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Doc 1





Car sales are expected to grow by **9% per annum until 2025**, boosted by the new women customer segment



Car leasing is expected to pick up substantially with a projected annual growth rate of **4% over 2017 - 2025**



A large number of new jobs will be created across the automotive sector to serve the growing demand



Doc 2 : It's Adapt or Die in the New Saudi Economy

The contrast of failure and success is now a familiar sight in Riyadh as the kingdom undergoes the biggest upheaval in its modern history.

By Vivian Nereim 18 juillet 2018 à 06:01 UTC+2 Just off the busy boulevard that runs through central Riyadh, an Italian restaurant called <u>Forchetta</u> lay empty and dusty for months. Less than a year after it opened, the branch succumbed to Saudi Arabia's economic slump as disposable income fell and unemployment climbed to the highest level in more than a decade.

A few doors down, <u>Draft</u> cafe looks right out of Brooklyn or Beirut. Women smoke cigarettes on the terrace as a soundtrack of American pop music plays in the background. A medium espresso costs the equivalent of \$2.90, while a quinoa and beetroot salad is \$7.70. Forchetta used to charge \$13 for a Margherita pizza.

"People are still going to have a cup of coffee even when the economy is bad," says Wadha Al Rashid, the 34-year-old businesswoman who opened the cafe in July last year and recently added a second location. "We kind of serve a niche for the young creative individuals. I think that really serves us as well."

The stark contrast of failure and success is an increasingly familiar sight in the Saudi capital as the 86-year-old kingdom undergoes the <u>biggest upheaval in its modern history</u> to adopt a Western-style model of capitalism. Since the government trimmed subsidies and costs rose, the survival of businesses is being determined by different market forces.

"You either adapt or you disappear," says Al Fozan, whose firm audits thousands of Saudi companies, sitting in his office overlooking the beige sprawl of southern Riyadh. "To make people change, you have to shock them."

Spurred by the oil price rout of 2014, the de facto Saudi ruler is trying to <u>diversify the</u> <u>petrodollar-dependent economy</u> and repair state finances while creating enough jobs for his growing population. For companies it means the era of cheap labor, subsidized energy, and easy government contracts is over.

Gulf Restaurants & Parks Co., which runs Forchetta along with several other restaurant chains, has dismissed 500 employees in the past few years, reducing its workforce to 700, says operations director Rabih Ghostine. The company closed about five restaurants, the new Forchetta branch among them.

"We didn't feel the crisis until maybe the middle of 2017," he says, adding that sales dropped 20 percent to 25 percent at some restaurants. "We need to stop the bleeding, as simple as that."

The challenges faced by managers like Ghostine are formidable. This year alone, the government raised electricity and gasoline prices, introduced a value-added tax, and required companies to pay extra fees to employ foreigners, many of whom receive lower salaries than Saudis.

Hundreds of thousands of foreign workers have <u>left the country</u>, shrinking the customer base for not only restaurants and stores but also private schools and telecommunications companies.

The economy expanded at an annual rate of 1.2 percent in the first quarter after shrinking 0.9 percent in 2017, buoyed by higher oil prices and government spending on wages and social benefits to soften the impact of its shock therapy.

The Saudi economy "is a big ship," says Karen Young, a senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. "It's not going to turn easily." The burst of trendy businesses, such as food trucks and women's gyms, won't be enough to transform the kingdom's private sector, she says. "I still see the state as central to the broad trends of economic activity."

DOC 3: Saudi Arabia's reputation has taken another hit over the death of a journalist and its economy may be next

Gina Heeb Oct. 20, 2018, 06:06 AM

REUTERS/Faisal Al Nasser

- There is mounting evidence suggesting Saudi Arabia was complicit in the death of a Washington Post journalist.
- It isn't clear whether the US would impose sanctions if an investigation reaches that conclusion.
- But the affair may have already damaged the reputation of the kingdom, according to experts.

As evidence suggesting Saudi Arabia was involved in the death of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi mounts, investors are pulling out of a major <u>investment conference in</u> <u>Riyadh</u> left and right. And experts say that may be just the start of economic troubles for the kingdom.

Jason Tuvey, senior emerging markets economist at Capital Economics, said the Khashoggi case and the manner in which Saudi Arabia has handled it "will damage the country's long-term economic prospects, and another political shock will remain a key risk to the outlook."

Earlier this week, Saudi Arabia's stock market, which had just recently been recognized as an emerging market on the MSCI, suffered its steepest drop since December 2014. Meanwhile, the riyal temporarily breached its 3.75 peg to the dollar and fell to <u>a two-year low</u>.

"We've seen a lot of volatility," Karen E. Young, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, said Thursday. "We can see now that markets are trying to figure out how to price-in this risk in Saudi Arabia."

While it isn't clear how the US would respond if it is determined that the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is guilty of involvement in <u>Khashoggi's death</u>, sanctions are an option. In a bipartisan <u>letter</u> sent to President Donald Trump last week, top senators demanded an investigation into whether "the highest ranking officials in the Government of Saudi Arabia" were complicit in the case.

The Trump administration, which did not respond to an email requesting comment, has 120 days to decide if it will impose sanctions under a human-rights <u>statute</u> invoked in the letter. Gregory J. Wawro, a political science professor at Columbia University, said he isn't betting on any formal penalties at the moment.

"If some sort of diplomatic reaction is going to happen — whether it's sanctions or some sort of formal statement condemning Saudi Arabia or top leaders there — I think the story is going to have to last through the election," he said. "And that is a tall order."

But sanctions or not, analysts say the economy could suffer as companies continue to delay or even cancel investment plans in the country. Foreign direct investment inflows fell to just 0.2% of gross domestic product last year, according to Capital Economics, down from about 9% in 2009.

Losing investments outside of the oil sector means risking employment opportunities at the heart of Vision 2030. With about 70% of the population under 30 years old, teens and young adults in the kingdom have struggled to find jobs. The state-run oil giant Aramco is booming, but its positions are limited in number and type.

DOC 4: Uber's Mideast rival is hiring women drivers in Saudi Arabia

by Sarah El Sirgany <u>@CNNTech</u> June 26, 2018: 9:48 AM ET

If you order a taxi anywhere in the world, chances are you'll get a male driver.

Careem — the Middle East's answer to Uber — is aiming to change that in one of the most conservative societies in the world by recruiting Saudi women to take the wheel after a female driving ban was lifted on Sunday.

Careem has received over 2,000 applications since announcing it would recruit so-called Captinahs — female drivers — in Saudi Arabia. A handful of these drivers have already hit the roads to serve male and female clients.

Enaam Al-Aswad, 43, is one of the faces of Careem's new program, even though she's still in process of exchanging her expired Syrian driving license for a Saudi one.

"I believe I'll be good in driving people around. I love driving and interacting with people," she told CNN on Saturday, the day before the female driving ban was lifted.

Al-Aswad, a single mother of two, said the job will suit her as she likes adventure and dislikes fixed working hours. She also works part-time as a makeup artist and communications manager.

"You can't depend on one source of income," she said.

Careem is aiming to have 20,000 Captinahs across the Middle East by 2020, according to Hisham Lary, Careem's team manager in Jeddah.

The firm already employs female drivers in other countries including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Morocco.

Enaam Al-Aswad is one of Careem's new drivers in Saudi Arabia.

Over two thirds of Careem's clients in Saudi Arabia are women, said Lary. The driving ban forced them to depend on services like Careem and Uber to get around.

Lary said he's not worried that the policy change could lead to a drop in customers.

"We expect the demand to increase because the economy is increasingly moving," he said.

Rush hour in the traffic department

After the Saudi government announced plans to remove the driving ban last year, major car companies reworked their advertising campaigns to target Saudi women.

Ford (\mathbf{F}) grabbed the spotlight by saying they would give a female driving advocate her dream Mustang. On Sunday, car washing shops and restaurants offered free services and special deals to women.

The Saudi traffic department said it received over 120,000 applications for new licenses as the nation prepared to lift its ban, the only country in the world with such a restriction. Some women are exchanging foreign licenses while others are aiming to get new licenses by completing 30 hours of training.

The demand has been so high that traffic departments and driving schools are struggling to keep up.

The Jeddah Driving School received over 8,000 applications but has only granted 82 licenses since the school opened over a month ago, said Omsia Almadani, the head of the school's instructors.

The changing face of Saudi Arabia

Scrapping the driving ban is the latest visible sign of change in Saudi Arabia.

The young Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman is spearheading an ambitious economic reform plan called Vision 2030 that's aiming to diversify and modernize the conservative nation. Plans include a push into tourism and move away from the country's dependence on oil revenue.

"The vision itself is all about diversifying the economy and engaging the Saudis in the labor force. Engaging Saudis doesn't either mean male or female; it's all the Saudis," Lary said.

The religious police has been stripped of arrest powers and the Kingdom has eased restrictions to allow concerts and movie theaters. Still, critics are worried that the crown prince's top down approach to change could spark a backlash from conservative sections of society.

Lary dismissed concerns about violating conservative social norms by having female drivers join his service.

"Women have been riding with a male [driver] for years. It's just literally a matter of switching seats," he said.

CNNMoney (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia) First published June 26, 2018: 8:17 AM ET

DOC 5:



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