



Building Strategic Differentiating Capabilities (DiSCs) for Syria - Fast

People's abilities, that are different to other people's abilities, and which help achieve long term goals.

Professor William Scott-Jackson

Mr Rida Kariem BA (Hons)

Dr Julie Scott-Jackson

Professor Jonathan Michie

Dominic Macdonald

Dr Najat Benchiba-Savinius

Professor Amal al Fatani

Professor Tony Venables

Dr Ali Al Lawati



Oxford Centre
for Impact Research

For slides, references, Arabic version of this presentation and management summary in English and Arabic, visit:

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Agenda

1. What are Differentiating Strategic Capabilities (DiSCs)

and why are they so important?

- Recent research projects and implementation examples (mainly from GCC)

2. How does this apply to Syria and how would it help?

- Some of the Strategic Sectors for Syria
- DiSCs for these sectors
 - How to identify them
 - How to build them

3. Practical Actions

- For government
- For global and Syrian companies wishing to help/maximise opportunities
- For us at the Oxford Centre for Impact Research





The exotic world of DiSCs

Who we are

- *Impact Research and Advisory Centre*
- *Governments and companies*
- *Middle East, Europe and USA*

- *Building DiSCs*
- *Developing national talent and Leadership*
- *Creating successful Entrepreneurs*
- *Happiness & Engagement*

Today's examples from Saudi, UAE, Oman and Qatar



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What are Differentiating Strategic Capabilities (DiSCs)?

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What are Differentiating Strategic Capabilities (DiSCs)?

Differentiating Strategic Capabilities (DiSCs)

Capabilities that provide sustainable competitive advantage - BONUS

**Valuable
Rare
Inimitable
Non-substitutable**

Growth Capabilities

Capabilities needed to reach 'best practice' in a market

Skills, expertise, sector/job specific

Fundamental Capabilities

Capabilities crucial to survival and governance

Healthy, happy, secure people

Money (income and capital)

Infrastructure

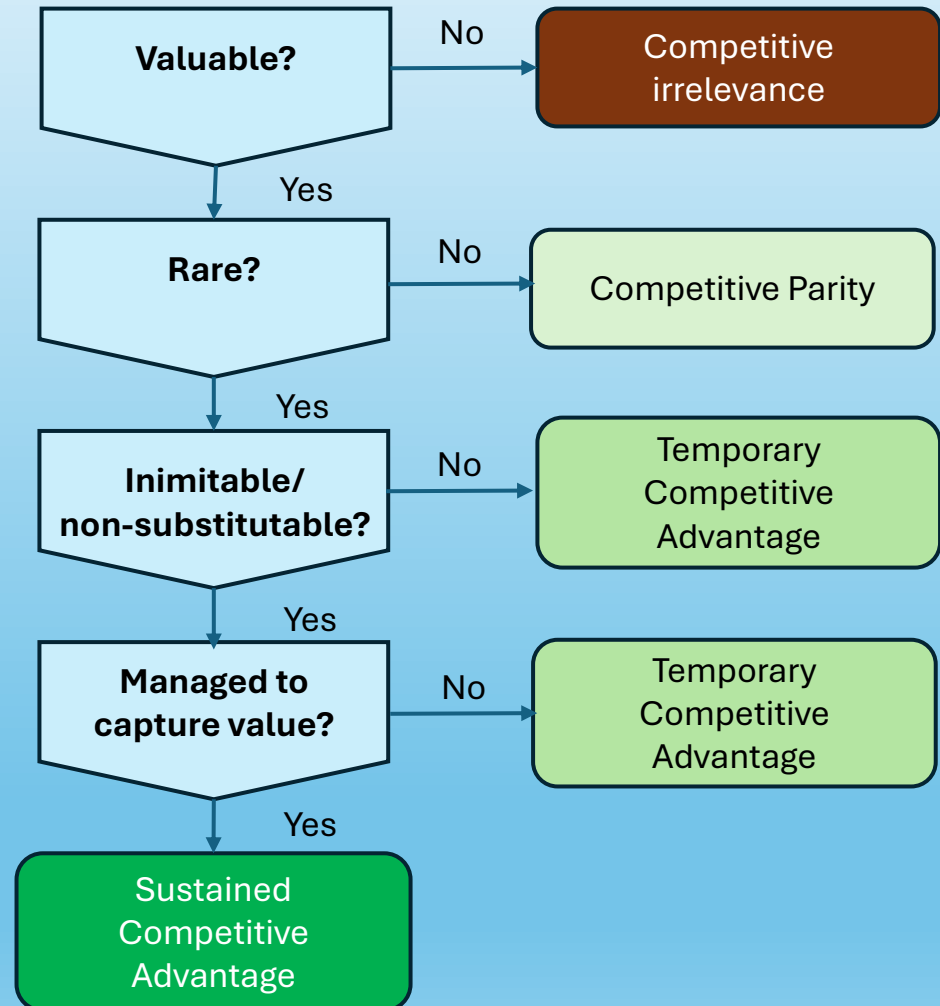
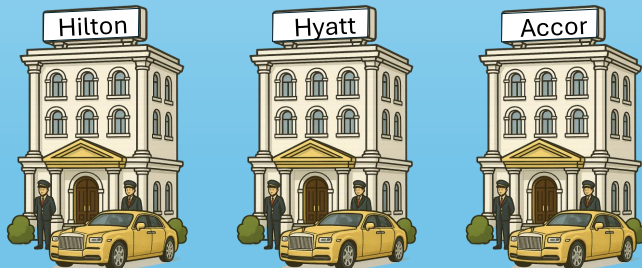
Leadership, governance, basic skills

Resources

Criteria for DiSCs

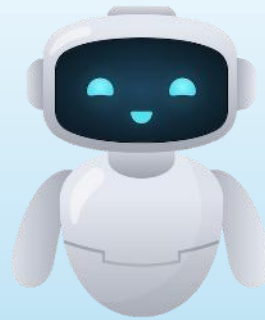


Jay Barney (1991) Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage

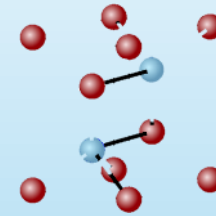


Are these DISCs?

Valuable
Rare
Inimitable
Non-substitutable
Managed to capture value



Advanced robots



Rare earths e.g for batteries
(e.g. Neodymium(III) oxide)



Massive
machinery



oil



Qatari Pearls



Gold (money)



Oil extraction
equipment



Seven Star Hotel
Burj al Arab

Are these DISCs?

Valuable
Rare
Inimitable
Non-substitutable
Managed to capture value



Professor Sir Peter Bruce
Oxford expert in battery
technology



Arthur Guérin-Boëri
World free-diving champion
(holds breath for 7.5 minutes)



Carrie Murray
Ireland's only female digger
operator



Qatari Pearl diver



Innovation



Nations,
such as Syria



Sectors
such as the oil sector



Organisations,
such as Gerdau



Individuals/groups,
such as Rida



DUBAI HAPPINESS STRATEGY

We want to make Dubai the happiest city on earth



What do we mean by happiness?

Active enthusiasm, not just 'contentment'



How can we build happiness?

Curriculum includes Attribution Style and Positive Psychology



How can we measure happiness?



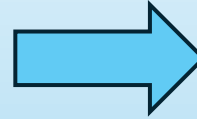
مؤشر السعادة
happinessmeter

How to destroy your own DiSCs

UK Supermarket
Chain



helpful staff



Fast staff

UK Post Office



Trusted postman

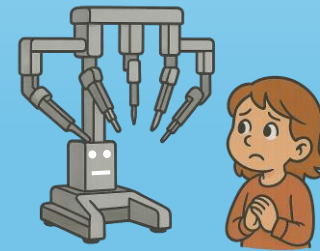
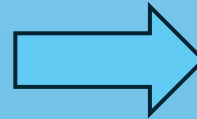


Pushy salesman

Health sector?



Kind surgeon



Effective robot

How to protect your own DiSCs



3

How do DiSCs apply to Syria and how would they help?

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Some of Syria's strategic areas

Economic sectors

- Tourism
- Agriculture
- Natural Resources
- Textiles
- Trade
- Light Industry
- Future technology

Infrastructure needs

- Health
- Education
- Services
- Built environment
- Governance
- Finance and markets

Capability building

- Syrian human capital & professional expertise
- Education, training and research
- Entrepreneurship
- Leadership
- National employment

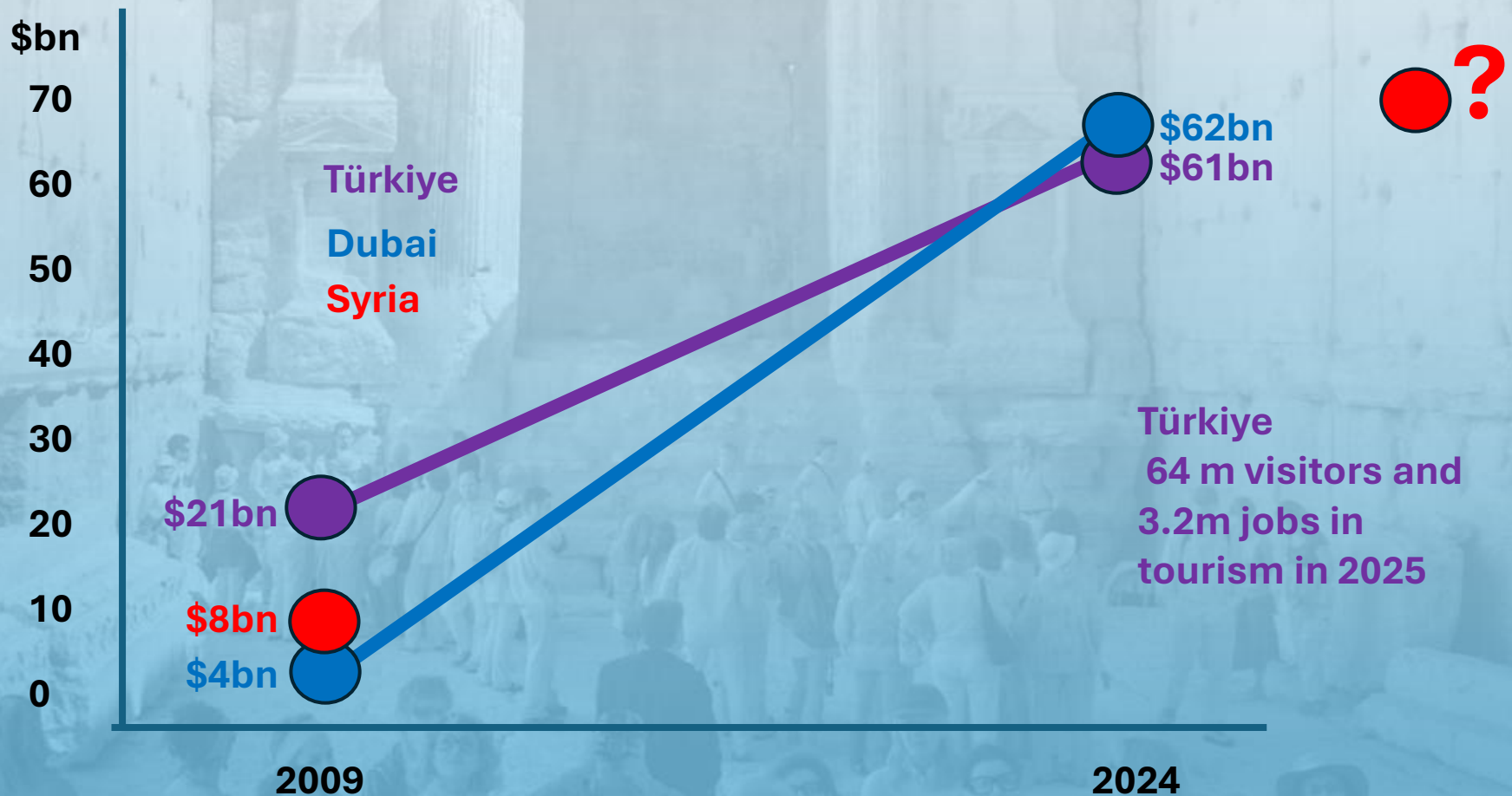
Tourism



Syria today is a safe and peaceful holiday destination. Guardian UK October 2009

Peter Aaron, Temple of Bel, Palmyra, 2009

Potential Tourism Revenues

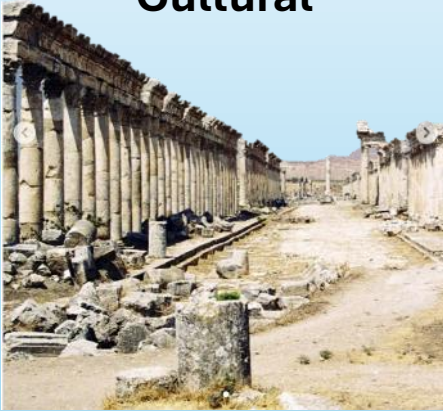


Key Sectors for Tourism in Syria



Oxford Centre
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Cultural



Apamea

19th March 2025

Religious



Umayyad Mosque, Damascus

1st Feb 2025

Medical

Explore
Medical
Tourism



Get a Quote
for healthcare

DiSCs for Tourism

(Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2020)

Differentiating Strategic Capabilities (DiSCs)

**Valuable
Rare
Inimitable
Non-substitutable**



Hospitality recognised as top prestige occupation



Saudis renowned as friendly and hospitable



Every Saudi takes pride in showing off their country

Growth Capabilities

Skills, expertise, sector/job specific



Hotel Management



Fundamental Capabilities



Attracting, developing retaining national talent



Human Resources



IT and processes



Tourism Entrepreneurs

DiSCs for Tourism

(Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2020)



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Differentiating Strategic Capabilities (DiSCs)

**Valuable
Rare
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Growth Capabilities

Skills, expertise, sector/job specific

Fundamental Capabilities



Hospitality recognised
as top prestige
occupation

Select, train and support
for hospitality



Educate young Saudis to
be proud of their country



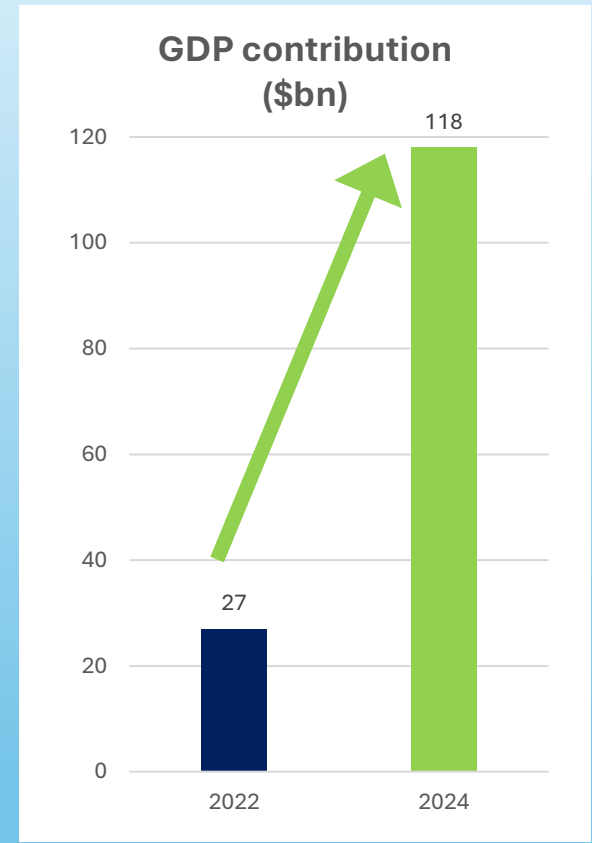
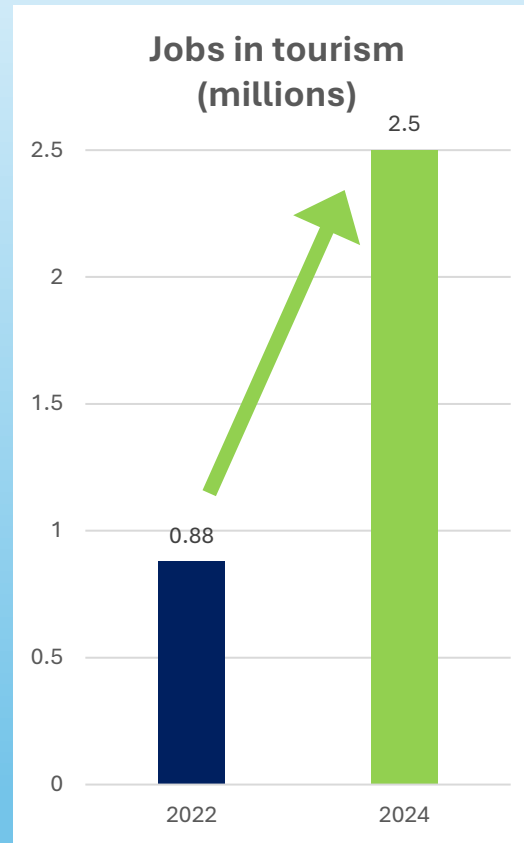
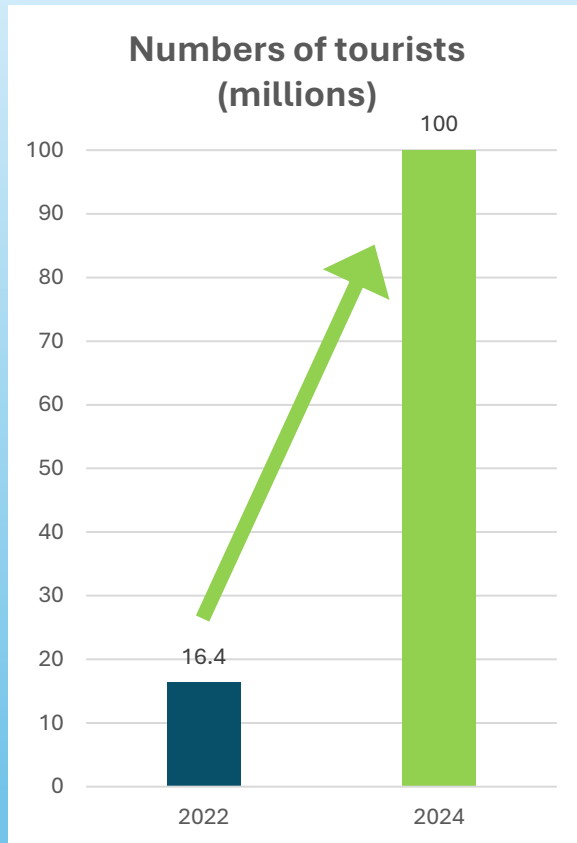
'Saudis first'
employment rules



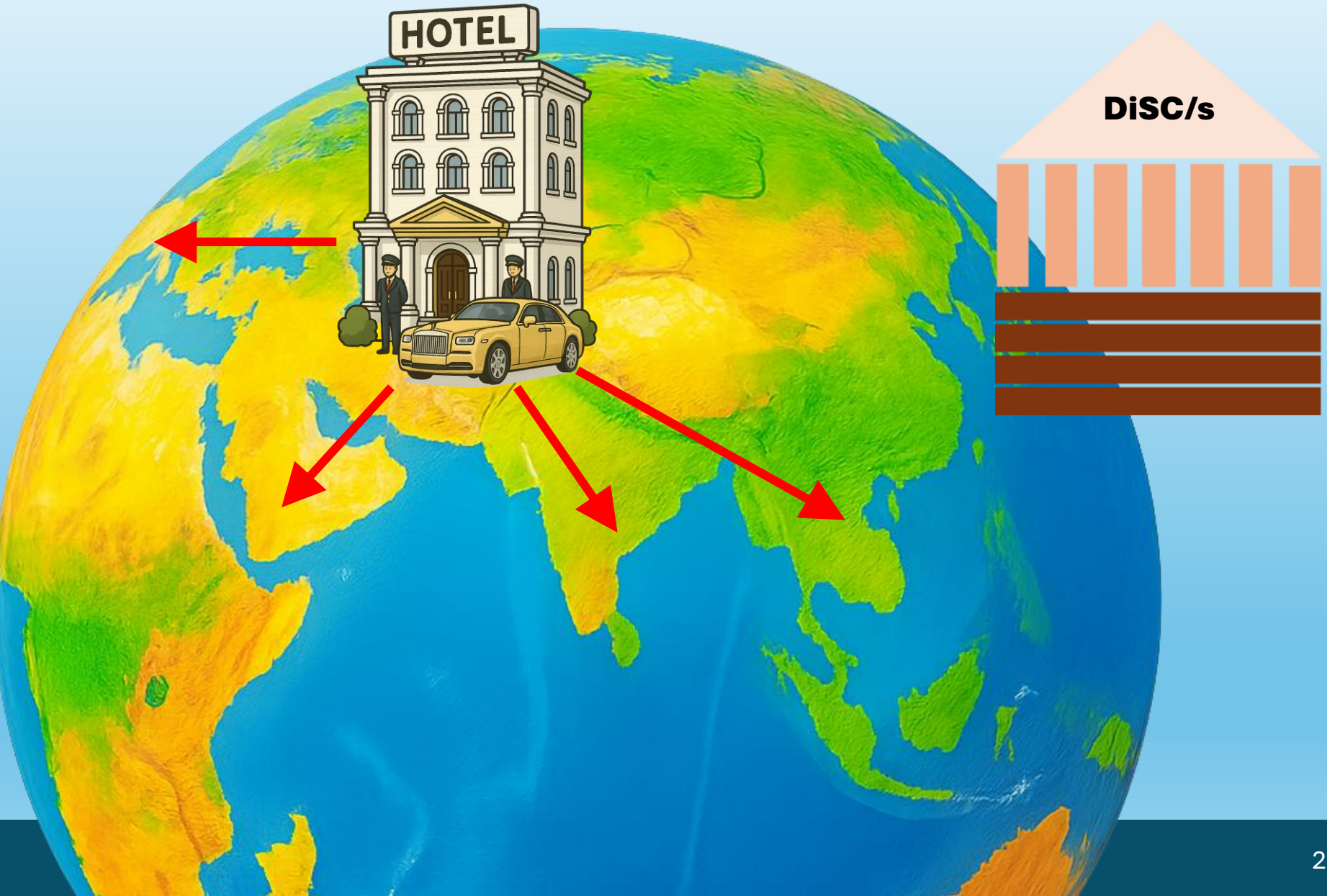
Start-up help (e.g.
incubator) and funding

Outcomes

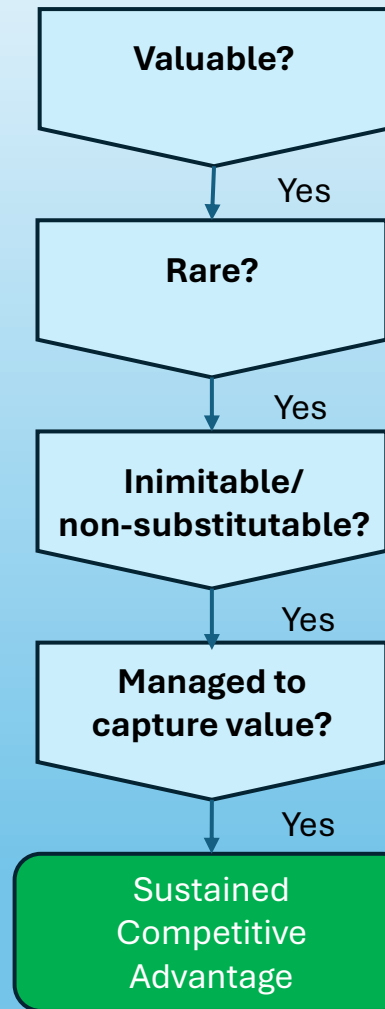
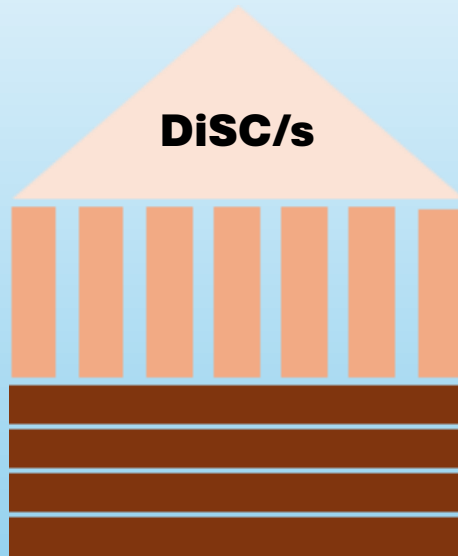
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Hotel Sector UAE



Hotel Sector UAE



For hotel guests in the Middle East and South Asia and Europe

So not every hotel group has it to the relevant degree

hard to copy so based on UAE culture and/or the group's values?

Has to be definable, and something we can build and assess

Luxury Hotel DiSCs

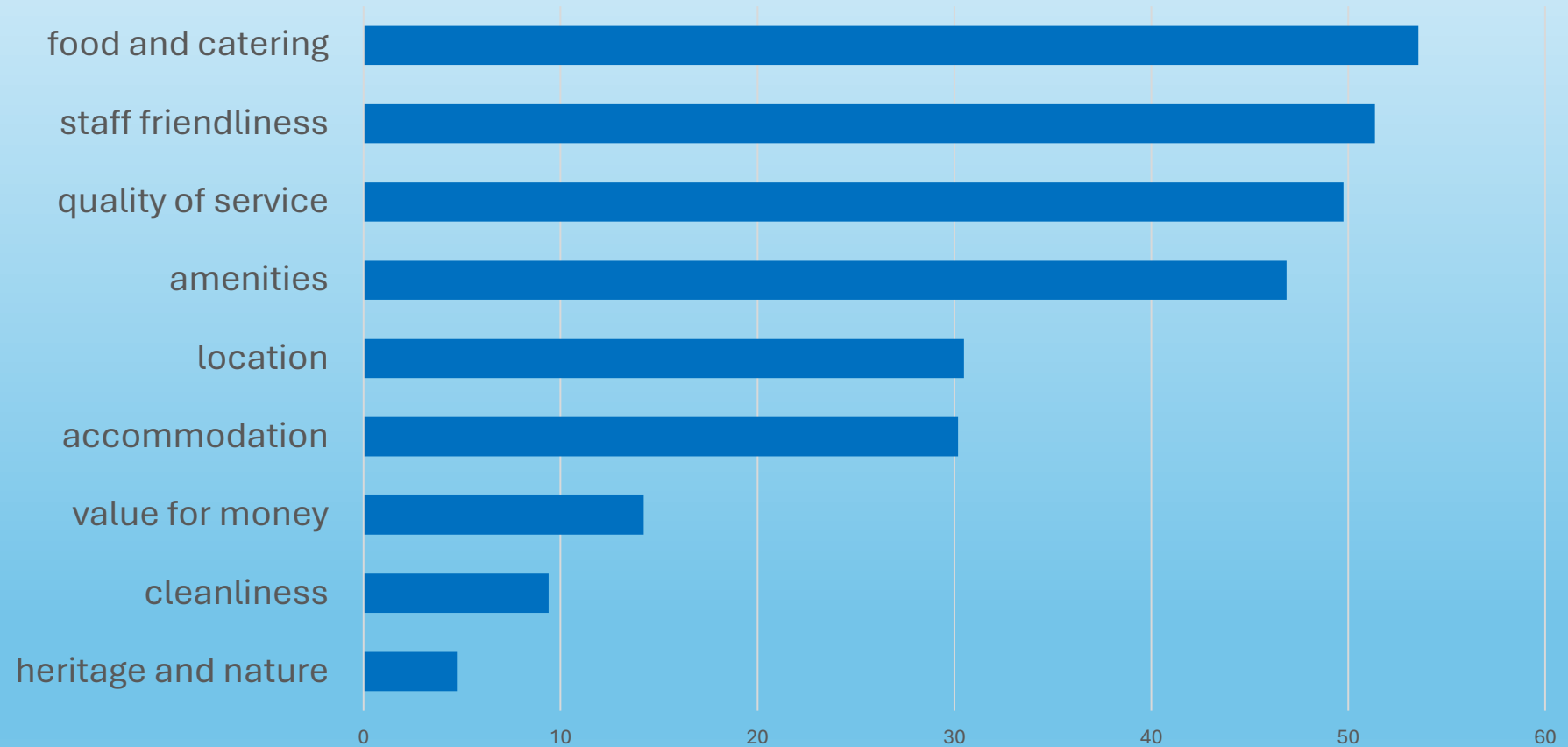
(Trip Advisor scraping and sentiment analysis)



Sentiment Analysis of Trip Advisor Reviews.
Data scraped with Apify Scraper and aspect-based sentiment analysis and NLTK

Success Factors in Tourism

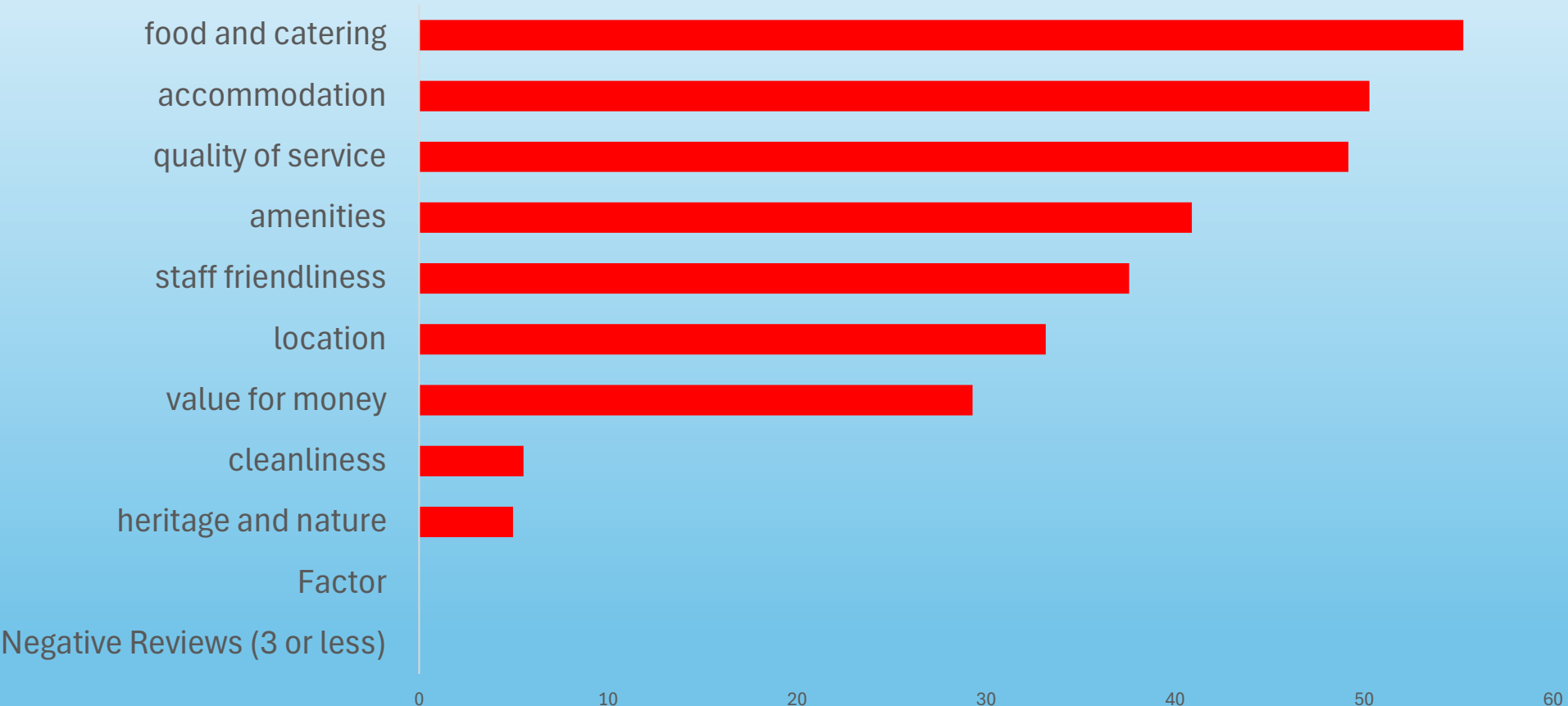
Positive Reviews 4/5



Data scraped with Apify Scraper and aspect-based sentiment analysis using ChatGPT4 and NLTK

Success Factors in Tourism

Negative Reviews (3 or less) Mentions



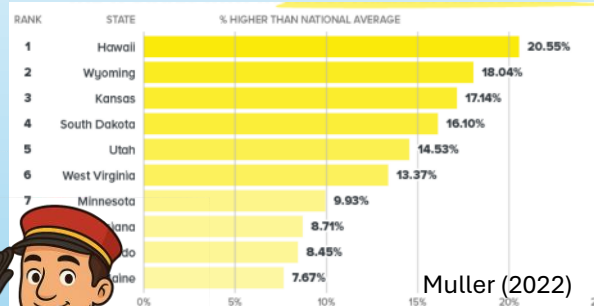
Data scraped with Apify Scraper and aspect-based sentiment analysis using ChatGPT4 and NLTK

How to build friendliness

Base the DiSC on culture



Friendliness doesn't have to be vague



Define in context



Friendliness as a key criteria in management processes and targets



Friendliness as a key criteria for recruitment, promotion and reward.



Outcomes

Luxury properties across the region with top ratings and global awards



‘incredible professionalism and
friendliness’

‘Wonderful, friendly
staff’

‘Staff attentiveness and
friendliness’

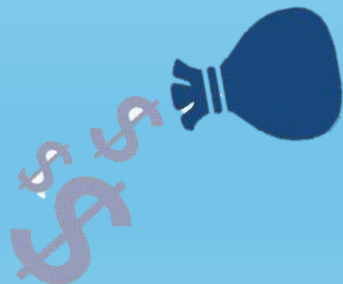
Health Sector

Resources and capabilities to maximise physical and mental health of the Syrian population



Resources and capabilities to create a vibrant health tourism sector

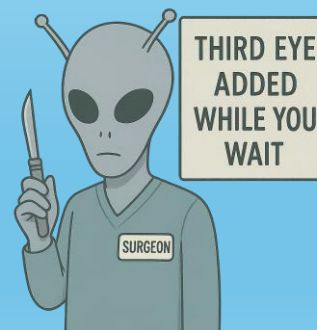
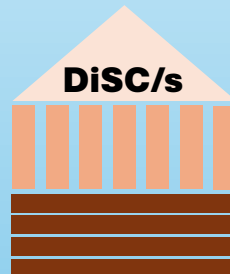
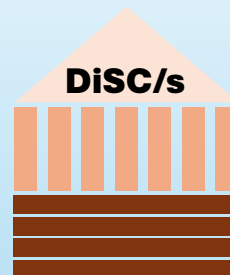
Why do people pay for overseas healthcare?



Save money



Reduce waiting times



Novel procedures

Are these DiSCs?

Valuable
Rare
Inimitable
Non-substitutable



Funding



Advanced medical
robot (da Vinci 5)



New team of nurses
(BSN graduates. The Citadel)

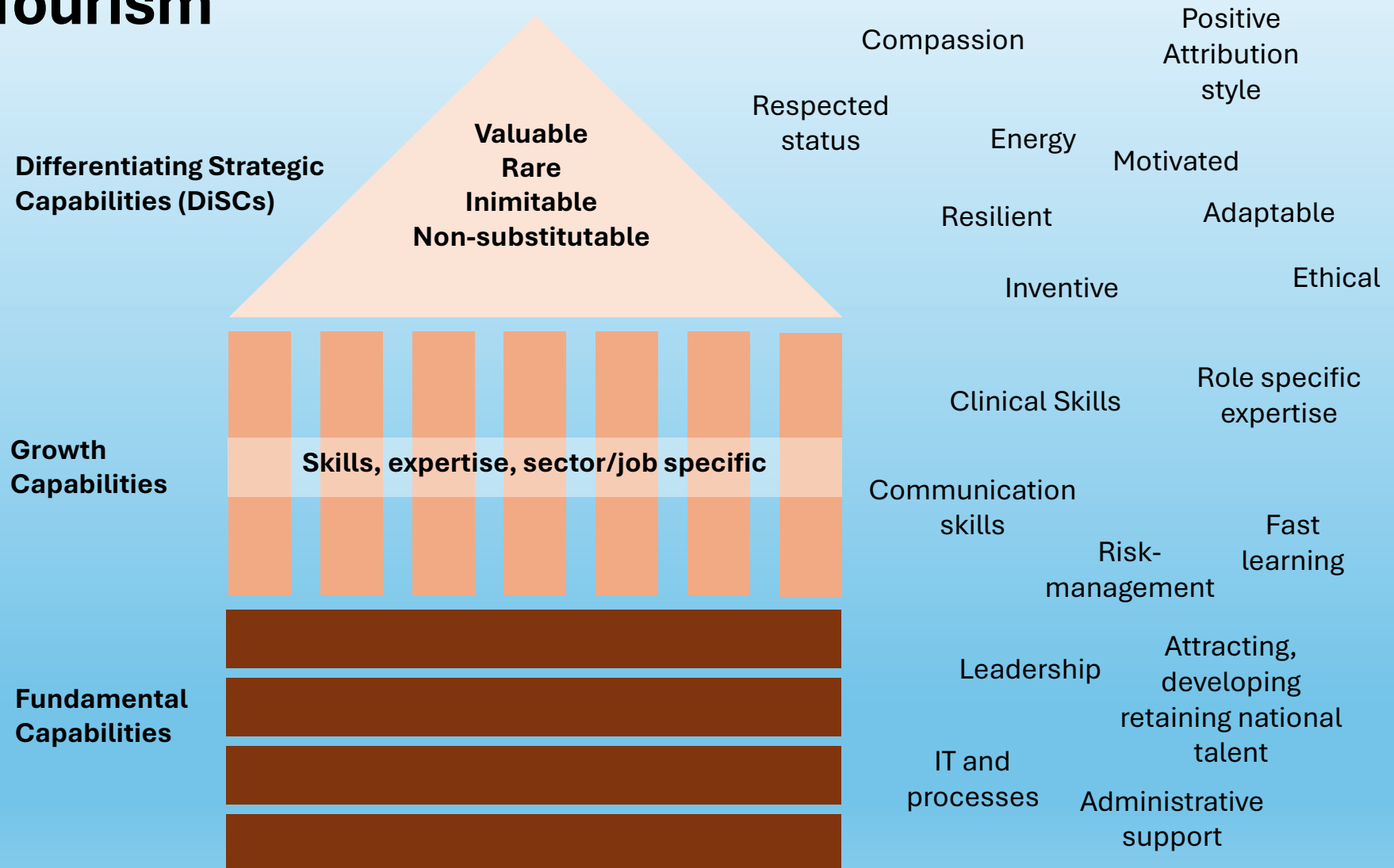


State of the art hospital
(sheikh Khalifa Medical City)



Dr Khaled - Amazing
neurosurgeon

Potential Capabilities for Medical Tourism



Potential Capabilities for Medical Tourism

**Differentiating Strategic
Capabilities (DiSCs)**

**Valuable
Rare
Inimitable
Non-substitutable**

**Respected
Status**



Compassion



**International
Expertise**

4

Practical Actions

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Possible actions for government

Launch National Research project to identify and build key Differentiating Strategic Capabilities (DiSCs)



Education



Targeted Funding



Entrepreneurial support for start-ups

Design and implement plans to maximize employment and development of Syrians – particularly for key roles



Government

Young Emiratis can be groomed to become leaders of the future

Actions for global and Syrian companies

Ensure all key roles are filled by skilled Syrian nationals (from Syria or abroad)



Help develop Syrian talents and capabilities for the future



Support National Strategies e.g. targeted investment or sponsoring research

DAILY NEWS
Rio Tinto sponsors research into strategic capabilities for the Syrian minerals industry

For Oxford Centre for Impact Research



DiSCs for Syria –

To identify and build key capabilities
for the future of Syria

Syrians First: Executive Search

To match organisations looking to fill key
roles with Syrians with exceptional skills

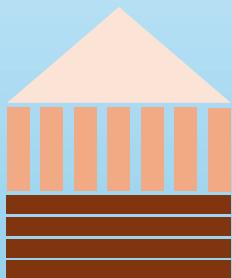
Syria Research and Advisory Service

to help find novel, evidence-based
solutions for complex issues

In Summary

1. Differentiating Strategic Capabilities (DiSCs)

People's abilities, that are different to other people's abilities, and which help achieve long term goals.



2. How this could contribute to the future of Syria and its people.

Tourism



Health



for Syria and health tourism

3. Practical Actions

National Project to build Capabilities



Government

Maximise employment and development of Syrians



Help build Capabilities

Employ Syrians First

Support National Priorities



Private Sector

Discs for Syria

Syrians First Exec Search



A colorful illustration of a jungle scene. In the center, two men in brown suits and ties are smiling. The man on the left has glasses and brown hair, while the man on the right has short brown hair. To the left, a blue and yellow toucan is perched on a branch. To the right, a red and blue parrot is perched on a branch. Several orange butterflies are scattered throughout the green foliage. The background features palm trees and a clear blue sky.

Thank you!

شكراً جزيلاً

wsj@oxford-cir.com

The background is a vibrant, cartoon-style illustration of a jungle. In the center, two men in business suits are smiling. The man on the left has blonde hair and glasses, while the man on the right has dark hair and a beard. They are surrounded by lush green foliage, including palm trees and various leaves. To the left, a toucan with a large yellow beak is perched on a branch. To the right, a colorful parrot with red, blue, and yellow feathers is perched on a branch. Several butterflies are also visible among the plants.

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For more information, contact:
wsj@oxford-cir.com