to maintain the phonetic integrity of the original English sounds, which may enhance brand recognition and phonetic fidelity for bilingual speakers. Another instance of this commitment to exact duplication is the incorporation of the English genitive case marker /'/ in the transliterated Arabic phrase (ومن 'سيكريت), derived from "Women'(s) Secrets", as shown in the fourth sign in Figure 1. The inclusion of the apostrophe represents a nuanced approach to transliteration that goes beyond simple phonetic adaptation, capturing grammatical elements from English that do not traditionally exist in Arabic script. This approach not only preserves the original structure and sound of the English brand but also signals adherence to the branding conventions associated with English. Through the application of phonetic and grammatical elements, the transliteration process mediates between global branding and local linguistic norms.

Ultimately, these transliterated signs demonstrate a nuanced LL where English visually integrates with Arabic script, forming a hybridized language that reflects the dynamics of global influence and local adaptation. Gu and Manan's (2024) framework of transliterated multilingualism reveals how English asserts itself in the Saudi LL not by displacing Arabic but by embedding its phonetic essence within the local script. This linguistic blending highlights the intricate interplay of globalization and localization, as Saudi cities shape a landscape where English's global prestige and Arabic's cultural resonance coexist. Transliteration thus emerges as a powerful strategy for linguistic and cultural convergence, allowing Saudi Arabia's LL to reflect both its connection to global trends and its dedication to cultural authenticity.

Although fewer in number (see Table 2), Arabic-English transliterations and English-only shop signs nonetheless have a distinct impact on the LL of Saudi Arabia. These signs contribute to a visual and linguistic environment that reflects global influence and local adaptation. By featuring English or English-inspired transliterations, the two shop signs in Figure 2 introduce elements of international branding and modernity, which can shape perceptions of urban spaces and influence cultural interactions.

The "Albaik" sign in Figure 2 (top) combines Arabic and English, demonstrating a bilingual approach that appeals to both local and international audiences. The Arabic script on the right reads "البيك" (Albaik), which translates to 'the chef' or 'the master' in English and goes along with the brand's identity as a local fast-food icon in Saudi Arabia. The English transliteration, "Albaik", is displayed in bold letters, making the brand recognizable to non-Arabic speakers while preserving its original Arabic pronunciation. This dual-language design reinforces the brand's local heritage and its adaptability in a globalized market. The bright red and yellow color scheme is visually striking and likely chosen to evoke feelings of energy and excitement, typical in fast-food branding. In the "Chuck E Cheese's" sign in Figure 2 (bottom), only English is used, indicating a direct import of the American brand without linguistic localization. This English-only choice may reflect the brand's association with American

culture, aiming to attract customers seeking an international or Western experience. The red and purple colors, combined with the large, playful font, connect with “Chuck E. Cheese's” image as an entertainment venue for children.

Figure 2

Arabic to English Transliteration and English-Only Signs



Semiotically, the images of the duck and mouse serve as mascots that embody the brand's identity and appeal. The duck in the “Albaik” logo, dressed in a chef's hat and waving with a welcoming smile, symbolizes hospitality and culinary expertise, harmonizing with the restaurant's focus on friendly service and food quality. The cartoonish style softens the brand's image, making it approachable and family-friendly, particularly appealing to younger customers and families. The mouse mascot in “Chuck E. Cheese's” is also playful, depicted in a fun, approachable cartoon style with a cap and a big smile. This character adds an element of fun and excitement, which is key to the brand's identity as a destination for children's entertainment and family gatherings. The mouse's expression and posture convey enthusiasm, suggesting an inviting and engaging environment inside the venue.

Together, these semiotic elements, language choices, color schemes, and mascots create distinct brand images. “Albaik” emphasizes cultural authenticity and bilingual accessibility, while “Chuck E. Cheese's” relies on its American identity and a universally enticing mascot, aiming to attract a diverse audience interested in a global brand experience.

New Trends: Cinema Signage

Entertainment in Saudi Arabia has rapidly evolved since the establishment of the General Entertainment Authority in 2016, reflecting the goals of Vision 2030 to diversify the economy and embrace globalization through initiatives like cinema reopenings and major cultural events.

Figure 3 shows the signs of two popular cinema chains in Saudi Arabia. In the left-hand side sign and the bottom sign of Figure 3, English is undeniably the dominant language, reflecting the influence of globalization in Saudi Arabia's public spaces. Nearly all the content in these signs is presented in English, except for the names of the cinema chains, which are displayed in both English and Arabic. This choice indicates an intentional harmony with

international norms and makes the signage accessible to non-Arabic speakers. By using English terms like “IMAX,” “GOLD,” “KIDS,” “SUITES,” and phrases like “VOX Cinemas is now open,” the signs signal an alignment with international cinema branding standards. It suggests that these cinemas are positioning themselves within a global market, attracting tourists and expatriates as well as locals who are familiar with English. At the same time, the inclusion of Arabic in the cinema names ensures that local audiences still feel connected to the brand, bridging between global appeal and cultural sensitivity.

Figure 3

Cinema Chain Signage



The right (top) bilingual age rating notice ensures that both locals and foreigners are informed about content appropriateness, catering to the diverse linguistic needs of Saudi society while honoring cultural expectations around media consumption.

In contexts like cinema signage, English helps project a modern, international image that is in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals, aiming to attract more global tourists. At the same time, Arabic usage asserts the country's linguistic identity and cultural heritage.

Cultural Localization Practices

Localization in LLs refers to the adaptation and representation of languages and linguistic resources within a specific local context (Trinch & Snajdr, 2020). The concept involves the strategic use of local languages and symbols to create a sense of place and identity and tailoring language use in public spaces to be meaningful and accessible to the community residing in that territory. It impacts emotional experiences, reflects globalization through translationalization, and plays a significant role in educational and urban contexts (Chang et al., 2022; Han et al., 2020; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2022). Understanding localization in LL helps in appreciating the balance between local identity and global influences.

Shop signs, like those in Figures 4 to 6, provide valuable insight into how language, imagery, and symbols reflect the local identity, often creating a space that is both culturally unique and globally accessible. Through elements such as local icons, culture-specific phrases, artistic calligraphy, and bilingualism, these signs convey a sense of belonging and cultural pride while adapting to the broader forces of globalization.

Figure 4

The Use of Culture-Specific Markers (1)



In the Saudi LL, phrases such as “هلا والله بزوارنا” (halā wa-Allāh bizwārnā) (top) and “بسم الله ماشاء الله” (bi-smi Allāh mā shā’a Allāh) (bottom) in Figure 4 serve as strong markers of local culture and identity. They convey values, religious beliefs, and social norms distinctive to Saudi society, embedding culturally specific meanings into public and commercial spaces (cf. Al-Athwary, 2022).

“هلا والله” (halā wa-Allāh) is a warm, informal greeting in Saudi Arabic, roughly translating to ‘Welcome indeed!’ Its use conveys hospitality, friendliness, and an authentic Saudi tone. When featured on a business sign, this phrase not only welcomes customers but also fosters a sense of belonging and familiarity, reinforcing cultural expectations of Saudi hospitality. Widely recognized and appreciated, it puts customers at ease upon entering the establishment.

Likewise, “بسم الله ماشاء الله” (bi-smi Allāh mā shā’a Allāh), meaning ‘In the name of Allah, as He wills,’ is a religious phrase commonly used by Muslims to invoke blessings and protection. On signage, it serves both as a spiritual expression and a cultural anchor. Its presence signals that the establishment aligns with Islamic values, creating an environment that respects and reflects the spiritual dimensions of Saudi life. The phrase evokes faith and humility, resonating deeply with local religious and cultural sentiments.

Language serves as a primary vehicle for cultural expression, and in Saudi shop signs, Arabic phrases often convey specific cultural meanings. For example, the store directory in Figure 5 (left) features the phrase “للعائلات فقط” (lil-‘ā’ilāt faqat) ‘families only’, which reflects cultural norms by designating certain areas exclusively for families. This practice connects

with local values of privacy and gender segregation, subtly regulating social behavior in public settings. The bilingual presentation in Arabic and English emphasizes cultural localization within a globalized mall environment, balancing modern commercial spaces with traditional social expectations.

Figure 5

The Use of Culture-Specific Markers (2)



When brands in Saudi Arabia incorporate local language, symbols, and expressions, they engage in what can be called “cultural branding”. They project an identity that is both commercially strategic and culturally resonant, appealing to consumers not only through products but also through shared values and traditions. A store like “Burger Here” in Figure 5 (right), for instance, uses Arabic phrases such as “لحوم مدخنة” (luḥūm mudakhanah) ‘smoked meat’ and “عوائل” (‘awā’il) ‘families’ to signal its connection to local preferences, despite offering a globally familiar item like burgers. Adapting the brand message to local cultural norms allows the company to establish a more familiar and relevant identity for Saudi consumers.

This localization strategy serves a dual purpose: it builds brand loyalty among Saudi consumers and differentiates local businesses from global competitors. Signage indicating “عوائل” not only communicates expected social conduct but also helps structure public space in line with cultural practices, allowing individuals to navigate environments that reflect and respect their social norms.

Let us now move to the shop sign in Figure 6. The inclusion of cultural symbols such as the Oud incense burner, as seen in the “Almajed Oud” storefront, is more than decorative; it’s a powerful statement of cultural identity. Oud, a traditional scent derived from agarwood, holds deep cultural and historical significance in Saudi and broader Arab society. It is often used in religious, social, and ceremonial contexts, making it a symbol of Arab heritage and hospitality. By integrating this symbol directly into brand identity, “Almajed Oud” not only markets a product but also reinforces the cultural importance of this traditional item. In a globalized market where Western fragrances dominate, the choice to center a traditional Arabian scent suggests an intentional act of cultural preservation. It is an assertion of local identity within a global marketplace, ensuring that local consumers see their culture represented and valued in everyday public spaces.

Figure 6

The Use of Culture-Specific Markers (3)



Another aspect of localization in Saudi LL is the employment of Arabic calligraphy potential. Arabic calligraphy holds a special place in Islamic and Arab culture. The use of artistic calligraphy on commercial signs, like in “ريف العطور” (rīf al-‘uṭūr) ‘Reef Perfumes’ (top), or “قصر المضياف” (qaṣr al-miḍyāf) (Qaser Almedyaf Restaurant) (bottom) in Figure 7, serves as both an aesthetic and a cultural marker. Styles of Arabic calligraphy transform words into visual art, symbolizing elegance, tradition, and spiritual significance (Gu and Coluzzi, 2024). The stylized script provides visual attractiveness and reinforces a sense of heritage and authenticity. For instance, the flowing lines and symmetrical forms in “ريف”, meaning ‘the countryside’, create an impression of elegance and simplicity, echoing the traditional values of modesty and beauty inherent in the region’s art and design. Similarly, the calligraphic style of “قصر المضياف”, meaning ‘the host’s palace’, in the form of a big cooking pot, suggests a sense of hospitality and grandeur, which is culturally significant in Saudi society, where hospitality is a valued trait. In the context of signage, calligraphy does more than communicate; it elevates the linguistic content to a level of art, reinforcing the value placed on the Arabic language itself. Incorporating Arabic calligraphy also signifies pride in linguistic heritage amidst a multilingual landscape, marking these businesses as distinctly local while fostering cultural continuity.

Figure 7

The Use of Arabic Calligraphy Potential



All these signs presented in Figures 4 to 7 contribute to a form of localized social order, subtly guiding behavior in a way that feels familiar and culturally respectful to Saudi nationals.

Linguistic Hybridity

Linguistic hybridity is a multifaceted phenomenon that reflects the interaction of multiple languages and semiotic resources in public spaces. It involves the merging of English with local languages, creating a unique linguistic and cultural expression that indicates the multicultural aspect of society. Hybridity in language signifies not only the fusion of languages but also an interaction of cultural symbols, where English takes on localized forms to fit the communicative and cultural needs of local speakers. According to Rubdy (2014), this adaptation challenges the traditional norms of “pure” language use, promoting a more inclusive and democratized form of English that resonates with the local population’s identities and social contexts. The analysis and discussion of some examples below will reflect this phenomenon, which represents 7.67% of the collected data, as shown in Table 2.

From a semiotic perspective, the shop sign “كيسة ليشنز” (Kabsalicious) on a restaurant in Riyadh (Figure 8) embodies a fusion of linguistic and cultural elements, reflecting the dynamics of globalization and localization within the LL. It blends Arabic-to-English and English-to-Arabic transliterations, illustrating a hybrid linguistic approach. “Kabsa” is the English transliteration of the Arabic word “كيسة,” referring to a traditional Saudi dish, while “ليشنز” is the Arabic transliteration of “licious,” a fragment from the English word “delicious.” The name merges local culinary culture with a trendy global appeal. This fusion seeks to attract both local customers familiar with kabsa and international audiences through the recognizable term “delicious.” The use of “licious” in an Arabic context signals the influence of globalized culture, while the inclusion of “kabsa” reflects a localized adaptation rooted in regional identity.

The sign communicates quality, taste, and cultural familiarity. The association of “delicious” with food quality, combined with the local reference to kabsa, creates a message that appeals to diverse audiences. The integration of Arabic and English also suggests cultural inclusivity and openness to varied linguistic and culinary experiences.

Figure 8

A Name of a Restaurant in Riyadh



The image of a pot with traditional inscriptions and motifs above the sign adds visual and symbolic depth. It represents cultural heritage and authenticity, evoking traditional cooking methods and reinforcing the dish’s cultural significance. This visual cue strengthens the

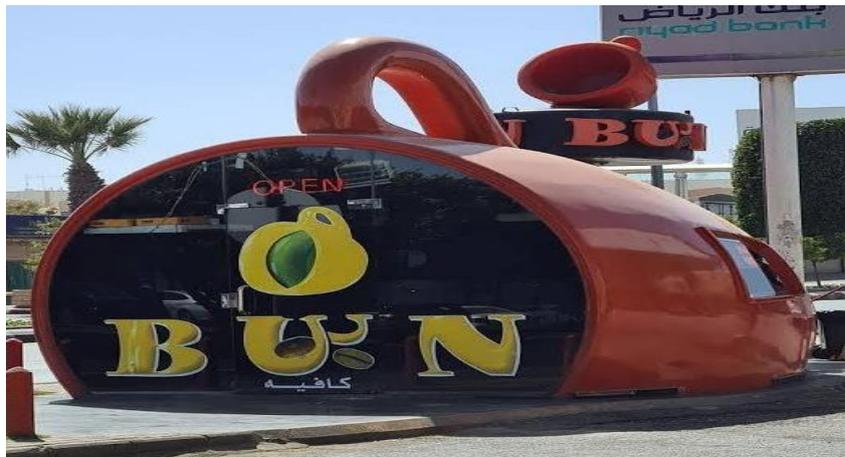
contrast and connection between the trendy appeal of “licious” and the traditional roots of kabsa, creating a unified and culturally rich message. Beyond language, the image enhances the sign’s appeal, capturing attention and communicating the essence of the restaurant’s offerings: traditional cuisine prepared using time-honored methods.

The café sign in Figure 9 is another interesting example of linguistic hybridity and semiotic creativity, blending global and local cultural symbols to attract a diverse audience. Before analyzing the sign, it is worth noting that restaurants and cafes are a prominent feature throughout Saudi Arabia, lining streets and filling malls, reflecting the community's strong affinity for food, coffee, and drinks. The diverse names of cafes and the growing number of coffee shops also serve as distinct markers of local culture (cf. Al-Hussami et al., 2020).

The café's name “BUN” demonstrates linguistic hybridity by combining Arabic and English in a single concept. The Arabic word “بن”, meaning ‘coffee’, is transliterated into “BUN” using Roman letters, which makes the term more accessible to non-Arabic speakers while maintaining its Arabic origin. This blending represents local identity and global readability, catering to both Arabic-speaking locals and international customers. Moreover, the word “كافيه” is an Arabic transliteration of the English word ‘café.’ This reverse transliteration is a common strategy in the Arab world to evoke modernity and global appeal while maintaining linguistic familiarity.

Figure 9

A Name of a Café Shop in Abha



The sign’s design is visually innovative, merging Arabic and Roman elements to attract bilingual audiences. The Arabic letters ب and ن for “بن” are embedded in the Romanized form “BUN,” with the letter “U” stylized so the entire form resembles its Arabic counterpart. Two coffee bean illustrations replace the diacritical marks (dots) placed below and above the Arabic letters, reinforcing the coffee theme and linking the two scripts. This is a sophisticated example of typographic fusion, where script and imagery merge to convey a multi-layered message. The playful design invites viewers to decode the name while connecting with familiar coffee imagery.

The café structure, shaped like a giant coffee cup, reinforces the theme through a universally recognized symbol. This visual metaphor transcends language barriers, instantly communicating the café’s purpose and enhancing its brand identity.

This sign and structure demonstrate a clever use of linguistic and semiotic hybridity. By blending Arabic and English elements with familiar symbols, the café creates a welcoming space that unites local traditions with global coffee culture. The design celebrates the richness of the Arabic language and invites a diverse community of customers. Its combined linguistic and visual strategies reflect a café that is both locally grounded and globally oriented. The use of Roman characters and a universally recognized coffee cup icon enhances accessibility for international visitors and those drawn to Western coffee culture. Through transliteration and typographic fusion, the café effectively communicates across linguistic boundaries.

The last notable instance of linguistic hybridity is the sign for “SAUDCONSULT” in Figure 10. The design, from the fusion of languages to the visual emphasis on the acronym, reflects a strategy to communicate across cultural lines. The name “SAUDCONSULT” combines the Arabic personal name “سعود” (Saud) with the English word “consult.” This linguistic fusion is a sophisticated choice that carries multiple layers of meaning. “Saud” grounds the company in Arabic culture, symbolizing a local identity, while “consult” signals the firm’s specialization in consultation, agreeing with international business identity terminology. The Arabic script, “سعود كونسلت,” reinforces the brand’s bilingual identity, demonstrating respect for Arabic-speaking clients while attracting a global audience.

Figure 10

A Name of an Engineering Firm in Riyadh



A major element is the bright, green “SC” letters, which serve as a visual anchor and a known sign. Designed to show strength, trustworthiness, and modernity, it implies qualities such as stability and professionalism, important attributes in architecture and consulting. The green color may represent growth, sustainability or new ideas while the strong typography and simple design show confidence and trustworthiness. Adding the director’s name gives credibility to the brand it personalizes; an approach that works well in Arab cultures where personal standing has a great deal of weight in business.

The use of Arabic and English languages, along with the “SC” logo, makes the brand very accessible and aspirational. The Arabic elements ensure that the brand maintains a strong local identity and culture connection, while English and the look it gives to the brand ensure a global standard perception. This hybrid identity suggests a firm rooted in local tradition yet open to international collaboration, likely catering to both domestic and global clients. Together, these elements form a cohesive brand that allures tradition with modernity in line with the firm’s architectural and consultative expertise.

The shop signs in Figures 8 to 10 serve as a fascinating example of semiotic fusion, indicating how linguistic and cultural elements intertwine to engage local and global audiences. They reflect the complexities of contemporary LL in Saudi Arabia.

In summary, this study reveals that the LL of Saudi Arabia is a complex and dynamic semiotic space, characterized by a sophisticated interplay of globalizing and localizing forces. This is primarily manifested through three key practices: the extensive use of English-to-Arabic transliteration to integrate global brands phonetically into the local script, the strategic deployment of cultural branding through religious phrases, traditional symbols, and Arabic calligraphy to assert local identity, and the emergence of innovative linguistic hybridity that creatively merges Arabic and English to form new, culturally resonant expressions. These practices do not occur in isolation but represent a deliberate and nuanced negotiation between global economic influences and the preservation of a distinct Saudi cultural and linguistic identity. This careful balancing act aligns with the broader national objectives of initiatives like Saudi Vision 2030, which seeks to modernize and open the economy to the world while simultaneously strengthening and promoting its unique cultural heritage.

The findings imply that transliteration is not merely a linguistic process but a sociocultural strategy that facilitates global integration without erasing local distinctiveness. For policymakers, this highlights the need for standardized transliteration guidelines to ensure consistency and professionalism in public signage. For researchers, it highlights the importance of semiotic and sociolinguistic approaches in understanding how urban spaces express broader cultural and economic shifts. This study ultimately contributes to a deeper understanding of how LLs serve as visible markers of identity, modernity, and belonging in an increasingly globalized world.

Conclusion

This study on the LL of Saudi Arabia offers a comprehensive view of how globalization and localization coexist and shape public signage in Saudi Arabia. The findings revealed that transliteration and translation strategies play a central role in negotiating global and local identities. The most frequently observed patterns included English-to-Arabic transliteration and direct translation, with businesses strategically selecting these modes to appeal to both international and local consumers. The signs often demonstrated a hybrid identity, combining global branding trends with culturally resonant elements such as Arabic script, Islamic motifs, and local references. These findings indicated that the Saudi LL functions not merely as a space of communication but also as a site where cultural pride and international visibility are actively negotiated.

The findings have significant theoretical and practical implications for understanding how language can influence cultural identity in a dynamically globalizing society. In theory, this research extends the globalization model of transliterated English by showing how English is adopted into the non-Latin script languages of Saudi Arabia's LL, stressing the reinforcement of global brand identities while accommodating local linguistic norms. Such a phenomenon can be described as "transliterated multilingualism," which therefore stresses the dynamic negotiation between the global and local forces that create linguistic hybridity, attracting a diverse cultural and commercial audience. The study resonates with Saudi Vision 2030, showing how translational practices in public spaces modernize without compromising cultural

traditions. In practice, these findings should guide policymakers and companies in designing signage to achieve a balance between global legibility and local identity.

The paper acknowledges several minor limitations. First, the study deals only with commercial signage and does not include governmental, educational, or religious signage, which presumably function on different linguistic ideologies. Second, the analysis was carried out through visual and semiotic methods; however, stakeholder perspectives and audience reception data were not incorporated. The lack of such information severely restricts insight into motivations for and interpretations of language choices. Third, though diverse, the sample may still fall short in adequately representing regional variations and the more dynamic trends. Therein lies also a possible trade-off in terms of its somewhat random sampling method: while it reduces researcher bias, it could be missing out on some niche or even recently developing linguistic practices.

Given the scope and focus of the current study, several areas remain open for further research. Future work could expand beyond commercial signage to explore other forms of public signage, such as governmental, educational, and informational signs, which would contribute to a richer understanding of Saudi Arabia's LL across various sectors. Integrating input from stakeholders such as business owners, designers, and policymakers would reveal motivations behind specific language and design choices, offering a deeper perspective on the decision-making processes shaping the LL. Furthermore, exploring audience perceptions could uncover how locals, expatriates, and tourists interpret bilingual and culturally embedded signage, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of its communicative and cultural impact. Focused research on transliteration strategies can also aid international brands in culturally aligning with the Saudi market by identifying approaches that resonate effectively with local consumers. Finally, conducting a comparative analysis of shop signs across different Saudi cities could explore how regional sociolinguistic dynamics shape the use of language, script, and translation strategies within localized LLs.

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