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Tourism Host-Guest Encounters in the Conservative
Muslim Setting of the Sultanate of Oman

Amina Abdullah Majid Al Balushi

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Abstract

Tourism development has been recognised as a vehicle for economic benefits at a national and local community level. However, its growth is widely associated with detrimental socio-cultural, environmental and economic impacts with regards to local communities residing in tourist destinations. Negative impacts of tourism include adverse changes in local communities' social capacity and quality of life, reflecting the socio-cultural drawbacks of tourism which, overall, could influence host attitudes towards tourists and the sustainability of tourism development. Although substantial literature on tourism's socio-cultural and socio-economic impacts exist, little attention has been directed towards tourism's socio-cultural impacts and its influence on host-guest relationship, particularly within emergent tourist destinations with conservative Islamic values.

To explore the socio-cultural impact of tourism and its influence on host-guest relationships in conservative Arab Muslim communities in the Sultanate of Oman; the specific cases of Bidiyah (a desert tourist destination) and Wadi Bani Khalid (WBK, a natural water-pool destination), both located in the Al Sharqia North Governorate, are investigated. This research applies ethnographic methodology, using a non-participating observer who takes an interaction approach through conducting 31 face-to-face semi-structured interviews in Bidiyah and 27 interviews in WBK with tourism stakeholders, including government representatives, tourism business, local community members, international and domestic tourists and an NGO representative in Bidiyah.

In addition, three focus group discussions are conducted with a group of four female craft-makers in Bidiyah, another four female craft-makers in WBK, and a group of five local community residents in WBK. The respondents are selected using the purposive sampling technique followed by snowballing and sequential methods. This study also applies document analysis to government reports, statistics and tourism brochures.

To enhance the understanding of host community attitudes towards tourism development and tourists, this study expands upon Doxey's 1975 framework for studying relationships between host communities' attitudes and tourists through

the level of tourism development. This model suggests a linear evolution of attitudes from a positive position, becoming increasingly negative through four stages of tourism development: euphoria, apathy, annoyance and antagonism. This trend occurs in parallel with an increase in tourism. This study examines the socio-cultural impacts of tourism to assess tourism development from the host community's perspective, thereby expanding upon Doxey's model to explore host-guest relations in the context of the Sultanate of Oman.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding tourism development and its socio-cultural impacts on host-guest relationships in a conservative Muslim community setting; specifically, it explores the planning and development of host-guest relations in conservative Muslim destinations in Oman. This study's first contribution is an empirical close study of the experiences of two distinct tourist destinations, and an in-depth investigation of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on Bidiyah and WBK with tourism stakeholders. This study obtains and analyses the perceptions of key government representatives, host communities, tourism business operators and international and domestic tourists in both destinations.

This study also contributes to the theoretical model of Doxey's Index by critically discussing the model and expanding it with the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions of specific tourist destinations in influencing host attitudes towards tourists in conservative Muslim contexts. Finally, this study contributes to practice by providing tourism planners and policymakers with a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural dimension and its influence on host-guest relationships in conservative Muslim communities in Oman, which in turn impacts the level of host support for tourism development. Thus, this study seeks to help emergent tourist destinations with conservative Muslim communities to develop appropriate tourism strategies and management plans that can mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive host-guest relationships for the sustainable development of tourism.

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Dedication

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Amina Abdullah Majid AL Balushi

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amina Al Balushi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light blue background behind the text.

Definitions/Abbreviations

AL Raffd Fund	Government Fund in Oman for Small and Medium Entrepreneurs
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MOT	Ministry of Tourism
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSCI	National Centre for Statistics and Information
OMR	Omani Rial
Omran	Oman Tourism Development Company
SCP	Supreme Council for Planning
SMEs	Small and Medium entrepreneur
TSA	Tourism Satellite Account
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNWTO	United Nation World Tourism Organisation
WBK	Wadi Bani Khalid
WTO	World Tourism Organisation

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, tourism has become an increasingly important vehicle for economic impacts, where it entails the potential for generating wealth, income, employment and foreign exchange earnings (Cooper et al., 2005; Gunn and Var, 2002). Policymakers throughout much of the world have recognised the important role tourism plays in enhancing the wider economy. Therefore, economic benefits are the main motive for including tourism in a given location's economic development strategies. Consequently, tourism has become an integral element for creating income opportunities at the local community level, and for diversifying the economies of many regions and countries (Sharpley, 2014).

Unfortunately, many destinations attempt to optimise the economic benefits while paying little attention to the socio-cultural and environmental costs associated with tourism development (Allen et al., 1988). Recent impact studies have revealed that tourism is not without negative consequence for host communities (Butler, 2019; Kinseng et al., 2018; Jamal and Dredge, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2013; Ghaderi and Henderson, 2012; Zamani-Farahani and Musa, 2012; Dadvar-Khani, 2012; Saarinen, 2010; Saarinen and Manwa, 2008; Mbaiwa, 2005; Mbaiwa, 2003; Henderson, 2003; Greenwood, 1972). These consequences include increases in noise, congestion, litter, pollution, and wildlife and plant destruction. These negative impacts influence the local community's quality of life and well-being, resulting in the critical socio-cultural drawbacks of tourism growth.

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism are effectively 'peoples impacts' (Mathieson and Wall, 1982:33) resulting from the interaction between hosts (local residents) and guests (tourists) (Greenwood, 1989). Research outcomes suggest that the socio-cultural impact of tourism is determined by the characteristics of interacting groups and the conditions in which interactions take place (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Differences in host-guest cultural background can be beneficial or detrimental to their interrelation depending upon variations in their cultural values, and the tourist's behaviour towards a local community's cultural norms.

For instance, positive impacts of host-guest intercultural contact could entail the enhancement of cultural understanding, appreciation, respect, tolerance and positive attitudes, and can stimulate the host's pride in respect of their own cultural heritage, local handicrafts and traditions (Reisinger and Turner, 2011).

Nonetheless, disparities between hosts' and guests' cultural values can jeopardise the achievement of successful interactions (Reisinger and Turner, 2011). Tourist-host contact could generate a conflict of values; for example, tourist dress and behaviour can create culture clashes, especially with the introduction of a Westernised approach to tourism development in destinations located in Muslim communities (Cooper *et al.*, 2005; Reisinger and Turner, 2011). Such conflict can create tensions between a local community and tourists which results in the local community developing antagonistic feelings towards tourists' behaviour and the tourism industry as a whole (Doğan, 1989; Al Haija, 2011), which may influence the host community's willingness to support tourism.

Host community support is crucial in ensuring the success and sustainability of tourist destinations, as it may affect their willingness to work in the tourism industry or participate in tourism entrepreneurship and activities; it can also influence their interactions with tourists (Allen *et al.*, 1988). Woo *et al.* (2015) found that there is a relationship between the perceived value of tourism and overall quality of life and host community support for further tourism development. The more positive the host community's perception is of the impact of tourism, the more likely the hosts are to support tourism development in their area.

Therefore, tourism planning should take into account the local community as well as tourists. Tourism should attempt to optimise not only the economic benefits but also, the socio-cultural and environmental benefits of tourism while minimising the negative impacts. If tourism is to be a source of economic benefits, this outcome is contingent upon a positive host-guest relationship (Doğan, 1989). Therefore, a deep understanding and consideration of the local community's socio-cultural values is essential for developing future plans and setting goals for tourism development. Especially, when the tourist destination is also a conservative Muslim community.

Several studies have considered host community attitudes towards the socio-cultural impacts of tourism (Nash and Smith, 1991; Pizam, 1978; Saveriades, 2000; Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Scherrer and Doohan, 2013; Saarinen and Manwa, 2008; Gonzalez et al., 2018; Kwanya, 2015). However, little attention has been directed towards tourism's socio-cultural impacts and their influences on host-guest relationships, particularly in emergent tourist destinations with conservative Muslim communities. Similarly, existing studies have not addressed the socio-cultural dimension of tourism and its influence on host-guest relationships within a conservative Muslim Omani host community.

Due to this gap in the research, several authors have pointed out the need for in-depth studies on issues specific to Islamic tourism. According to Jafari and Scott (2014:15), there is still a need to research the 'socio-religious' principles in Islam and the reciprocal influence of the Muslim world and tourism. Zamani-Farahani and Musa (2012) further highlight the important need for research in Islamic countries to enhance the understanding of the effect of religiosity on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. Furthermore, Carboni et al. (2014) point out the need for greater attention to be focused on the broader issue of Islamic tourism. Al Balushi and Wise (2017) further emphasise the need to research the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on communities in Oman specifically.

In recent years, oil-producing countries—especially in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which is the political and economic union of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—have been faced with a challenge in terms of the fluctuation of world oil prices and uncertainty around the future of an oil and gas-based economy. Thus, to secure a sustainable source of income in the future, these countries aim to diversify their economy and to solve their unemployment problems by focusing on developing alternative sources of income, including tourism (Alhawaish, 2016).

Oman is one country that is attempting to develop its nascent tourism sector to diversify its economy and create job opportunities for its large number of young Omani jobseekers (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b). The long-term plan (1996-2020) called Vision 2020 emphasises the shift of the Omani economy away from its reliance on oil towards other economic sectors; this includes tourism, whereby it

aims to increase tourism's contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) from 0.8% in 1995 to 3% by 2020 (Ministry of National Economy, 2007). Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) introduced a new Oman Tourism Strategy in 2016, which states that the country's socio-economic long-term objectives include increasing tourism's contribution to the GDP from 2% in 2013 to between 6 and 10% by 2040, this includes increasing tourism-related employment from 89,000 jobs in 2013 to 500,000 by 2040, and increasing the number of small- and medium-sized tourism sector enterprises from 99 in 2015 to 1,200 by 2040 (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b).

However, developing tourism to attract international tourists has the potential to clash with Oman's conservative cultural values, which could ultimately make the tourism phenomenon "culturally undesirable" in the eyes of some local community members (Sharpley, 2008). The influx of international tourists in conservative Muslim destinations is associated with features which are unacceptable in Islamic culture (e.g., dress code, alcohol consumption, public behaviour) (AL Haija, 2011). One example in this respect is the challenge created for human resources in the hospitality sector in Oman as a result of the local community's cultural values. The hotel sector's image is highly associated with serving alcohol, which is against Islamic principles. Along with other socio-cultural factors, this is one of the most important elements that makes working in the tourism industry unattractive for many Omanis (AL-Balushi, 2008). Consequently, a large proportion of service jobs are taken by expatriate Asian employees (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b). According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI, 2019a), in 2018 Omani nationals represent only 30.9% of the total workforce in the hotel sector, leading to economic leakage, as the expatriate working in the sector transfer their income abroad to their families; hence, the arrival of Western tourists in conservative Muslim destinations could be more disruptive rather than settling (Henderson, 2003), due to their behaviour and the manner in which they present themselves in public. Therefore, the social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts of tourism (whether positive or negative) on the local community, should be understood and considered to ensure the acceptance and success of tourism development (Mathieson and Wall, 1982).

Preserving the social and cultural context of Oman must be achieved in order to develop the tourism industry as a sustainable source of income for the country. In the Sultanate of Oman, the paradoxical link between tourism as a vehicle for economic diversification and the context of Oman's conservative Muslim communities urges tourism planners to consider various factors when developing the tourist industry. Although Oman's government mission statement was to develop the tourism industry with the intention of diversifying the economy, while achieving a balance of cultural and environmental preservation (Khan and Krishnamurthy, 2016), it is likely to encounter problems during tourism development because of the dominant Westernised orientation of tourist development approaches. These approaches include various activities that contradict with the local population's Islamic cultural values, especially those related to water-based tourism destinations, as the behaviour and clothing worn by the majority of the international tourists clashes with the values of the local community.

As an Islamic country, Oman's cultural values and social norms are influenced by *shari'a law* (Islamic law). *Shari'a law* is derived from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* (the recorded sayings of the Prophet Mohammed—peace be upon him) (Jafari and Scott, 2014). In Oman, Islam heavily influences people's lives and shapes their behaviours and attitudes. The local community's identity revolves around a framework of Islam, Arabic traditions and local customs (Othman *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, the local community's identity has been upheld in the Omani Vision 2040 as one of its strategic priorities of its long-term plan from 2020 to 2040. For instance, the plan calls Oman “a society that is proud of its identity and culture and committed to its citizenship” (Supreme council for planning, 2019). Omanis are attentive to their traditions and cultural values, especially those interlinked with Islamic principles. An example of Islamic thought that demonstrates conservative Muslim community norms is the widely affirmed value of modesty. Modesty is expressed by Muslim women through the practice of wearing the *hijab*, which is a covering [for the] head, face or body that ranges from wearing a head scarf to covering the whole body” (Jafari and Scott, 2014:5).

One major concern is that with the rise of tourism, cultural clashes may arise when hosts' religious values conflict with guests' behaviour (Din, 1989; Doğan,

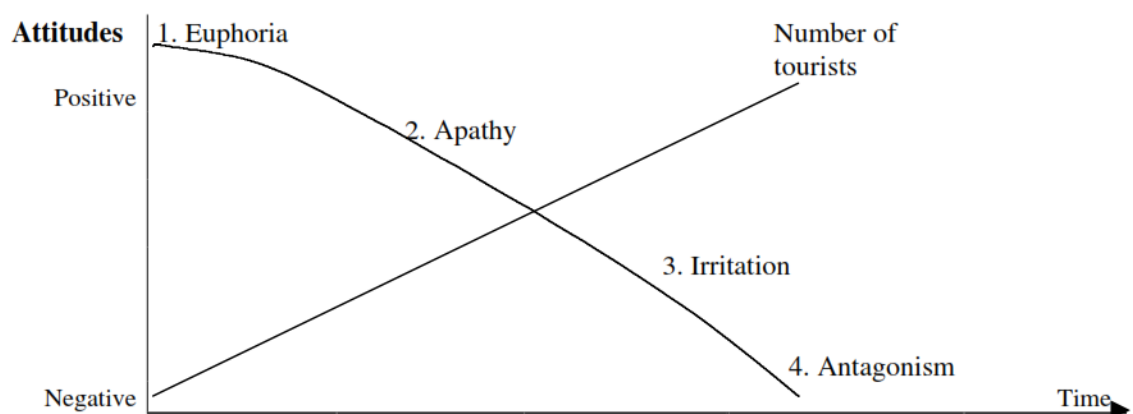
1989; Reisinger and Turner, 2011; Zamani-Farahani and Musa, 2012). Studies from around the world have shown that tourism development challenges a host community's cultural values and creates environmental concerns (Al Balushi and Wise, 2017). One example is the neighbouring tourist destination of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), whose tourism success did not come without social, cultural, environmental and economic drawbacks (Al Balushi and Wise, 2017; Stephenson, 2014b; Telfer and Sharpley, 2016). Therefore, the development of tourism in Oman should take on board the lessons of the unsuccessful aspects of other's experiences, as well as being sensitive towards the local community's religious values, cultural traditions and social capacity to maintain positive host-guest relations and minimise any undesirable social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the number of international tourists almost tripled during the period from 2005-2018, reaching 3.2 million tourists in 2018 compared to 1.1 million in 2005, while the number of domestic tourists more than tripled during the same period (NCSI, 2019b; NCSI, 2017). However, no studies have yet explored residents' attitudes towards the perceived consequences of the continuing growth of international and domestic tourism for local communities' socio-cultural situation and quality of life. As tourism continues to develop in Oman, there is an urgent need for these aspects to be addressed. Therefore, the aim of this study is to address the social and cultural impacts of tourism on two conservative Muslim communities in the Omani context. This study additionally explores the links between the local community's social and cultural values and their relationships with tourists visiting their area, which in turn reflects on their support for tourism development and the sustainability of tourist destinations. Through investigating host-guest relationships based on Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, which evaluates local residents' attitudes towards tourists, this study focuses on the Omani national residents of the territorial areas of Bidiyah and WBK, and their relationship to the international and domestic tourist.

1.1.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Doxey's (1975) Irridex model. This is one of the most well-known (Harrill, 2004) and most frequently applied (Fan *et al.*, 2019) models for studying hosts' responses to tourists and tourism development. Thus, this model has been identified for this study to explore host-guest relationships in the tourism industry in the context of the Sultanate of Oman. This model assumes that host attitudes towards tourism development are determined by social interrelation with guests; that is, based on an increase in tourist numbers (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Host response can be classified into stages of euphoria, apathy, annoyance and antagonism, through to the final stage in which the environment is destroyed. Hosts are euphoric at the initial stage of tourism development, aspiring to gain potential economic and social benefits from tourism. However, a host's response and their acceptance level of tourism tends to change with the increase of tourist numbers and the development of tourism as the host's response gradually becomes apathetic, annoyed and antagonistic Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, as is visualised in Figure 1.1 and detailed in Table 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Doxey's (1975) Irridex model



Source: Zaidan and Kovacs (2017: 297)

Table 1.1: Doxey's (1975) Irridex Model

Stages of Tourist Irritations	
Stage One - Euphoria	Host community members are enthusiastic and thrilled by tourism development. They welcome tourists for the expected opportunities of economic and social benefits.
Stage Two - Apathy	As the tourism industry expands, local begins to take tourists for granted. The tourist become a target for profit making.
Stage Three - Annoyance	The tourism industry reaches the saturation points or passes the level at which the host community is able to tolerate the increasing number of tourists. However, "policymakers tend to see solutions in increasing the infrastructure rather than through setting limits to growth".
Stage Four - Antagonism	Irritation has become more overt. Hosts see the tourist as the "cause of problems, personal and social".

Source: Doxey (1975:195-196)

Although the stages of host-guest relationships are subject to the different socio-cultural, socio-economic and environmental contexts of each destination, Doxey's (1975) Irridex model serves as a simple tool to categorise host attitudes to tourism growth in general (Nunkoo et al., 2013). Numerous studies have been conducted employing this model (see section 2.4.2).

1.1.2 Study Setting

The empirical research for this study was undertaken in Bidiyah and WBK, two Wilayats in the Northern governorate of Al Sharqia in the Sultanate of Oman (see Section 4.7). Bidiyah is a desert destination that offers tourists the chance to experience the sand dunes and the Bedouin cultural traditions and lifestyle. The tourist desert camps are the most popular accommodation in Bidiyah; a total of nine tourist desert camps offer a combined 310 units. The development of these desert camps has attracted a large number of international tourists, estimated at 48,000 in 2016 (SCP, 2018). The sand dunes in Bidiyah also attract domestic tourists who wish to experience camping in nature, as well as enjoy sports activities such as sandboarding, dune bashing and quad riding.

Residents of Bidiyah are involved in the tourist desert camps through guiding or offering transportation and through making handicrafts. However, despite the host community's involvement in the tourism industry, the dramatic increase in demand among international and domestic tourists has created concerns about the fragile ecology of the desert and the host community's social capacity and quality of life. This could influence the host community's perceptions and attitudes towards the tourists, which in turn reflects on the sustainability of tourism development in the area.

Tourists come to WBK to experience the natural water pools for swimming. Despite the limited tourist facilities, parking and accommodation available in the destination, the number of tourists more than tripled during the period 2009-2018, reaching 187,107 in 2018 compared to 59,368 in 2009 (MOT, 2019). Although the increase in international tourists who come to swim in a public space could trigger a clash of culture with the conservative Muslim community residing in the area, no studies have yet explored residents' attitudes towards the perceived consequences that this may have on the local community in terms of socio-cultural aspects and quality of life. Thus, this study seeks to examine the cases of Bidiyah and WBK to explore host attitudes towards the international tourists and the

perceived socio-cultural impacts of tourism and its influence on host-guest relationships.

1.2 Significance of the Research

Current literature in the field of socio-cultural impacts of tourism on local communities reveals that very little research has investigated the social and cultural impacts of tourism for conservative Islamic destinations, especially in the GCC countries such as the Sultanate of Oman. Several authors have pointed out the need for in-depth studies on issues related to tourism in Muslim destinations (Al Balushi and Wise, 2017; Carboni *et al.* , 2014; Jafari and Scott, 2014; Sharpley, 2008; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010; Zamani-Farahani and Musa, 2012). This study will fill the gap in the literature on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism for conservative Muslim destinations and their influence on host-guest relationships and the sustainability of tourism development. This study will provide a knowledge base that will help planners to develop a long-term socio-cultural, economic and environmentally sustainable model of tourism in the conservative setting of the Sultanate of Oman.

Further, while Doxey's (1975) Irridex focuses primarily on the increasing number of tourists as the main factor shaping host-guest relationships, this study adds another overlooked dimension by focusing on the destination's context and tourist behaviours in influencing host attitudes towards guests. This research found that the fragile desert ecology, its Bedouin community's lifestyle and the behaviour of domestic tourists are the dominant factors that are shaping host-guest relationship in Bidiyah. The domestic tourists' driving behaviours and activities are damaging the desert flora and fauna and aggravating the local community's social capacity and quality of life, resulting in irritation in the host-domestic guest relationship. However, because the international tourists tend to behave respectfully towards the desert's sensitive environment and the Bedouin community's cultural resources, they have maintained a positive host-guest relationship. As a result, the destination is simultaneously in two stages of Doxey's (1975) Irridex (apathy and irritation) of host-guest relationships because it caters to two distinct tourism markets (the international and domestic tourists).

At the same time, the clash between the religious values of the conservative Muslim community residing near a natural water pool destination and the international tourists' swimming dress code and behaviour are the main cause of tension between hosts and guests in WBK. The international tourists' swimming attire and behaviours clash with the Muslim religious value of *Al hayaa*, resulting in the local community developing antagonistic attitudes towards international tourists in the early stages of tourism development in WBK.

While Doxey's (1975) Irridex model only considers host-guest relations, this research found that relations between domestic and international guests are another dimension that could be considered. This is apparent in the case of WBK, where the cultural differences between the Omani guests' religious values and the international guests' swimming behaviour has created a clash of culture, resulting in decreasing number of Omani tourists visiting the natural water pool site.

This area of study is considerably underexplored; therefore, this study makes a pioneering contribution to the body of knowledge on the dimensions that shape host-guest relationships in conservative settings within the Sultanate of Oman. It investigates host-guest relationships in highly sensitive desert environments (in the case of Bidiyah) and in a natural pool site with a conservative Muslim community (in the case of WBK).

Further, the importance of this research is that it paves the way for new tourist destinations with a conservative Muslim community, such as the Kingdom of Saudi, which has recently opened up to international tourism. The findings of this research are not only important for the literature, but also to aid governments to plan sustainable tourism development within distinct tourist destinations. This study further proposes an extended model to support Doxey's (1975) Irridex to maintain long-term positive host-guest relationships by considering the destinations' contexts and tourists' behaviour from socio-cultural, socio-economic and environmental perspectives. This study endeavours to develop a new extended model as a tool to help tourism planners develop long-term sustainable tourism development.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study explores host-guest encounters in the conservative Muslim setting of the Sultanate of Oman. The main research objective is based on gaps identified in the literature regarding conservative Muslim communities and how their socio-cultural values influence tourism host-guest relationships. Therefore, the following are the key objectives of the current study:

- 1- To critically discuss models and dimensions of host-guest relationships by reviewing the literature on the concept of host-guest relationships, particularly in an Arab Muslim context.
- 2- To identify Omani government efforts that are intended to develop tourism in the Arab Islamic culture of Oman.
- 3- To critically assess the impacts (socio-economic, socio-cultural and environmental) of tourists visiting Omani destinations.
- 4- To establish a deeper understanding of host-guest relationships to inform the planning and future development of tourism in conservative Muslim destinations.
- 5- To develop a set of recommendations for tourism stakeholders to encourage local community involvement, and thereby participate in sharing the economic benefits of tourism.
- 6- To develop a model to support long-term positive host-guest relationships for tourism planners in the context of Oman, as well as in destinations with a socio-cultural, environmental, economic contexts and stages of tourism development.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to understand the socio-cultural impacts of tourism and its influence on host-guest relationships; namely, to understand host-guest encounters in conservative Muslim settings within the Sultanate of Oman. To that end, the following questions are addressed:

- 1- How does the Omani community perceive tourism and engage with tourists?

- 2- What are the overall effects of the interaction between tourists and the Omani host community?
- 3- How do various tourism stakeholders' perceptions influence host-guest relationships in the Omani context?
- 4- How do tourists perceive tourism in Oman and engage with the Omani community?
- 5- What is the nature of the relationship between different types of tourists and the host community?

1.5 Research Contributions

There is a lack of research on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism and its influence on host-guest encounters in conservative Muslim communities in Oman, which in turn reflects on the level of host community support for tourism development. Moreover, there is little research on host-guest encounters in conservative Muslim settings that might support the improvement of host-guest relationships and the development of tourism in a sustainable manner in this part of the world.

1.5.1 Empirical Contribution

The significance and uniqueness of this research is that it explores the perceptions of tourism stakeholders in two distinct tourist destinations in Oman: the case of Bidiyah, a fragile desert ecology and its Bedouin community's lifestyle and the case of WBK, a natural water-based destination in a conservative Muslim community. The study involves key government representatives, local community residents, tourism business operators and international and domestic tourists from both sites. Research of this kind has not been undertaken before in Oman. This study contributes to the small amount of literature on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism and their influence on host-guest relationships in Oman, which in turn reflects on the host community's support for tourism development and the sustainability of the Omani tourism industry.

Another important purpose of this study is to contribute to the growing research on the sustainable development of tourism in Oman, which is strongly supported

by the Omani government, which considers the development of tourism to be a key element of the country's economic diversification. It is therefore hoped that the tourism industry can gain the support, participation and engagement of Omani communities.

1.5.2 Contribution to Theory

This research also illustrates the lack of theoretical generalisability of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model by exploring the ways in which the contextual dimension of tourist destinations contributes to shaping local communities' attitudes towards tourism development and host-guest relations. This study consolidates the significance of this contextual dimension and initiates new paths for future research to study the topic further in specific tourist destinations.

1.5.3 Contribution to Practice

It is hoped that the result of the current study will be used as a source for tourism planners and policymakers in Oman to enhance their consideration of the socio-cultural aspects of the communities living in tourist destinations to positively influence host-guest relations, which in turn would improve the sustainable development of tourism in Oman.

The study's outcomes may also help newcomers to tourism development in places with conservative Islamic religious and cultural values to develop tourism strategies and management plans that overcome the negative impacts of tourism and its influence on host-guest relations. By doing so, the research itself becomes part of the self-evaluation of host-guest relationships and its influence on the sustainable development of tourism.

Finally, although the focus of the study is on the cases of Bidiyah as a fragile desert destination and WBK a natural water-based destination within the Omani context, it is also hoped that the research process, instruments and findings may be of use to other tourist destinations in Oman and in the wider Arab Gulf region.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Following on from this introductory chapter, **Chapter Two** explores the previous literature on tourism planning and development and its economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts on a destination's local communities. It highlights the theoretical approaches to host and guest relationships, including Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, Dogan's (1989) and the social exchange theory. The challenges facing Islamic destinations with the development of tourism will also be reviewed.

Chapter Three outlines the context of the Sultanate of Oman. It presents the country's geographical location, topography, demography and socio-cultural context, and provides information about the national economy, its economic diversification and its relation to Oman Vision 2020. It further highlights the country's new Oman Vision 2040 and its economic and socio-cultural strategic priorities. It then provides details about the national tourism industry and its economic indications and highlights the new Omani tourism strategy and its economic objectives and plans.

Chapter Four describes the epistemological and theoretical perspectives of this research and explains the research design employed in order to achieve the study's aims. This chapter provides a justification for adapting ethnography as the research methodology to investigate the perceptions of host-guest relations in communities with a conservative culture. It provides details of the different methods used to collect data in three stages: the first stage used semi-structured interviews with government and private sector authorities as a pre-research phase, to test the availability of data and sources of data collection; the second stage employed document analysis and semi-structured interviews with tourism stakeholders in Bidiyah; and the third stage used document analysis and semi-structured interviews with tourism stakeholders in WBK. The chapter explains the sampling procedure and the ethical considerations. Finally, it presents the applied techniques to validate the quality of the research and presents a description of the analytical framework for the collected data.

Chapter Five is the first of two research findings chapters based on the data collected from the fieldwork. This chapter presents the key issues related to

tourism development in the case of Bidiyah. It illustrates tourism stakeholders' perspectives on socio-cultural and economic impacts, and their views on the environmental and social drawbacks of tourism growth.

Chapter Six presents the stakeholders' perspectives on the socio-cultural constraints and economic challenges affecting the local community's participation and enjoyment of economic benefits in the case of WBK.

Chapter Seven discusses and compares the main findings of the Bidiyah and WBK case studies. This chapter engages with theoretical models that elaborate on host-guest relationships within the stages of tourism development in both destinations. Finally, the chapter explains the relationships between the international guests and domestic guests in WBK and presents implications on the socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of tourism development.

Following on from the discussion chapter, **Chapter Eight** provides conclusions drawn from the research. This chapter presents the key implications for tourism stakeholders to help them resolve issues related to local community engagement and participation concerning tourism development, in line with the objectives of the government's plan for tourism development. It also presents the contribution of this thesis to knowledge and provides some suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the impacts of tourism, particularly host-guest relationships and perceptions of tourism development. This chapter will: 1) discuss the importance of tourism planning and development and the challenges facing local community participation in tourism development; 2) explore the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts of tourism development on local communities; 3) discuss the concept of ‘carrying capacity’ as a measure of a destination’s threshold; 4) present host-guest relationships and frameworks that examine and justify local communities’ responses to tourism development (these frameworks will inform this study, which will culminate in the development of an integrated model for obtaining long-term positive host-guest relations); 5) discuss specific issues influencing the engagement of Muslim communities with tourism development.

2.2 Tourism, Planning, Development and Impacts

Tourism planning is critical for the successful development of destinations, and a successful tourism development plan requires a clear understanding of its objectives, as Cooper *et al.* (2005) and Getz (1986) stress. Unfortunately, from 1960 to 1970, the emphasis of tourism development was on the positive economic impacts of tourism, while the socio-cultural and environmental aspects were overlooked (Getz, 1986; Postma and Schmuecker, 2017). With the rapid growth of the tourism industry and its ability to generate hard currency, new income and job opportunities, “many destinations have been caught off-guard in dealing with the negative impacts of tourism on natural, social and cultural resources” (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005:380). However, with the growing concerns to sustainable tourism development and societies’ quality of life in 1970s, the focus was moved to the negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism (Postma and Schmuecker, 2017). In the 1980s and 1990s, research on the impacts of tourism integrated the economic and socio-cultural aspects with the environmental dimension (Ibid). In response to the negative impacts of tourism on communities,

the field of research on local communities' attitudes towards the impacts of tourism has expanded, with the inclusion of local residents as major actors in tourism development being suggested by numerous researchers (De Kadt, 1979; Gunn and Var, 2002; Murphy, 1985).

Therefore, it was considered that for successful tourism planning to occur, it is vital to undertake an integrated planning approach. According to Gunn and Var (2002), an integrated planning approach to tourism embraces the social, cultural, economic aspects within a destination. Murphy (1985) offered another perspective viewing tourism as a community industry. Murphy (1985) argues that tourism relies on a community's resources, so tourism development must consider what can be put back into the community. As it is local people who experience the impacts of tourism in terms of employment, congestion and the development of tourist facilities. In this sense, tourism relies heavily on the goodwill and cooperation of the local community (Murphy, 1985).

Tosun (2000:616) states that "people who enjoy or suffer the main impacts of tourism are those who live in the communities in tourist destinations". Thus, as Murphy (1985) suggests, the tourism industry has great social and economic potential if its planning takes a community-oriented approach, where tourism is viewed as a community resource. Jamal and Dredge (2015) support Murphy's (1985) understanding that a community-oriented tourism strategy should take into account the environmental, economic, social, cultural and management aspects of tourism development. Thus, it is suggested that the local community's participation in tourism planning and development is crucial to ensure that the benefits are felt locally, as well as to addressing concerns of cultural conservation, environmental degradation and economic dependence (Gunn and Var, 2002).

Grybovych and Hafermann (2010:357) state, that the "involvement of those affected in the planning process not only helps ensure public support, it can also help build bridges of trust and confidence among planners, the general public, and the private industry". The importance of local community participation in tourism development decision-making, will help decision makers to consider what is culturally, socially and environmentally appropriate to ensure the local

acceptance of tourism development which will, ideally, result in their involvement in the economic benefits to be gained from tourism.

Community participation in decision-making for tourism development can appear in different ways. As devised by Pretty (1995), the typology of local community participation is based on the participants' power and control. It consists of seven decision-making scenarios: manipulative, passive, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation and self-mobilisation. The first four scenarios represent situations in which the local community has absolutely no power (as in 'manipulative participation' and 'passive participation'), or in which they have limited power, with the decisions being made by external bodies (as in 'participation by consultation' and 'participation for material incentives').

According to the fifth category in Pretty's (1995) typology, 'functional participation', is a form of participation in which local community members seek to meet project objectives, especially to reduce costs after the main decisions have been made by external agents. This functional type of local community participation has been identified by Dadvar-Khani (2012) in Iran, where a top-down planning approach applied by the government on tourism development has led to a gap between the government's expansion of tourism and the benefits enjoyed by the local community. Here, the local community has voiced concerns about being involved in tourism businesses that contradict their values from a socio-cultural perspective, with one respondent stating, "making more money is not as important as saving our traditional values and our identity" (Dadvar-Khani, 2012:272). In such a context, decision-making is carried out by the government and large tourism firms, resulting in the dominance of external agents and the marginalisation of the local community (Dadvar-Khani, 2012).

The last two community participation categories in Pretty's (1995) typology are interactive participation and self-mobilisation. 'Interactive participation' is described as a learning process, as a local community takes control over decisions and gains a stake in maintaining its own structures and practices. 'Self-mobilisation', is where the local community takes initiatives independently of

external organisations, developing contacts for resources and technical assistance and retaining control over these resources.

Participation in decision-making for tourism development is highly important for the local community, but the key question is *how* they should participate. According to Tosun (2000:621) “although community participation seems to be highly desirable, few developing countries have sufficient experience in this area”. This is particularly true in destinations new to tourism development, such as the Sultanate of Oman, which came to consider tourism an important economic sector following Vision 2020 (Ministry of National Economy, 2007). In 2004, a royal decree created Ministry of tourism, which is responsible for the development of tourism in Oman and which formulated a tourism development plan in 2006.

This tourism development plan aims ‘to develop tourism as an important and sustainable socio-economic sector in a manner that reflect the Sultanate’s historic, cultural and environmental heritage and a sense of traditional hospitality and values’ (Ministry of Tourism, 2006:1). It must be stated that Oman is not a typical example of an emerging tourism destination in developing countries. In Oman, planning for tourism has been approached in three ways. First, a mitigation of the negative impacts of tourism has been an aim of the new national tourism strategy, which seeks the participation of the local community, as well as other tourism stakeholders such as businesses, relevant government authorities and NGOs, all of whom are invited to regional workshops conducted all over the country. This to ensure successful tourism development that maximises any resulting socio-economic benefits for the local community while minimising the socio-cultural costs. Second, the official marketing strategy for Oman aims to promote the country internationally as a “quality destination for responsible tourists and to spread tourism’s benefits across the Sultanate” (Ministry of Tourism, 2015). The new Omani tourism strategy aims to appeal to open-minded travellers with an interest in experiencing the authentic culture of Oman and Arabia. Third, the Omani vision for tourism development is based on three guiding principles (Ministry of Tourism, 2015:10):

- 1- Improve the quality of life of the Omani people, whilst benefiting the rest of the stakeholders.

2- Cultivate Omani culture, heritage and tradition.

3- Preserve natural resources and ensure their sustainability.

By most indices of development, Oman achieved an average tourist growth rate of 12.8% between 2011 and 2018, which generated a value of OMR 788.6 million (£1.634 billion) in 2018, up from OMR 520.8 million (£1.079) billion in 2011. Of the tourists who came in 2018, 45.4% were from the Arab Gulf region, 21.3% were Asian and 19% were European (NCSI, 2019c). Despite this growth in revenue, it would be hard to ignore the negative consequences of tourism development, which will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Tourism literature shows that the connection between strategies, principles and tourism development is complex; in practice, the planned and expected results are not always the same (Saarinen, 2010). It is important that tourism planning be implementable, meaning the plans should be feasible and realistic and help to maintain a balance between the socio-economic, socio-cultural and environmental characteristics of a destination. However, even with a careful approach to tourism development, negative impacts may arise.

Furthermore, as an emerging tourism destination, Oman's experience in local community participation with tourism development decision-making is limited and needs to be improved, particularly with the increase of tourism development in the country (MOT, 2016b). The following four sections briefly present some of the challenges facing local communities' participation in the decision-making process for tourism development, specifically in the Omani context.

2.2.1 Lack of Government Expertise in Tourism Planning

Tosun (2000) argues that a lack of qualified planners with training in traditional planning techniques and an interest in involving the local community in the development and implementation of tourism plans is a critical challenge limiting local communities from participating in tourism development. Tosun (2000) states that a significant barrier to tourism development in developing countries is that community participation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, requiring not only

tourism planners, but also sociologists, economists, social psychologists and political scientists with knowledge about tourism. In the absence of these expertise in developing countries, it is difficult to apply a participatory tourism development approach. In Oman, due to a lack of local planning expertise in tourism development, the government appoints international consulting firms with international expertise in the field; however, local experience participation is limited.

2.2.2 Lack of Local Community Awareness in Tourism Planning

The existence of challenges facing the effectiveness of community participation in tourism development and decision-making is not only related to the planners' lack of expertise, but also to the local community's limited knowledge and understanding of tourism's potential costs and possible benefits, as addressed by Simmons (1994) and Tosun (2000). Issues such as lack of awareness, community empowerment and capacity-building have been found to be the cornerstones of involving the community in deciding what is suitable for them to implement in tourism development and what is not, so our limited understanding of the economic, sociocultural and environmental impacts of tourism among inexperienced communities is a challenge. Bello *et al.* (2017) find that in Malawi, a lack of understanding of ecotourism due to limited information from the government, management agencies and NGOs has hindered local community participation in the planning of activities related to protected areas. Therefore, skills and knowledge built through education and training on the potential positive and negative aspects of tourism development might be an effective tool to create an empowered community that can understand and react to tourism development.

Likewise, Oman being a newcomer to tourism development, the local community's awareness of the potential positive and negative impacts of tourism remains limited; thus, local communities need to be sensitized to potential positive and negative impacts before engaging them in tourism development.

2.2.3 Lack of Collaboration Amongst Tourism Stakeholders

Collaboration in tourism development includes many stakeholders in the public sector, the private sector and the local community (Tosun, 2000). On the one hand, Mair and Reid (2007) suggest collaborative participation that considers the local community's needs and desires has the potential to gain long-term local community support and local economic benefits. On the other hand, Jamal and Getz (1995:186) argue that the "lack of coordination and cohesion within the highly fragmented tourism industry is a well-known problem" for tourism planners. Especially in developing countries, it has been found that the planning process is highly fragmented, which negatively impacts the development of tourism (Bello *et al.*, 2017; Dodds *et al.*, 2018; Tosun, 2000). For example, Bello *et al.* (2017) observe that in Malawi, the lack of coordination among government authorities, NGOs and locally-based organisations responsible for ecotourism development in protected areas has a great effect on the participation of local communities in tourism planning, which resulted in less interest towards taking part in any form of participatory development approach. This underlines that a lack of coordination and cooperation among related stakeholders can be damaging for a collaborative and participatory tourism development approach (Bello *et al.*, 2017; Tosun, 2000).

Tosun (2000) argues that a lack of coordination among related authorities owes to the bureaucracy that dominates legislative and operational processes. Furthermore, Tosun (2000) stresses that a lack of definition in stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, as well as a lack of accountability, makes the necessary coordination between them less possible. Therefore, it is critical to develop coordination and cooperation mechanisms between tourism stakeholders to maintain an effective participatory tourism development approach. In the case of Oman, the approval of multiple stakeholders and lengthy procedures to license tourism projects is considered to be one of the main challenges hindering the local community from developing tourism projects and gaining economic benefits from tourism development, as will be seen in Section 6.5.4.

2.2.4 Who Will Speak for the Local Community?

Many authors have remarked that local community participation in tourism development decision-making is dependent on who is in power at a local community level; those who have powerful relationships can rule the processes of decision-making (Blackstock, 2005; Nepal, 2007; Richards and Hall, 2002; Tosun, 2000). Blackstock (2005) argues that power structures within different communities could make the adoption of tourism development based on local community participation difficult. Tosun (2000) warns that well-organised elites could be a barrier to local community participation in tourism development. For instance, Nepal (2007) observes that the poor representation of young people in the Annapurna Conservation Area Project in Nepal is due to elders' control of the decision-making. Thus, it is widely believed, according to current research, that conflict amongst members of heterogeneous communities could make it difficult for the residents to adopt a homogenous view (Blackstock, 2005; Dodds *et al.*, 2016). Blackstock (2005) argues that even if local community agreement is achieved, not all communities succeed in defending their goals and plans against regional, national or global players seeking to maximise profits. In Oman, tribal sheikhs represent the voice of the local community, even though this might deliver certain opinions, as such opinions may be subjective, hindering the representation of certain demographics such as youth as will be conveyed in Section 6.5.9.

Leading on from challenges facing local community participation in the decision-making processes of tourism development, Section 2.3 will explore the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts of tourism development on local communities.

2.3 Tourism Impacts

The aim of this section is to provide a conceptual background of tourism's positive and negative impacts on local communities' economic, environmental and socio-cultural characteristics.

Tourism development can enhance local communities' economies through numerous positive economic impacts. However, tourism can also bring negative

outcomes. The changes brought by tourism development raise questions about the development of tourism on the basis of its damage to the economic, social, cultural and environmental characteristics of each destination. The following section describes the myriad impacts of tourism development, in particular on local communities.

2.3.1 Economic Impacts of Tourism

The prime motive for local communities to engage in tourism development is its potential for generating economic wealth (Murphy, 1985). The positive economic outcomes of tourism development perceived by residents are that it is a means to generate employment, develop the local economy and increase their standard of living (Aref *et al.*, 2009; Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Liu and Var, 1986). Additionally, Andereck *et al.* (2005) in their study on Arizona, find that tourism development supports the development of infrastructure, such as public transportation and city services, and had a positive effect on the state's economic diversity and tax revenue. Narayan (2004) in his empirical study on the economic impacts of tourism on Fiji's economy, also finds that tourism has made a positive contribution, both in terms of the gross domestic product (GDP) and the national welfare.

Even though tourism development brings positive economic impacts to tourist destinations, it has also been seen that less developed regions are unable to take full advantage of tourism's potential (Choudhury and Goswami, 2013). A number of researchers, such as Akama and Kieti (2007), Mbaiwa (2003), Meyer (2007), Sharpley and Ussi (2014) and Wall and Mathieson (2006), argue that a lack of links between the tourism industry and the local economy leads to high leakages of tourism revenue and, consequently, limited economic benefits from tourism development. Some authors criticise tourism on the grounds that in many developing economies, such as Kenya and Botswana the tourism industry is dominated by foreign investment (Akama and Kieti, 2007; Mbaiwa, 2003). This scenario is explained by Akama and Kieti (2007), whose study evaluating the economic impacts of tourism on Kenya's local community demonstrates that an enclave form of tourism (where cruise ship passengers and tourists come on all-inclusive packages) makes it difficult for local entrepreneurs to access the

economic opportunities associated with tourism. They found that when core tourism and hospitality services are controlled and managed by foreign investors, the local community is excluded, only engaging in marginal and informal tourism business, such as hawking and vending souvenirs along the street. Mbaiwa (2003) argues that income generated through enclave tourism benefits the host economy minimally, as financial benefit is transferred to the investor region.

Cooper *et al.* (2005), Sharpley and Ussi (2014) and Wall and Mathieson (2006) point out that another cause of leakages is the propensity to import goods. This is highly likely to occur in developing economies where local capacity is unable to meet tourists' needs; consequently, 'a high proportion of demand is met through imported goods and services' resulting in money flowing out of the destination's economy (Cooper *et al.*, 2005:161). Sharpley and Ussi (2014) undertook a detailed study of tourism in Zanzibar and concluded that 80% of all food and beverage consumed by tourists in Zanzibar is imported. Furthermore, they found that not only are the majority of souvenir shops in Zanzibar owned by mainlanders, but most of the arts and crafts are imported as well (Sharpley and Ussi, 2014). In such a situation, even if tourists buy goods from local shops or service providers, a large proportion of the money is used to pay for imported food and services (Mbaiwa, 2003).

The employment of expatriate labour in tourist destinations is another impact of tourism that contributes to a local community's limited enjoyment of the economic benefits of tourism development and due to the outflow of currency through remittance payments (Wall and Mathieson, 2006). Although tourism is considered to be a labour intensive sector, with a high proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled labour, many developing countries are still experiencing a dominance of expatriate labourers in their tourism industries (Brohman, 1996; Mbaiwa, 2003; Meyer, 2007). In their extensive study on Zanzibar's tourism, Sharpley and Ussi (2014) find that due to a lack of relevant skills among the local community, only half of the tourism sector's employees are Zanzibaris. In addition, they find that many senior positions in internationally owned hotels are dominated by expatriates.

Wall and Mathieson (2006) argue that it is possible that as the industry matures in a destination, the need for expatriate labour will decrease, particularly if training programmes are introduced. Nevertheless, the limited participation of local people in the tourism industry is not only related to the extent to which training is available to locals. In countries such as Oman, although the government has provided extensive training programs for local youth in tourism and hospitality, yet a limited number of Omanis are interested in working in the industry (AL-Balushi, 2008). This is especially true in the hotel sector, in which local youth are reluctant to work due to socio-cultural perceptions of tourism (Al Balushi, 2008). This has resulted in around 70% of the hospitality sector labour force in Oman being made up of expatriates to meet this employment gap (NCSI, 2017).

As previously mentioned, the handicraft industry is an important component of community-based tourism that can contribute to the local economy (Fabeil *et al.*, 2015). Ghaderi and Henderson (2012) find that in the village of Hawraman, Iran, women have profited greatly from the tourism industry by producing and selling handicrafts, cooking foods and operating homestay accommodations. However, marketing local handicrafts is a critical element in any handicraft industry and this is where local communities have faced challenges. As Dhamija (1981) argues, marketing problems have hindered most handicraft projects launched by welfare organisations in the developing world. Fabeil *et al.* (2015) also find that there are some issues that constrain handicraft producers from producing and selling their goods in Sabah, Malaysia; the availability and accessibility of raw materials and limited financial assistance for marketing activities are the main obstacles to maintaining a successful business in this region. Ashley and Mitchell (2008), who adapt a value chain approach to their study of pro-poor tourism, state that factors such as market failure can prevent greater benefits being obtained for the poor. The term pro-poor tourism is to generate economic benefits from tourism development for people who are lacking sufficient income to live at a comfortable standard (Meyer, 2007). (Ashley and Mitchell, 2008). argue that a lack of linkage between small enterprises and large buyers decreases potential benefits enjoyed by producers, and they suggest that identifying 'barriers to entry' for poor producers and changing regulations to remove these barriers is critical for local economic development.

Despite the fact that tourism has been recognised as an agent for economic development, the negative economic impacts of tourism make this statement questionable. De Kadt (1979) argues that although tourism has been emphasised in various countries' policies to increase economic returns, there is evidence that some governments fail to assess different types of tourism to achieve the greatest net benefits. Moreover, Brohman (1996) indicates that the success of a tourism strategy should not be assessed by increasing numbers of tourists, but according to how tourism has been integrated to the local economy. Saarinen (2010) concurs, stating that local community benefits do not automatically follow when tourist numbers increase. Therefore, adequate measures for the economic impacts of tourism are required.

The Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) is a method that is widely promoted by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation to measure the contribution of tourism to a country's GDP. It has been implemented by 60 countries worldwide (World Tourism Organization, 2010). This method has been criticised by Cooper *et al.* (2005) and Liburd *et al.* (2012), who argue that the TSA is a set of statistics that can be used to determine the size of tourism industry within an economy, but it does not measure the actual impact of tourism. Specifically, for developing economies which are characterised by large amounts of foreign investment, imported goods and services, and expatriate employment in the tourism industry, the TSA does not consider the amount of leakages from these economies to determine the actual size of the locally owned tourism economy. As it will be further explored in Section 3.7.3.

2.3.2 Environmental Impacts of Tourism

Tourism development has positive and negative impacts on the physical environment of tourist destinations (Butler, 2019; Cooper *et al.* , 2005; Gunn and Var, 2002; Mbaiwa, 2003; Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Wall, and Mathieson, 2006). Tourism development can be beneficial to a physical environment in the sense that it encourages the preservation of flora and fauna, the creation of national parks, and the development of buffer zones around settlements to decrease threats to animals and to attract tourists to observe wildlife (Anup *et al.*, 2015; Gezon, 2014). However, tourism also produces congestion, noise, litter,

disturbance to animal life and the desecration of fragile ecologies (Butler, 2019; Mbaiwa, 2003; Mbaiwa, 2005; Uysal *et al.*, 2012).

Comparable with tourism development in developing countries, tourism development has led to negative environmental changes in developed countries (Ap and Crompton, 1998). For instance, exploring the attitudes of local residents from the Isle of Skye, in northern Scotland, to the impacts of tourism, Butler (2019) discerns that due to inappropriate tourist behaviour, local residents maintain a strong opposition to them. The problem of over-tourism on the island has created pressure on roads, carparks, toilets and accommodation, leading the local police to warn tourists 'not to visit Skye without prior booking of accommodation' (Butler, 2019:205). Nonetheless, tourism-based businesses and the local government continue to promote tourism in Skye despite local residents' opposition, which has resulted in a dilemma between businesses, which seek economic gains, and the local people, who suffer the social and environmental consequences of tourism (Butler, 2019). Similarly, Venice, Italy struggles to cope with the vast number of tourists it receives (at the expense of its built heritage and local lagoon ecosystem), which has resulted in antagonised local residents and the development of an anti-tourism movement (Nolan and Seraphin, 2019).

Another example of the perceived negative environmental impacts of tourism reported by the local community can be found in an empirical study on the Okavango Delta, north-western Botswana, where increasing numbers of tourists have had a negative impact on the fragile environment of the area, with the creation of illegal roads affecting the vegetation and scenic beauty of Okavango (Mbaiwa, 2003). The noise pollution from the tourists' aircraft engines and vehicles has disturbed the hippos, nesting birds and other wildlife in the delta, and the littering of plastic bags, paper, cans and bottles has exacerbated the negative impact of tourism on the delta's environment (Mbaiwa, 2003). This study has found similar environmental challenges of tourism development in Oman as will be shown in Section 5.5.2.

2.3.3 Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism refer to the “the changes in quality of life of residents of tourist destinations that are consequence of tourism of any kind in that destination”(Wall and Mathieson, 2006: 227). Fox, 1977, in Mathieson and Wall (1982:133) details that in “ways in which tourism is contributing to changes in value systems, individual behaviour, family relationships, collective lifestyle, safety levels, moral conduct, creative expressions, traditional ceremonies and community organisations”. In simple terms, socio-cultural impacts are defined as “people impacts” on the “people of host communities of their direct and indirect associations with tourists” (Wolf, 1977, in Mathieson and Wall, 1982:133). Thus, much of the literature on socio-cultural impacts focuses on the impacts of tourism on the host community.

However, limited attention has concentrated on how tourism can have socio-cultural impacts on domestic tourists. Cultural differences between domestic tourists—“people consuming tourism in their own countries” (Telfer and Sharpley, 2016:260)—and international tourists can lead to negative socio-cultural impacts. Particularly in Islamic countries with conservative cultures, domestic and international tourists could experience culture clashes based on dress and swimming behaviour, as will be seen in Chapter 6. Similarly, little attention has been paid to the idea that tourism can have negative socio-cultural impacts on international tourists themselves; for example, due to domestic tourists’ noisy driving behaviours, as will be seen in Chapter 5. In reality, tourism can have a mixture of both positive and negative socio-cultural impacts that affect hosts and guests.

Saarinen (2010:714) suggests that tourism’s economic impacts are an important source of employment and income, but due to hosts’ and guests’ cultural differences, tourism can have socio-cultural impacts that could be perceived negatively. While Cooper *et al.* (1998) argue that the magnitude of tourism’s direct socio-cultural impact is determined by the extent of the difference between the socio-cultural traits of hosts and guests. Inskeep (1991, in Cooper *et al.*, 1998:175) suggests that these differences include “basic values and logic systems, religious beliefs, traditions, customs, lifestyles, behavioural patterns,

dress codes, sense of time budgeting and attitudes towards strangers”. Furthermore, Brunt and Courtney (1999) state that the extent to which tourism generates socio-cultural impacts depends on the type and number of tourists, the nature of tourism development, and on other many aspects of the host community, such as age, size and traditions.

A number of researchers have examined the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, with some of them identifying positive host perceptions. Liu and Var (1986:201) note that the majority of the Hawaiian community view “meeting tourists as a valuable educational experience” and perceive tourism as a “cultural exchange giving [residents] better understanding of the world”. Socio-cultural impacts have many benefits, such as facilitating learning, awareness, appreciation, family bonding, community pride and stronger cultural identity (Ap and Crompton, 1998; Besculides *et al.*, 2002).

However, other researchers have found that tourism development also has negative socio-cultural impacts. Doğan (1989) states that large numbers of tourists from developed countries leads to a decline in local traditions, and increases social conflicts, environmental deterioration, crime rates and crowding. Doğan (1989) further claims that tourism development changes the socio-cultural structure and diversifies previously homogeneous local communities. Mbaiwa (2005) indicates that due to the transformation of the environment to accommodate the needs of the foreign-dominated tourism industry, the local community in the Okavango Delta suffers a loss of sense of place, and some of them perceive the domination of the foreign companies as a “selling out” of their resources.

Another aspect of socio-cultural impacts of tourism is the commoditisation of local communities’ cultures, crafts and ceremonies, that are driven into a position of exploitation, as their appearance becomes more colourful and dramatic to attract tourists’ attention (Cooper *et al.*, 1998). Buntén (2010) reports that the Maori community face the paradoxical position of their desire to present their culture according to their local values and rules, but also adapting to the requirements of the product industry in order to make tourism more profitable. Buntén (2010:53) states that when local cultural workers present their cultural identity based on a

cross-cultural model, they experience “self-commodification”. Ghaderi and Henderson (2012) further find that due to the commercialisation of culture in Iran’s Hawraman village, local handicrafts are modified to meet tourists’ desires and expectations; into inauthentic tourism products. Tourists’ demand for local handicrafts has led the handicraft makers to reduce the quality and increase the price of their products (Ghaderi and Henderson, 2012).

Generally, the importance of culture as a product in tourism cannot be denied. However, tourism can also influence the cultural traditions of the host destinations, as the following section will detail.

- **Acculturation**

One of the major socio-cultural impacts of tourism is its ability to influence host communities’ cultural traditions. Despite the significance of cultural resources to tourism products, there is the possibility that tourism can influence the host culture’s traditions. As Nunez (1989) states, when two cultures come into contact for a span of time, each will adapt to become like the other through a process of borrowing; this process is known as acculturation. Tourism may have a significant cultural impact when it brings into contact people of different cultural backgrounds, nationalities and races, enriching the cultural exchange for both the traveller and the receiving community (Nunez, 1989). The exchange process, however, will not be equal, as it will be influenced by the nature of the encounter, the socio-economic characteristics of the interacting groups and the number of people involved, particularly when one culture is more prominent than the other (Faulkner and Tideswell, 1997). In other words, as the host community adapts to tourism in attempt to satisfy the tourists’ needs, it will surrender to the tourists’ attitudes and values and become more like the tourists’ culture (Wall and Mathieson, 2006). Contact of this kind may have beneficial economic impacts, but they can also be culturally disruptive. Local cultures and traditional ways of life may be weakened and even destroyed by the impact of tourism; as a result, in many tourist destinations, foreign culture has been imported.

Tourism as an economic activity based on interaction between different societies and cultures results in some form of acculturation as a potential outcome of

interaction between permanent visitors and members of the host community. Nevertheless, the adaptive process of the host culture will depend mainly on the strength of the host's cultural affiliations to tolerate the internal and external influences of change, and the duration, permeance and intensity of interaction with guests (Wall and Mathieson, 2006).

In the case of Islam, diversity and differences between people are recognised, but it is important to strive for knowledge and understanding of diversity, which will in turn enrich society by respecting the human right to maintain one's identity. Thus, from the perspective of Islam, travel is encouraged in order to interact with other nations and tribes from different races and regions to understand cultural differences and enrich one's own culture. In addition, to travel is to see the majestic creation of Almighty Allah. Accordingly, tourism based on the principles of Islam is considered a means of bestowing honour and righteousness on people.

Generally, the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the host's cultural traditions are based on the strength or resilience of the host community's culture. The extent to which the host culture can resist the changes brought by another dominant culture depends mainly on how rooted the host culture is and whether it is widely and routinely practiced (Teo, 1994). Teo (1994) argues that if the host's cultural traditions and values are not practiced or believed and do not have strong roots to anchor them, they are likely to be absorbed by the dominant culture of the tourists. For example, in some conservative Muslim destinations, such as the understudied case of WBK, despite the fact that tourism has been developed for over 20 years, the host community continues to maintain its resistance and opposition towards international tourists' culture, particularly when it comes to wearing revealing swimming costumes and engaging in behaviour which contradicts the host community's religious values. The host community has maintained an avoidance reaction to minimise contact with the international tourists and maintain its religious and cultural values (see Chapter 6 for a more detailed exploration of this issue). This situation could occur when the socio-cultural carrying capacity of the local community residents of the destination become intolerant of the presence of tourists as shall be illustrated in the next section.

2.3.4 Carrying Capacity and Destination Thresholds

The concept of 'carrying capacity' has been discussed by many researchers in relation to the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism (Butler, 2019; Cooper *et al.*, 1998; Martin and Uysal, 1990; Saveriades, 2000; Wall and Mathieson, 2006). Wall and Mathieson (2006:33) define the term 'carrying capacity':

“the maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and the social, cultural and economic fabric of the destination and without an unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors”.

Cooper *et al.* (1998:186) differentiate between the concept of carrying capacity and the threshold of a destination in relation to 'saturation limits', meaning the threshold where tourism can be sustained, while the carrying capacity limit refers to “a situation where the growth of tourism is no longer sustainable and will decline or change” (Cooper *et al.*, 1998:186). To clarify the concept of threshold, Cooper *et al.* (1998) assume that the threshold of a destination is reached when the volume of tourists is likely to affect tourism development. This can be broken down into five key categories:

- Physical thresholds “will limit the volume of tourist flows and expose tourists to safety hazards”;
- The environmental threshold “will limit the tourist flows by creating secondary problems, such as health hazards, or detract from the attractiveness of a destination”;
- Social and cultural thresholds “will generate resentment and antagonism towards tourists from the host population”;
- Tourist flow thresholds “will affect the satisfaction level of tourists and cause them to search elsewhere for a better product”;

- Economic thresholds “will result in misallocation of resources and factors of production” (Cooper *et al.*, 1998:186-187).

Martin and Uysal (1990) theorise about carrying capacity in relation to a destination’s lifecycle: in the initial stage of tourism development, the carrying capacity might be nearly infinite, but it gradually decreases with the increase of unpleasant physical environmental changes related to tourism development. Generally, both the carrying capacity and the threshold of a destination are determined by the accepted quality of tourists’ experiences before they begin choosing alternative destinations, and the accepted quality of life for hosts with the presence of tourists.

The social carrying capacity is defined by Mathieson and Wall (1982) as the level at which the local community of a destination become intolerant of the presence of tourists. Martin and Uysal (1990) further clarify that social carrying capacity is reached when the local community of a destination no longer wants tourists because they are destroying the environment, damaging local culture and crowding out the local community with their activities. However, it has been argued that the terms ‘carrying capacity’ and ‘threshold of destinations’ are generic concepts that are difficult to measure quantitatively (Cooper *et al.*, 1998; Butler, 2019; Saveriades, 2000). Cooper *et al.* (1998) criticise the use of the word ‘capacity’ to refer to a stage of tourism development where the damage is occurring, as in this stage, the limits have already been exceeded. Furthermore, Saveriades (2000) states that the hosts’ attitudes are likely to change over time, either through a process of adaption or through population turnover.

Nevertheless, the terms ‘carrying capacity’ and ‘socio-cultural, environmental and economic thresholds’ could be applied as useful planning and management tools and indicators for tourism planners to evaluate the negative impacts of tourism, and introduce necessary policies and regulations to control potential damage. However, with the continued growth of tourist demand and the economic overdependence of destinations on the tourism industry, the expansion of tourism seems unstoppable. This has been observed in the previously highlighted experience of Venice, as although its carrying capacity for tourism development has exceeded for more than 20 years, the lack of coordination among

stakeholders' approaches to destination management hinders efforts to control tourist numbers and the negative impacts of mass tourism (Nolan and Seraphin, 2019). This reveals that when economic gain is prioritised over social and environmental challenges, and when there is a lack of cooperation among a destination's stakeholders, destinations can reach and exceed their tourism development saturation level, and this stage may never be undone.

2.4 Host-Guest Encounters in Tourism

The overall purpose of this research is to investigate the socio-cultural impact of tourism and its influence on host-guest relations in a conservative Muslim community in the Sultanate of Oman. More specifically, it seeks to explore the Omani community's perceptions of the international and domestic tourists' behaviour in two distinct tourist destinations as a basis for suggesting how tourists' behaviour might be better managed and planned in these types of tourist destinations.

While the previous section considered the socio-economic, environmental, socio-cultural impacts of tourism, and the carrying capacity and the destinations thresholds, this section turns to the concept underpinning of this research: host-guest relationships.

Tourism is a social activity, where the relationship between hosts and guests occupies a central position (Saarinen and Manwa, 2008). The relationships between the local communities (hosts) and tourists (guests) have been long the focus of academic research because it is widely claimed that the long-term sustainable development of tourism is dependent on the positive perceptions and support of the local community residing in tourist destinations (Zhang et al., 2006). As Kim et al. (2013) found, residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism could influence their well-being and quality of life, which will affect their support for tourism development. Similarly, active opposition could hinder or stop tourism development (Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004). Therefore, understanding factors that are likely to influence the perceived impacts and subsequent support for tourism development is crucial. Hence, they suggest that tourism planners should consider the stage of tourism development and rejuvenate the tourism destination

before the community reaches its maximum carrying capacity and the decline stage. Thus, successful tourism practice for both hosts and guests will result in sustainable and successful tourism development.

The importance of understanding host-guest relationships is widely recognised (Ap and Crompton, 1998; Tosun, 2002; Tasci and Severt, 2017). Therefore, such an understanding is fundamental to this study in particular, which aims to explore and evaluate the relationship between the international and domestic guests and the host communities in Oman. In addition, this study seeks to specifically consider the local community's perceptions and experiences of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism development.

The terms 'hosts' and 'guests' have persisted since Smith (1977) used them to refer to a destination's local communities and tourists respectively. Also, MacCannell's (1992: 176) book, *Empty Meeting Grounds*, contributed significantly to the establishment of theory around host-guest relationships, indicating that "tourism's meeting ground [is] where people live and tourists visit". Both works of Smith and MacCannell are widely used within tourism anthropology, but Smith regards tourism to be less exploiting than MacCannell. MacCannell (1992) perceives such an encounter to be an empty meeting ground, meaning it is a place deprived of the formation of relations between the host and guest as it is largely marked by economic transactions and consumptions by the tourists, whereas Smith sees chances for mutual understanding through closer contact between the hosts and guests. Both Smith and MacCannell will be referred to in the discussion with regards to both of the cases analysed in this study.

The relationships between local communities and tourists are an important topic in tourism sociology (Cohen, 1984), and it has been studied from various perspectives since the 1970s. It comprises three main dimensions: host-guest interactions, perspectives and attitudes. Cohen (1984: 379) states that "interaction between hosts and tourists are essentially transitory, non-repetitive and asymmetrical; the purpose of interaction is not to form long-lasting relationships" as short-term benefit is the main focus of the interaction.

According to De Kadt (1979:50) host-guest interactions occur in three main contexts: “where the tourist is purchasing some good or service from the host, where the tourist and host find themselves side by side, for example on a sandy beach or at a night-club performance, and where two parties come face to face with the object of exchanging information and ideas”. It has been indicated that the latter context is less common than the two former ones (Saarinen and Manwa, 2008). However, if host-guest relations are determined by the economic dimension, Sutton (1967) suggests that host-guest encounters, when one or more tourists interact with one or more hosts, is based on a network of goals and expectations. On one hand, the tourist is relaxed, freely spending and enjoying their leisure. On the other hand, the host is relatively stationary and if employed in the tourism industry, spends a large proportion of time catering to the needs and desires of tourists.

In host-guest interactions based on socio-cultural backgrounds, Sutton (1967) suggests three types of encounter: those where the host’s and guest’s cultural backgrounds are the same or closely similar, those where their cultural backgrounds are different but their differences are integrative in character, and those where they are different and inconsistent. The first two pose no problems, especially for those promoting good will, while in the third category, the greater the differences among any two cultures are, the greater the chance of friction and misunderstanding arising. Hence, it has been argued that in destinations where the majority of tourists are foreigners, the host community perceives tourists to be different from themselves and have different behavioural characteristics (Reisinger and Turner, 2011). However, in destinations where the majority are domestic tourists, the differences between hosts and guests are perceived as minimal. A great difference in cultural values can be found where conservative Muslim communities encounter misunderstandings and negative socio-cultural impacts as a result of foreign tourists’ behaviour.

On the other hand, Reisinger and Turner (2011) argue that cultural differences could attract people to each other, as it contributes to cultural enrichment and exchange. Furthermore, the difficulties between hosts and guests with cultural differences could be minimised and even eliminated when tourists and hosts are aware of the differences between their cultural backgrounds; from this

perspective, understanding cultural differences is the key factor to overcoming interaction difficulties (Reisinger and Turner, 2011). Furthermore, the impact of cultural differences and their influence on host-guest encounters will vary based on different hosts, different guests and different types of tourism.

Tourist typology then is conceptually important in understanding host-guest relationships. Of great relevance to this research is an early typology created by Cohen (1972), in which tourists are classified in several typologies under the broad headings of institutional or non-institutional. Cohen's (1972) tourist typology identifies four different tourist types and their levels of interaction with local communities. The four categories are summarised below.

2.4.1 Host-Guest Relationships: the Typology of Tourists

Cohen (1972) suggests that the nature of host-guest relationships could be extrapolated by understanding the typologies of tourists and their varying motivations for traveling. He developed four classifications of tourist experiences as follows:

- Institutional forms of tourism could be classified as:

- The organised mass tourist: this tourist buys a package-tour in which itineraries are fixed in advance, stops are planned and guided, and all main decisions of the trip are made by the organiser. The experience is designed to maximise familiarity with the tourist's home environment.

- The individual mass tourist: this type of tourist has some control over their itinerary, but all major arrangements for the trip are made by the travel organiser. Similarly to the organised mass tourists, the individual mass tourist's experience includes a good deal of familiarity with their home environment, and there is little intercultural contact with the host community.

- Non-institutional forms of tourists:

- The explorer: usually they plan their own trips and avoid highly developed tourist destinations. Although they desire to mix with the local community, familiarity with their home environment is still required. The desire to experience novelty and foreign culture is strong, but they do not become fully integrated with the local community.
- The drifters: they plan their trips alone, avoid developed tourist destinations, attempt to fit in, accept and understand their hosts' customs. With this type of tourist, novelty is dominant and familiarity disappears. This type of tourism is associated with a relatively slow growth rate.

Cohen's typology has apparent implications for destinations like Bidiyah and WBK, which are mostly visited by institutionalised international tourists, organised mass tourists and individual mass tourists, as well as non-institutionalised explorer international tourists and drifter domestic tourists (see Sections 5.2 and 6.2.1). As can be seen in the above breakdown of Cohen's typology, the behaviours of the different groups vary significantly from each other. However, it is the non-institutional form of tourists who are more interested in local culture are most likely to adapt to it in some form. Nevertheless, Wall and Mathieson (2006) claim that the impacts of tourism research consider the institutionalised tourist, while little is known of the effect of the interaction between hosts and non-institutionalised guests, as they do not deal with specialised services providers in the destinations.

Smith (1977; 1989:12) identifies seven different tourist types and levels of interaction with local community. His typology is summarised below:

- Explorer: very limited in numbers and engaged with the local community's lifestyle and culture.
- Elite tourist: relatively small in number. They like expensive tours but adapt fully to local culture.
- Off-beat: also relatively small in number, they adapt well to the local community and prefer to get away from the tourists.
- Unusual tourist: greater in number than the previous categories, they go in on organised special interest tours to experience local culture.

- Incipient mass tourists: this category travels in greater numbers to popular tourist destinations. They prefer tourist destinations where the tourism industry is not dominant, but they prefer Western amenities.
- Mass tourists: this category occurs in large numbers, traveling and staying in established resorts on packaged tours and expecting Western amenities to be available.
- Charter tourists: the number in this category is massive. They demand Western-style amenities and they desire entertainment and home standard of food and accommodation.

As can be seen from above categories, the behaviours of the different groups vary significantly from each other. However, it is the explorer, elite and off-beat tourist categories that are most interested in the local culture and most likely to adapt to it in some form. However, despite the wide-ranging typologies of tourists identified by both Cohen (1972) and Smith (1977; 1989), they do not necessarily include all type of tourists, such as the domestic tourists visiting Bidiyah, who travel in large family or friend groups to experience the nature of desert, and camp in the desert in tents or stay in provided local accommodation (see Section 5.2). These groups are not specified within Cohen's or Smith's typologies.

Generally, the socio-cultural impacts associated with tourism and host-guest interrelations could be positive or negative (Wall and Mathieson, 2006; Saarinen and Manwa, 2016). Their influence on host-guest relationships vary based on the characteristics of host and guest, type of tourism product, scale of tourism, length of tourists' stay, perceived economic importance of tourism, local community involvement in tourism planning, stage of tourism development and tourists' attitudes to the quality of the tourism facilities. The complexities of these factors make the identification and study of socio-cultural impacts and their influence on host-guest relationships relatively challenging. Therefore, a number of models and frameworks have been developed to describe, understand and measure tourism's impacts and its influence on host-guest relationships. These include for example, Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, Doğan's (1989) coping strategies towards the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, and Social exchange theory Ap (1992). These examples of frameworks that examine and justify local communities' responses to tourism development will be presented in the following sections.

2.4.2 Doxey's (1975) Irridex model

Doxey's (1975) Irridex—the word 'irridex' being a combination of 'irritation' and 'index'—was one of the first frameworks to measure residents' attitudes towards tourists and tourism development. The model, based on work conducted in Canada and the West Indies, suggests that host community's attitudes change over time, becoming more negative as tourism development and the influx of tourists increases. The model is comprised of four stages of euphoria, apathy, annoyance (irritation) and antagonism, to explain the responses of the host community to tourism development (Wall and Mathieson, 2006). Table 2.1 displays Doxey's irritation model, indicating the four stages of host-guest relationships and their characteristics.

Table 2.1 Doxey's (1975) Irridex Model

Stage	Host Attitudes	Characteristics
Stage one	Euphoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small number of tourists - Host community welcoming tourism
Stage two	Apathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourist numbers increase - Host-guest relationships become formalised
Stage three	Irritation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourist numbers near the saturation point - Host community becomes concerned about tourists and tourism development
Stage four	Antagonism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irritation expressed verbally and socially - Tourists are seen as a cause of social and personal problems

Source: Adapted from Doxey (1975)

This model recognises that negative impacts brought by increasing numbers of tourists might eventually disrupt the host's way of life, leading to irritation and antagonism (Wall and Mathieson, 2006). Moreover, the way in which the host community reacts to tourism and tourists differs from one destination to another depending on levels of incompatibility between host and guest (Zhang *et al.*, 2006). Doxey's model is a useful framework for tourism planners to utilise as it helps them understand the stages of tourism development by measuring the response produced by the relationship between host and guest.

Despite its popularity among academics, Doxey's model has been criticised for not reflecting the more nuanced dynamics of the host-guest relationship (Cooper *et al.*, 2005). A key weakness of the model is that it assumes host communities have homogeneous characteristics and attitudes, but as host communities are really heterogeneous, they will encompass various attitudes towards tourists and tourism development (Zhang *et al.*, 2006). Carmichael (2000:603) suggests that due to the complexity and the variety of experiences occurring within host communities, one should recognise that "different residents within a given time period may exhibit the full range of feelings on Doxey's scale".

Moving from theory to previous research, do their finding differ from Doxey's model? Murphy (1985) suggests that host communities' reactions to tourists and tourism are affected by their awareness of the economic opportunities of tourism and other extrinsic factors, such as the scale of tourism development, the seasonal employment situation, and traffic and parking congestion. Furthermore, De Kadt (1979) finds that cultural differences between hosts and guests contributes towards negative interactions, which could lead to the socio-cultural instability of a destination.

According to Martin Uysal (1990) the attitudes of host communities towards tourists in destinations with fragile ecologies depends on the capacity that the destination can absorb before negative impacts are felt by the host community. The further emphasise that "social capacity is reached when the local community of an area no longer want tourists because they are destroying the environment, damaging the local culture or crowding them out of local activities" (Martin and Uysal, 1990:329). For example, the activities of irresponsible tourists in the desert,

which result in the destruction of natural resources, are likely to irritate the Bedouin community residing in the desert and generate negative attitudes among the host community towards tourists (Benmecheri and Veirier, 2007).

Moreover, Teo (1994) finds that the importance of the tourism sector to a destination's economy could be a reason for local communities to adapt to the changes brought by tourism. In a study conducted in Singapore in 1991, Teo (1994) found that due to the positive economic impacts of tourism, 75% of the respondents were strongly welcoming of tourists. However, the study also found that 75.3% of respondents felt that tourists were given better service than locals and 98.8% felt that overcharging tourists was reasonable and to be expected, but the study did not discover any feelings of irritation or antagonism.

Similarly, when it comes to a local community's cultural values, as Cooper *et al.* (1998) suggest, the attitudes of the host community towards tourists depends on the extent to which the host and their tourists are different in terms of cultural backgrounds. In their study on the residents of Australia's Gold Coast, Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) found that the residents were more supportive of tourism development than Doxey's (1975) Irridex model would suggest they should be. The study also defines extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions, and classifies positive (economic, regional and community development) factors influencing host-guest relations. Further, they identified differences between hosts' and guests' cultural backgrounds and the social capacity of destinations as negative extrinsic factors that influence hosts' attitudes towards tourists.

Further, Horn and Simmons (2002), in their study on community adaption to tourism in a comparative study on Rotorua and Kaikoura, New Zealand, reported other factors such as the visibility of tourists, geography, the governance of the two local councils, a sense of local control, the pace of tourism development and the meaning of tourism for both communities as the main factors affecting local perceptions of tourism development.

Furthermore, in their study on host attitudes towards the impacts of tourism in Langkawi, Malaysia, Shariff and Tahir (2003) found positive host perceptions to be influenced by tourism's tendency to improve and increase the local service

capacity of the police, fire department, medical services and utilities. The locals also favoured tourism due to the increase in the variety of restaurants and the amount of investment spending in the area. The hosts were also inclined to take a favourable view of tourism development thanks to its positive socio-cultural impacts, as it increased the demand for cultural activities and programs, increased the hosts' standard of living and improved the opportunities to restore and protect historical structures in the area (Shariff and Tahir, 2003). However, the host community perceived tourism negatively for its impacts on the wildlife, such as plant, birds and animals, and due to the amount of local tax collected and the increased level of noise in the area (Ibid).

In a study on the cultural impacts of tourism and the local community attitudes towards tourism development in Kenya, Irandu (2004) emphasises the importance of local community involvement and the benefits of tourism for the development of positive attitudes.

Contrary to Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, which suggests that local communities tend to be more enthusiastic, happier and welcoming in the initial stages of tourism development because of the expected socio-economic benefits of tourism, Lepp (2007) identified other feelings among the local community in Bigodi, Uganda, such as anxiety, suspicion and fear at what should have been the euphoria stage of tourism development in the area.

Zaidan and Kovacs (2017: 303) report that the anticipation of local community tolerance towards tourists and tourism in Dubai is connected with the significant benefits of tourism such as the "improved image of Dubai to outsiders; significance of job creation; improvement in infrastructure, increased number of tourist facilities, shopping venues and leisure attractions", all of which results in a low irritation level among local Dubai residents and acceptance of tourism growth and its impacts by the majority of the Emirati community. Despite the fact that Dubai is one of the fastest growing tourist destinations, attracting millions of visitors every year (e.g., 11.95 million in 2014), the majority of respondents from the local community believe the number of tourists visiting their city is currently appropriate; 56.7% of the respondent stated that they were satisfied with Dubai's

tourism goal of attracting around 20 million visitors by 2020 (Zaidan and Kovacs, 2017).

On the other hand, tourists themselves are also not a homogenous group; tourists can be domestic and international (Becken and Simmons, 2019). Their different characteristics, behaviours and impacts on destinations could mean the same destination is simultaneously at different stages of host-guest relationships with regards to different groups of tourists. For example, the unacceptable activities and behaviours of domestic tourists regarding the fragile environment of the desert in Oman has affected local acceptance and tolerance towards tourism. At the same time, international tourists' awareness of the environmental sensitivity of the desert has led to a positive relationship with the host community, as will be seen in Chapter 5.

Based on the studies cited above, it is clear that host communities' attitudes towards tourists are not homogenous as Doxey's model assumes. Doxey's (1975) Irridex model is too simplistic to be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of residents' attitudes. Şanlıöz-özgen and Günlü (2016) highlight that heterogeneity makes it difficult to generalise the attitudes of residents and requires other variables to be taken in consideration. Thus, the research emphasis shifted to understanding the specific attitudes of residents of a given place towards tourism. To address the need to consider context and the specificity of each place, Doğan (1989) outlines five strategies for host communities to cope with the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. The following section will describe Doğan's framework in detail.

2.4.3 Doğan's Framework for Social and Cultural Impacts

Like the framework proposed by Doxey (1975) at the macro destination level, Doğan (1989) offers a framework that addresses residents' reactions to the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. Doğan (1989) highlights that tourism development has negative social and cultural impacts, such as the decline of traditions, materialisation, increases in crime rates, social conflicts, crowding, environmental deterioration and dependency on industrialised countries. In his justifications for hosts' reactions to tourism development, Doğan (1989) claims

that when the host community perceives the impacts of tourism as positive their reaction takes the form of acceptance of the associated changes, and when they perceive the impacts as negative, their reaction becomes more resistant. Table 2.2 displays Doğan's (1989) framework for host community reaction and coping strategies towards the socio-cultural impacts of tourism.

Table 2.2 Doğan's (1989) Framework for Host Reaction to the Social Cultural Impacts of Tourism

Hosts coping strategies	Host reaction and coping strategies
Resistance	In areas with intense and broad negative impacts, there is widespread hostility and aggression towards tourists and their facilities
Retreatism	The community avoids contact with tourists and there is a revival of traditions and increased cultural and ethnic consciousness
Boundary maintenance	The establishment of physical and social boundaries between tourists and the local community
Revitalisation	In some cases, tourism may be a factor in the preservation of local cultural traditions where the hosts adopt strategies to preserve, display and promote their cultural resources to tourism
Adoption	The conscious replacement of traditional host social structure with the adoption of tourists' culture and behaviours

Source: Adapted from Wall and Mathieson (2006).

Although Doğan's framework is a useful model for tourism officials to understand how local communities perceive tourism (based on their socio-cultural context) and informs the ways in which they respond to tourism development, it does not prevent the occurrence of negative attitudes among local communities. Some destinations, such as conservative Muslim communities, present special cases as the saturation level can be reached without the local community gaining benefits from tourism growth. This happens because instead of engaging with the tourism

industry, the residents withdraw due to their concern for the preservation of their religious and cultural values. Therefore, there is a need to improve this framework to include different levels of acceptance that are related to the boundaries set by cultural and religious values, which could be integrated with Doxey's (1975) Irridex model to help tourism planners create situations where tourism is likely to be perceived positively by the local community for sustainable long-term tourism development.

According to Becken and Simmons (2019), good governance for the development of tourist destinations should take into consideration a destination's cultural context, social fabric and environmental constraints. Kim et al. (2013) found that the relation between the economic impact of tourism and host community's well-being is strongest in the mature stage of development, but is lower during the other stages. Therefore, they suggest that tourism planners "develop not only short-term perspective of tourism benefits, but also, a long-term perspective of residents' quality of life and sustainable development" (Kim et al., 2013: 538). Many researchers emphasise the importance of introducing regulations from the early stages of tourism development in any destination, making efforts to value long-term sustainability for both hosts and guests alike (Kim et al., 2013; Martin and Uysal, 1990; Uysal et al., 2012). A set of policies and management regulations should be introduced as a boundary to maintain a positive relationship between hosts and guests for successful tourism development. Establishing that boundary means introducing and adhering to regulations and management plans. This research suggests that the strategy of boundary maintenance be combined with Doxey's (1975) Irridex of host-guest relationships to maintain sustainable tourism development, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Like Doğan's (1989) types of host response to tourism impacts, which could exist individually or coexist in a destination, social exchange theory also emphasises understanding the heterogeneity of the host community to understand host attitudes towards tourists and tourism development's impacts on the individual level. These are explored in the following section.

2.4.4 Social Exchange Theory

As in Doğan's (1989) work on host communities' different strategies for coping with the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, Ap (1992) illustrates the diversity of residents' attitudes that exist in any community; thus social exchange theory has been adopted to explore host-guest relationships. Social exchange theory highlights the need to maintain a balance in terms of resource use between individuals and groups (in this case the tourism industry and local residents) Ap (1992). To put it another way, residents will adopt exchanges (tourism development) based on the amount of benefits they perceive they will gain from such development. Andereck *et al.* (2005) suggest that if residents gain greater benefits in exchange for their resources, they will have more positive perceptions of it. While Sharpley (2014) states that a host community's attitude towards tourism development is a compromise between the perceived economic benefits and their social and environmental costs. Studies based on social exchange theory suggest that host communities are willing to support tourism development if they perceive more positive than negative results from tourism development (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2006).

One of the strengths of social exchange theory is its applicability and usefulness as a framework for explaining positive and negative attitudes towards tourism among host communities (Ap, 1992). However, social exchange theory has limitations when it is used to explain local community perceptions. According to Pearce *et al.* (1996, cited in Murphy and Murphy, 2004:45) "social exchange theory is too simplistic". First, the assumption that individuals balance the costs and benefits of tourism to guide their support of tourism development fails to be justifiable when considering the complexity of the tourism industry and its relation to local communities. Secondly, they doubt that equity and social justice often occur in tourist destinations. Thirdly, they find that there is no ascertained justification for how individuals balance their requirements with the host community's costs and benefits.

Furthermore, the positive and negative impacts of tourism are perceived differently from one community to another. For example, Dadvar-Khani's (2012) investigation of a local community's positive and negative perceptions towards

tourism development in Iran found that making money is not as important to the local community as preserving their cultural values and identity. Such a priority could be perceived differently in other cultures and communities. Therefore, due to the limitations of social exchange theory, it is recommended that other frameworks be used or in conjunction with it to consider these limitations.

In general, many variables identified in studies on host perceptions of tourists and tourism can be external and internal, or as Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) refer to them, 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic', with the former referring to the broader factors related to the destination and the latter related to individuals. These two categories will be detailed in the following two sections.

2.4.5 Extrinsic Factors

- Stage of Tourism Development

Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) suggest that host communities' perceptions change negatively with the increase of tourism development. Doxey's Irritation Index (1975) model (see Section 2.4.2 in this chapter) explains the changing perceptions of host communities with the increase of tourism. In short, during the initial stage of tourism development (the euphoria stage), host-tourist interaction is limited and the local community is happy to host and welcoming to tourists. In the early stages of tourism development, host communities are apathetic to tourists and tourism development, especially when they become involved in tourism-related economic activities. However, in the later stages of tourism development, local communities begin to get irritated, especially when they start to face numerous negative impacts of tourism growth that threaten their social capacity and quality of life, such as crowding, congestion and littering. This stage results in antagonistic host community attitudes towards tourism development.

- Type and Nature of Tourists

Host perceptions towards tourists depend on the extent to which the host community and tourists differ from each other "in terms of racial characteristics, cultural background and socio-economic status" (Faulkner and Tideswell, 1997:7).

Similarly, Sutton (1967) states that cultural differences are very important factors that influence interaction difficulties and shape perceptions towards tourists, as “the greater the inconsistency among two cultures, the greater the probability that encounters...will lead to friction and misunderstanding”. For example, according to Abu Al Haija (2011), Jordanian culture is influenced heavily by the Islamic religion, so behaviour that goes against Islamic principles are not likely to be accepted by the host community. For example, not respecting the prohibition of certain kinds of foods, such as pork or alcoholic drinks, or the way that liberal foreign tourists dress may irritate the local conservative communities and generate negative attitudes and even hostility on the part of the hosts as a result of cultural differences and host-guest misunderstanding.

- **Seasonality**

According to Faulkner and Tideswell (1997), high and low seasonality also influences host perceptions of tourism. Vargas-Sánchez et al. (2014) reported that residents’ attitudes to tourism change based on whether it is high or low season in the destination. They found that in the low season, tourism impacts and tourists are perceived more favourably. The local community also has a more positive attitude towards further tourism development in the low season.

- **Density of Tourists and Tourism Development**

The density of tourism can also influence the hosts’ perceptions. For example, Şanlıöz-özgen and Günlü (2016) focused on understanding host attitudes towards the intensive tourism development in two villages in Antalya in Turkey, and they reported that the host community was irritated with the poorly constructed development of tourism infrastructure and services. These issues led to a negative attitude and even rejection of tourism development by the host community. Similarly, other studies have suggested that host perceptions become more negative when they have to deal with a greater concentration of tourism and services in a destination (Nolan and Seraphin 2019; Butler, 2019; Okulicz-Kozaryn and Strzelecka, 2017).

2.4.6 Intrinsic Factors

- Economic and Employment Dependence on Tourism

Where host communities are financially dependent on the tourism industry, they tend to have positive perceptions towards tourism. Many studies have examined residents' perceptions of tourism development and revealed that there is a positive relationship between hosts' perceptions and level of economic dependency (Tosun, 2002a; Gonzalez et al., 2018; Andereck et al., 2005). For example, Tosun (2002a) conducted a comparative study on host communities' perceptions of tourism's impacts in Urgup, Turkey compared with two previous studies in Nadi, Fiji and Central Florida. The findings show that with the limited number of job opportunities in other sectors in the local economy, the host community in Urgup perceived tourism positively because of the increase it brought in job opportunities and the town's overall revenue earning. Muler Gonzalez et al. (2018) found that local residents who are employed in tourism or who have close relatives employed in it perceive the positive impacts more and the negative impacts less than those who are not employed in the industry. Harrill (2004:5) states that the studies he reviewed led to the conclusion that "the more a person or community depends on tourism dollars, the more positive his or her attitude is toward tourism development". Generally, studies have found that there is a direct relation between those whose income depends on tourism are more favourable views of tourism.

However, host communities also have some concerns about tourism's role in pushing up shops prices and the cost of goods and services (Gonzalez et al., 2018). Similarly, negative community perceptions have also been identified by Tosun (2002) in Urgub, where the host community has negative perceptions of seasonal tourism jobs that offer relatively low wages to people who are attempting to support their families, and these jobs only last during the high season, so there is very little job security.

- **Community Attachment**

Length of residency and the extent and patterns of social participation and integration into the local community are factors that fall under the heading of 'community attachment'. Many studies have examined residents' perceptions of tourism development and revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between community attachment and residents' attitudes towards tourism development (Park et al., 2017; McCool and Martin, 1994; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004). For example, Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) found that residents who express high levels of attachment to their communities are more likely to view tourism as both economically and socially beneficial. Similarly, Park et al. (2017) found that residents' attachment to their communities is able to influence their attitudes to the future development of facilities and infrastructure in their community.

In contrast, Harrill and Potts (2003) found that residents who have a high level of community attachment are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards tourism development. They found that some residents perceive themselves as losing their investment through property taxes and other taxes used to fund tourism development (Harrill and Potts, 2003). Therefore, understanding community attachment and its influence on hosts' attitudes towards tourism is considered one of the key factors that could help policymakers gain local community support for developing the right sort of tourism.

- **Distance from Tourism Area**

The distance of one's residence from tourism hotspots can have a great influence in shaping hosts' attitudes towards tourism development. For example, in their study on the host communities living within the vicinity of heritage tourism sites in Tabriz and Khashan, Iran, Rassolimanesh et al. (2019) found residents living far from heritage tourism sites are more positive than those living within the immediate vicinity of heritage tourism. Hosts living in close proximity to heritage tourism sites may experience negative economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism such as traffic, pollution, littering and crime. These negative impacts shape their perceptions of tourism development and can lead to the host

community being less interested in being involved in the process of tourism development. However, residents living far from heritage tourism were found to hold more favourable attitudes and perceive great economic gains from tourism, and they had more interest in becoming involved in the tourism development process. Nevertheless, Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) suggest that residents who are employed directly or indirectly in tourism will be more tolerant of its impacts regardless of where they live. This requires tourism planners and policymakers to develop a greater understanding of the economic dependency of the residents in the tourism area, as well as other aspects of tourism that impact the resident's views and relations with tourists.

- **Cultural Distance and Social Identity**

Some studies investigate how host communities' cultural differences and social identity influence their perceptions and support for tourism development in their areas. For example, Zhang et al. (2014) found that cultural differences between Chinese tourists and Hong Kong hosts influenced negative attitudes among the host community. Although Hong Kong and China share same cultural roots, because Hong Kong was a colony of the United Kingdom for more than a century, it has been Westernised and cultural differences have been identified in terms of values, social norms and lifestyle. Thus, the perceived cultural distance is found to be influential on the perceived negative impacts and the social identity of Hong Kong residents, which in turn affects their attitudes towards Chinese tourists (Zhang et al., 2014).

In summary, it is essential for policymakers and tourism planners to understand the factors influencing hosts' perceptions of tourism development in their destinations. However, it is also necessary to understand that the host communities in each destination are not homogeneous.

Now that the theoretical frameworks of host-guest relationships have been discussed, as well as the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that influence host-guest relationships, Section 2.5 will discuss specific issues influencing the engagement of Muslim communities with tourism development to build on the above knowledge.

2.5 Islam and Tourism

Although the relationship between Islam and tourism has been neglected in the past (Carboni *et al.*, 2014), with the fast growth of the Muslim travel market (Jafari and Scott, 2014; Oktadiana *et al.*, 2016), it is unsurprising that Muslim-oriented tourism has attracted considerable attention from scholars in recent years (Afifi, 2015; Carboni *et al.*, 2014; Jafari and Scott, 2014; Neveu, 2010; Oktadiana *et al.*, 2016). In an attempt to go beyond “Islamic tourism” (tourism activities that meet the requirements of Islamic law), studies have focused on various factors in Islamic countries: how heritage and religious archaeology are utilised to develop Islamic tourism products (Neveu, 2010); the influence of Islam towards developing tourism strategies (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010); tourism as a spiritual journey (Aziz, 2001); perceptions towards work in alcohol service in the tourism industry (Afifi, 2015); the concept of “*Halal*” tourism (Oktadiana *et al.*, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016) and Islamic hotels (Henderson, 2010).

The topic that has been most discussed in academic literature regarding the development of Islamic tourism is the potential for economic returns (Henderson, 2010b). However, tourism development and Muslim communities' perceptions of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism have been relatively neglected (Zamani-Farahani and Musa, 2012). Therefore, Afifi (2015) suggests that studies on Islamic tourism in Muslim countries should focus on how communities perceive tourism and how it affects the moral and religious aspects of people's lives. In a similar vein, Carboni *et al.* (2014:7) suggest investigating the coexistence between Muslim and non-Muslim tourists in destinations. On this light, in the upcoming four subsections, tourism as a purposeful journey in Islam, *Halal* tourism, Islamic hospitality and modesty in Islam will be discussed.

2.5.1 Tourism is a Purposeful Journey in Islam

Islam is based on the concept of human well-being, which requires a balance between the material and spiritual needs of all humans, reflected in daily life in the *Sharia* (Jafari and Scott, 2014). According to Henderson (2010), *Sharia* is Islamic law shaped by the holy book of the Qur'an and the *sunnah* (customs) of the Prophet Muhamad (peace be upon him). *Sharia* provides guidance for Muslims

in all aspects of life, including what to eat and drink, how to dress and behave, and how to travel and enjoy themselves (Din, 1989; Henderson, 2003; Jafari and Scott, 2014). Many researchers in this field (Al Sawafi, 2017; Aziz, 2001; Din, 1989; Jafari and Scott, 2014) have pointed out that travel in Islam must be “purposeful” and Muslims are accordingly urged to travel for purposes that comply with the principles of Islamic law.

The first purpose that Muslims are encouraged to travel for is worship. Traveling to Makkah for *hajj* (pilgrimage) is an obligatory journey that must be undertaken at least once in the life of every Muslim who is physically and financially capable (Aziz, 2001; Jafari and Scott, 2014). Pilgrimage is one of Islam’s five pillars, alongside belief in Allah and the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), prayer, fasting and charitable giving (Henderson, 2010). In the opinion of Jafari and Scott (2014), the *hajj* is a journey that creates a shared understanding of the Islam across age, gender, social status and race.

Concurring with readings of the holy text of the Holy Qu’ran, Muslims are encouraged to travel for spiritual purposes. As is stated in the Holy Qu’ran *Surat Al-Ankabout*, one of the purposes of tourism is to make Muslims aware of the greatness of Allah through observing the “signs” of the history of his creation (Din, 1989).

”قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ“

(Holy Qu’ran, *Surat Al-Ankabout*, 29:20).

The above quote translates as: “Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation: so will Allah produce a later creation, Allah has power over all things” (Holy Qu’ran, *Surat Al-Ankabout*, 20:20). Likewise, *Surat Al-Hujurat* calls for all humankind to travel around and see the creation of Allah in order to know each other and promote cross-cultural understanding (Din, 1989).

”يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ“

(Holy Qu’ran, *Surat Al-Hujurat*, 49:13).

This quote translated into: “O mankind, we created you from a single of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other, the most honoured of you in sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you and Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with things)” (Holy Qu’ran, *Surat Al-Hujurat*, 49:13).

Thus, Muslims are encouraged to travel for spiritual, historical, social and cultural encounters to gain knowledge, to associate with others, to appreciate Allah’s creation, to spread Allah’s word and to enjoy themselves (Jafari and Scott, 2014; Din, 1989). This shows that tourism in Islam focuses on the preservation of religion, the preservation of self, promoting understanding among nations and contributing to Muslim travellers’ morals and values.

Also, Muslims are encouraged to travel to visit friends and relatives (Al sawafi, 2017; Din, 1989). It is important to know that the notion of hospitality in the Muslim world has a different meaning than it has according to Western views. According to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), being kind and generous to visitors is an Islamic value. When the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) was questioned about being a good Muslim, he replied, “Whoever believes in Allah and the last day should offer hospitality to his guest” (Reynolds, 2010:185). The hospitality associated with host-guest relations in Islamic morality is unlike the commercial goal of the modern hospitality industry; while the main motive of modern hotels is to create profit, in Islamic culture, it is considered as charity to welcome guests. In the pre-Islamic Arab culture, three days was a common period of hospitality extended to visitors (Reynolds, 2010). However, although Islamic and Arab culture call for hospitality to guests as one noble Islamic and Arabic value, this has become commercialised under the current tourism model.

Conversely, Muslims are not encouraged to travel to destinations that contradict their morality and values (Al Sawafi, 2017); for instance, Din (1989) criticises rich Muslims who travel to Europe and Bangkok. Klemm (2002) finds that Muslims have less interest in beach holidays, where undressing is normal and acceptable for European tourists, and it is perceived as immoral and unacceptable to Muslim tourists for cultural and religious reasons. Al Sawafi (2017) reveals that Omani

tourists are influenced by Islamic teaching when choosing destinations, and influential factors for choosing destinations are the availability of Halal food and mosques, and the existence of positive attitudes towards Islamic culture. Omani tourists also avoid participating in activities prohibited by Islamic law, such as gambling, dancing or drinking alcohol (Al Sawafi, 2017). This shows that Islamic values play a pivotal role in influencing the choices of Muslims.

From another perspective, adhering the *Sharia* law is becoming increasingly challenging in modern Islamic societies. Unlike the Islamic model, the current modern mass tourism industry has been promoted as a leisure and entertainment industry based on Western-oriented values (Din, 1989). Moreover, although the *Sharia* provides guidance for all aspects of life, Muslim countries differ in how they interpret and practice Islamic law (Din, 1989; Jafari and Scott, 2014). Some Muslim countries are less insistent on Islamic religious values, while others exhibit severe conservative policies, where tourism is seen as industry that violates Islamic cultural values and traditions, and is therefore not given priority in their economic development plans (Henderson, 2009). Thus, tourism development policies are not uniform across Muslim countries (Henderson, 2009; Jafari and Scott, 2014). Those such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Brunei prefer to have Muslim tourists in order to avoid negative social and cultural impacts (Zamani-Farahani and Musa, 2012). Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has recently shown an interest in developing its tourism industry. The BBC News (2019) reported that the Saudi Government has opened its doors to foreign tourists for the “first time” as part of the government’s efforts to reduce the country’s economic dependence on oil. The Saudi authorities announced the introduction of tourist visas for citizens of 49 countries, while easing restrictions on female tourists’ clothes (BBC News, 2019).

Countries, such as Turkey, Malaysia and Tunisia, are seen as more moderate Islamic countries, where Islam and public life are separated (Jafari and Scott, 2014). Tourism is marketed as a pleasure industry and religious values are not considered (Din, 1989). However, in attempting to attract Muslim tourists, Malaysia adopted “a double-standard policy”: one for Muslims and another for non-Muslims (Din, 1989:558). They tailored services in some hotels and destinations to Muslim requirements by offering prayer facilities: pray rooms with

mats, copies of the Qu’ran, and pointing directions to *Qibla* (facing Mecca) (Din, 1989).

For most Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, particularly Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, leisure tourism has been seen for two decades as “either culturally undesirable or economically unnecessary” (Sharpley, 2002:221), but Bahrain and Dubai are the most popular leisure destinations in the GCC (Karolak, 2014). Karolak (2014) argues that Bahrain is a country facing a cultural dilemma, with liberal tourism policies putting the country at risk of corrupting Muslim values; especially among the young, by selling alcohol, improper dressing and prostitution. Consequently, Manama (the capital of Bahrain) has been listed as “one of the top 10 cities to pursue vice and debauchery” (Karolak, 2014:102). This led the Bahraini government to reconsider their liberal policies and regulations on tourism development.

Dubai’s tourism development approach has also brought about a crisis of cultural identity and negative socio-cultural impacts (Al Balushi and Wise, 2017; Stephenson, 2014b). According to Al Balushi and Wise (2017) relaxed rules have encouraged the sale of alcohol and organised clubbing events, as well as prostitution, which is illegal but still widely reported. Another dilemma associated with Dubai’s approach is that its local cultural traditions have not been promoted as a central element of Dubai’s tourism experience, so the culture it promotes is a “manufactured” one (Stephenson, 2014b). Instead, Stephenson (2014b) argues Dubai’s objective is to achieve world records and attract international attention without considering indigenous social activities and cultural resources.

2.5.2 Halal Tourism

While many Muslim host destinations are struggling to embrace their religious values and cultural traditions alongside tourism, some tourist destinations targeting Muslim travellers, such as New Zealand, China, Australia and Japan, have capitalised on the religious needs of the growing world of Muslim tourists and promoted themselves as so-called “Halal tourism destinations” (Oktadiana *et al.*, 2016).

The term '*Halal* tourism' has been emphasised in recent studies (Battour and Ismail, 2016; El-Gohary, 2016; Henderson, 2010; Mohsin *et al.*, 2016; Oktadiana *et al.*, 2016; Razzaq *et al.*, 2016; Stephenson, 2014). It is concerned with meeting the needs of Muslim travellers, such as the availability of *Halal* food in hotels and restaurants, as well as providing prayer rooms and facilities in the accommodation and tourist services (Oktadiana *et al.*, 2016; Razzaq *et al.*, 2016). However, El-Gohary (2016) argues that although the term *Halal* is used to promote a type of tourism product that caters to Muslim needs, it does not necessarily represent the *Halal* concept as per Islamic *Sharia*.

The term *Halal*, as highlighted by El-Gohary (2016:126), is an Arabic word meaning "allowable, acceptable, permitted and/or permissible". It is not only related to food or food products, but goes beyond that to cover all aspects of Muslim life. According to Battour and Ismail (2016:151) *Halal* means "lawful" in Islam, or that which is permitted by Allah. *Halal* is the opposite of *Haram* which means unlawful, or that is not permitted by Islamic law (El-Gohary, 2016:126). The concept of *Halal* includes any Islamic *Sharia*-compliant product, including food, beverages, banking, interest on loans, tourism, jobs and entertainment (El-Gohary, 2016; Henderson, 2010).

Halal is rooted in Islamic law, which provides guidance for all aspects of human conduct among Muslims (Jafari and Scott, 2014), and which "calls into question material and immaterial aspects" (Carboni *et al.*, 2014:2). As the term *Halal* can be used for what is permitted by Allah only, it should be in full compliance with the rules and guidance of the *halal* concept and Islamic *sharia*, so it would be more appropriate to call "Halal tourism" Muslim-friendly tourism.

2.5.3 Islamic Hospitality

The term 'Islamic hotel' is not widely discussed in the academic world. However, it is worth more attention due to a rapidly expanding market demand of 1.6 billion Muslims, representing 23.2% of the estimated world population in 2010 (Jafari and Scott, 2014). The idea of an Islamic hotel may be new in the literature and for non-Islamic destinations, but due to religious and cultural principles it has been widely applied in some Muslim destinations. In Mecca and Madinah, for example,

this concept is not at all new, but has been implemented for centuries to meet the requirements of Muslim visitors for *Hajj* and *Umrah*. It is also applied in Al Sharjah in the UAE, which positions itself as an Islamic tourism and family destination, with its tourism industry focused on Islamic culture (Nicholas and Prakash, 2017). According to Henderson (2010), there are several Islamic hotels in Dubai and many more planned for the Middle East, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Cairo, Muscat and Doha. Since Henderson proposed Islamic hotel in 2010 many Islamic hotels developed in the Mena region (Middle east and Northern region). For example, in Dubai AL Jowhara, Tamani, Raihan chain hotels , that do not serve alcohol and respect the Islamic values, which attracts both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists(Kasrawany, 2017).

As explained by Henderson (2010), an Islamic hotel is a *Shariah*-compliant hotel with a set of attributes that allows it to provide hospitality services within an Islamic context. These attributes include:

- No alcohol
- Halal food only
- Qu'ran, prayer mats and directions to Mecca available in each room
- Beds and toilets positioned so as not to face in the direction of mecca
- Bidets in the bathroom
- Prayer rooms
- Appropriate entertainment
- Predominantly Muslim staff
- Conservative staff dress
- Separate recreational facilities for men and women

- All female floors
- Guest dress code
- Islamic financial funding

Such a model was proposed by (Henderson, 2010) to meet the demand of Muslim tourists and it attract non-Muslim tourists; yet it might not suit the needs of certain non-Muslim guests, especially with the issue of segregation between males and females in restaurants, swimming pools and beaches—unless they are interested in experiencing Islamic culture. In Sharjah, for example, there are no night clubs, bars or restaurants selling alcohol, which has affected potential demand and has reduced hotel occupancy rates (Nicholas and Prakash, 2017). Alternatively, although *Shariah*-compliant hotels could face challenges in meeting the requirements of both Muslim and non-Muslim guests' needs, it has been found in the case of Al Mulla Hospitality in Dubai, which positions itself as a *Shariah*-compliant hotel, its alcohol-free policy in combination with a healthy lifestyle policy has led to the expansion of its operations, and it is doing better than standard hotels in the area (Razali *et al.*, 2012).

This model could be an attractive opportunity for Muslim investors to develop *Halal* tourism products based on Islamic principles, which would also serve Muslim youth's desire to work in religiously acceptable jobs, in workplaces that meet their Islamic values. However, Henderson (2010) argues that such tourism products require commitment from both the developer, who must comply with requirements, and the government, who must implement such plans. Generally, more research has been recommended in order to examine how the ambitious goal of mixing Muslim and non-Muslim desires can be achieved (Nicholas and Prakash, 2017; Henderson, 2010; Razali *et al.*, 2012).

2.5.4 Modesty in Islam: *Al Haaya*

In accordance with Islamic principles, morality and virtue provides the basis for happiness, and modesty is a central theme in Muslim religious codes and behaviour (Jafari and Scott, 2014). The concept of modesty is addressed in Islamic teaching

from many angles. In physical terms, ‘*al haaya*’ is connected with ‘*awrah*’ (Boulanouar, 2006), which is an Arabic term meaning “what must be covered of the private body parts of a human being” (Boulanouar, 2006:135). For men, the *awrah* is from the navel to the knee. For women, the *awrah* is the entire body, with the exception of the face and hands. Therefore, Muslim men are not permitted to wear conventional swimming trunks. If they participate in swimming activities, they must ensure that they wear shorts that cover the area between the navel and the knees. Furthermore, there should be no indecent exposure of the bodies of men or women in public (Eniola, 2013).

From a behaviour perspective, *al haaya* is linked to lowering the gaze, ‘*Ghadd al-basar*’, which refers to refraining from looking at people’s *awrah* (AL Munjjid, 2006). In Arabic, to ‘lower the gaze’ means to avoid looking at something in one’s field of vision (Boulanouar, 2006). According to Al Sharawy (2013), Muslim males and females are mandated to avoid looking at any unlawful appearance of a male or female in order to discourage any opportunity for encouraging possible unlawful sexual relations out of marriage. It is therefore considered as self-protection against natural temptations and mutual attraction that occurs between the opposite sexes (Al Sabt, 2015). The only acceptable context for sexual relations in Islam is a lawful marriage (Eniola, 2013). El Shrawy (2013) states that this is to avoid having children outside of lawful marriage, as the ultimate goal of lowering the gaze is to protect the basis of the family.

This could be understood from the *Ayat* 30-31, *Surat Al Noor* in the Holy Qur’an:

"قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ "

(Holy Qur’an, *Surat Al Noor*, 24:30).

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts.

That is purer for them. Indeed, Allāh is aware of what they do” (Holy

Qur’an, *Surat Al Noor*, 24:30).

"قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا
وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءَ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ
أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ

غَيْرُ أُولِي الإِزْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوْ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ
مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ"

(Holy Qur'an, *Surat Al Noor*, 24:31).

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess [i.e., slaves], or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allāh in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed” (Holy Qur'an, *Surat Al Noor*, 24:31).

Al haaya can therefore be seen as a means by which morals and ethics in Muslim communities are maintained and pursued; according to Islamic thinking, this provides the foundation for human happiness. However, large cultural differences in the ways Westerners approach *al haaya* and the privacy of the body and the way members of the Muslim community approach it can be a main cause of culture clashes, especially in tourist destinations with a conservative Muslim community.

Nevertheless, a comparative study by Sadatmoosavi and Shokouhi (2013) on the observance of *al haaya* in human spiritual life, finds that the concept of observing modesty is not only considered in Islam, but is also maintained in Christianity, as Jesus (AS) stated in Matthew:

You have heard that it was said, do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (Sadatmoosavi and Shokouhi, 2013:2).

Both Islam and Christianity provide a moral system to restrain improper and disorderly behaviour that threatens people's socio-moral conditions. The religious concern for the importance of maintaining *al haaya* in human relations is due to the aim of protecting males and females from prohibited relationships outside of lawful marriage, to protect the institution of the family through lawful relationships. Furthermore, Muslims believe that Allah is aware of what is appropriate for them, and therefore they obey what is regulated for them; when people believe that the creator's desire is best for them, they will seek submission to his guidance and rules. Therefore, when religious principles clash with the economic desires that motivate the tourism industry, conservative Muslim communities' religious values take priority over any expected economic benefits. This emphasise that conservative Muslim community avoids being present in tourists' places where their religious values clash with tourists' behaviours. Nonetheless, these religious values are expressed differently depending on different communities' interpretations of the *Sharia* and personal preference. The decision on how to pursue tourism is affected by people's values and economic imperatives. The question is the extent to which tourists are willing to adapt to the local culture and religious values, especially when there is big difference between a host's and their guests' cultural values.

2.6 Conclusion

As discussed throughout the above literature review, tourism has become one of the world's most important economic sectors, pursued by many destinations for its employment and income potential. Mbaiwa (2003), however, suggests that despite the economic benefits tourism can bring on a national level and its contribution towards government revenue, tourism offers limited meaningful employment and economic benefits to local communities; in fact, tourism can have adverse impacts on the destination and the host community. Problems of overcrowding, noise pollution, littering and environmental degradation are a few of the many negative impacts that may occur as a result of tourism development (Butler, 2019; Mbaiwa, 2003). Thus, Section 2.2 of this chapter discussed taking a community-based approach and its associated benefits and challenges.

Section 2.3 outlined how tourism is a community industry in that it relies on a community's resources; thus, tourism development must ensure the local community's participation and involvement in the economic gains it brings (Murphy, 1985). To promote successful local community participation and to allow local people to enjoy the benefits of tourism growth, the preservation of their cultural and environmental values should be included among the goals of tourism development plans (Gunn and Var, 2002). Furthermore, in planning for beneficial community tourism it is essential to ensure cooperation and coordination among all related parties, particularly the government, the local community and tourism businesses (Wilson et al., 2001). In addition, local community consultation, empowerment awareness and participation in decision-making for the development of tourism in their locality are commonly recommended procedures for establishing effective local community participation (Dadvar-Khani, 2012; Grybovych and Hafermann, 2010; Mershen, 2007; Simmons, 1994; Tosun, 2000).

Local communities usually welcome tourists in the early stages of tourism development. However, they sometimes lose their supportive attitudes towards tourists and tourism development. As described in Section 2.4, Doxey (1975) suggests that with an increase in tourist numbers and the growth of a related infrastructure, the host community develops gradual feelings of irritation towards tourism. This model is valuable to the extent that it highlights the fact that the negative social impacts of tourism increase if tourism is not effectively planned, managed and developed. It is also a useful framework for tourism planners to understand the irritation experienced by host communities. However, as this research will demonstrate, by filling the gap with regards to Oman, it fails to consider heterogeneities within local communities (Zhang *et al.*, 2006), and is unable to consider the socio-cultural context of a destination's host community, which is a key failing because this factor could play a main role in shaping host-guest relationships.

Then, in Section 2.5, focusing on the socio-cultural context of destinations, It showed that Doğan (1989) provides a framework of host community strategies in reaction to the perceived impacts of tourism. This framework could also provide useful guidance for tourism policymakers to understand why and how local communities react towards the impacts of tourists and tourism. However, the

framework has limitations in that it does not help tourism planners understand how to prevent the occurrence of negative host attitudes towards tourism. This research suggests ways to fill this gap (see Chapter 8), it will help tourism planners consider the socio-cultural dimensions of destinations to maintain positive host-guest relations.

New tourist destinations with conservative local religious values and cultures, such as Muslim communities, come with certain constraints, requirements and needs that must be recognised when destinations are being developed for international tourism. This research illustrated in Section 2.7 how residents' morality and values play a major role in shaping their attitudes towards tourists and the tourism industry. Therefore, for successful long-term host-guest relations, there is a need for integrated tourism development policies and management plans that consider their cultural sensitivities when developing tourism in their areas. This research will help arrive at a better understanding of the above point which is addressed in chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 3: The Omani Context

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the context for this study by introducing the Sultanate of Oman's history, geography, religion, culture, economy and tourism industry. Oman is a country with a unique culture and a strong national identity that is embedded in an Arab Islamic context. This context is maintained at a government level as well as at the community level. Given the importance of this identity to the government and the local community, it is vital that it be considered and safeguarded when developing tourism within Oman.

After presenting a general overview of Oman's geography, history and culture, the nation's economic conditions will be considered, shedding light on the Omani quest for independence from an oil-dependent economy. The final section on tourism will introduce the state of the current tourism industry, including the problem of labour in hotels, and discuss Oman's new national tourism strategy.

3.2 Geographical Location of the Sultanate of Oman

The Sultanate of Oman is an Arab and Islamic country occupying the south-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula in the south-western part of the Asian continent, overlooking the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian sea with a coastline of 3,165 kilometres (Ministry of Information, 2017). Oman shares its land borders with the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Map of the Sultanate of Oman



Source: Ministry of Education (2019)

With an area of 309,500 square kilometres, Oman is the second largest country in the Arabian Peninsula. It occupies a strategically important geographical location

at the Strait of Hormuz, through which around 30% of the world's oil imports pass (Ministry of Information, 2017).

The Sultanate of Oman is divided into 11 administrative governorates: Muscat, Dhofar, Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Dakhliyah, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Dhahirah and Al Wusta. Each administrative division is further divided into sub-divisions called Wilayats, with a total of 61 Wilayats in Oman (Ministry of Information, 2017). Governors, as well as *walis* (leaders of the Wilayats), are responsible for matters of local administration and act as a link between Oman's national government and the local community (Ministry of Information, 2017).

3.2.1 Topography and Climate

The topography of the Sultanate of Oman consists of three regions. First, mountain ranges occupy 15% of the country. The Al Hajar Mountains in Northern Oman, run from *Ru'us al Jibal* at Ras Musandam (the gateway to the Gulf) to the Arabian Peninsula's south-eastern extremity at Ras al Hadd on the Indian Ocean. In the southern governorate of Dhofar, a continuous chain of mountains includes *Jabal Samhan* in the east, *Jabal Al Qara* in the centre and *Jabal al Qamar* in the west, reaching more than 23 kilometres in width and 2,500 metres in height (Ministry of Information, 2017). Second, a coastal plain accounts for 3% of the country's land, and this serves as its main agriculture area, comprising of Al Batinah North and South and the Salalah Plain in the southern part of Oman (Kwarteng *et al.*, 2009). Third, accounting for 82% of the country a plateau in the interior region occupies the area between the mountain ranges in the north and south, and consists of sandy desert wasteland (*Ibid*). These sands and desert include two large areas: the Ash Sharqiyah Sands, formerly known as the Wahiba Sands (or *Ramlat al-Wahibah*), and part of the Empty Quarter (*Rub'a AL Khali*) (Edgell, 2006).

Oman's climate is as diverse as its topography, with humid coastal areas and a hot dry desert interior. The average temperature in Northern Oman from May to September is between 32 and 48 degrees Celsius, and between 26 and 36 degrees from October to April. The coastal regions are hot in the summer, with high temperatures of 46 degrees and more than 90% humidity, while the interior plain

can reach 50 degrees in the summer, with milder temperatures of 15-23 degrees occurring in winter (Kwarteng *et al.*, 2009). The temperature in the highlands and the Dhofar governorate are moderate throughout the year. Although rainfall is light and irregular, the southern Dhofar governorate catches the Indian Ocean's monsoon rains (*Khareef*), which fall between May and September and turn Dhofar green, drawing thousands of tourists from the Gulf Council and other Arab countries every year as they flee the summer heat in their home countries (Ithraa, 2016).

3.2.2 Demography

In 2018, the total Omani population was approximately 4.6 million, with 2.57 million Omanis (56%), and 2.24 million expatriates (44%) who mainly come from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan (NCSI, 2019a). Omani society is particularly youthful, with people under 29 years old making up about two thirds (64%) of the Omani population (NCSI, 2019a). Approximately 50% of the Omani population is less than 21 years old and only 6% is above 60 years old (Al Balushi, 2018).

A labour market gap has been created, for despite a community characterised by a young population and the expansion of its economic sectors which should create jobs for these youth, there has been an expansion of low-skilled and low-cost imported labour. This creates a challenge for the educated Omani labour market to compete with imported labour as an Omani person's demand for wages is equal to their higher educational standard (AL Mamari, 2018). Furthermore, due to limited job opportunities, unattractive benefits and work environments are available in the private sector, so increasing numbers of young Omanis are finding it difficult to secure employment that can guarantee earnings and benefits similar to those provided by the government. This occurrence has led to a decline in the number of Omanis working in the private sector (AL Mamari, 2018). As of 2016, this has resulted in 81% of job opportunities in the Omani private sector being filled by expatriates, versus 43,858 Omani job seekers with 36.7% of them being university graduates (Al Balushi, 2018). Al Balushi (2018) argues that most job opportunities created in Oman go to expatriates as 84.9% of job opportunities in the private sector go to imported labours every year. This has resulted in four billion US dollars leaking out of the Omani economy in 2012; a figure which

increased to nine billion US dollars in 2014, reflecting a currency drain that could affect the country's economy (AL Mamari, 2018).

The challenge of the demographic structure described above, is found mainly in the Muscat and Al Batinah North governorates. Muscat has the highest population in Oman with 1,454,518 people, followed by Al Batinah North, which was home to 770,541 people in 2017 (NCSI, 2019a). Accordingly, the majority of Oman's young population are in Muscat and Al Batinah North, representing 41.4% of the country's total youth population in 2017 (NCSI, 2019a).

3.2.3 Languages in Oman

Arabic is the official language of Oman. Along with Arabic, English and a number of languages including Swahili, Balushi and Lawati are spoken by some in the governorate of Muscat, some parts of the governorate of Al Batinah, and the Al Sharqia North and South governorates (Peterson, 2018). Also, although the Omani dialect is, generally, close to modern standard Arabic, the population residing in the mountains in the governorate of Dhofar speak the Gebali language, a South Arabian language which is not mutually intelligible to Arabic speakers (the word 'Gebali' comes from the Arabic *jabal*, meaning 'mountain') (Risse, 2019:3). In the governorate of Musandam in the north of Oman, the Kumzari language is spoken in Kumzar. Kumzari is a language that contains a number of loanwords from Baluchi, Persian, Urdu and even Portuguese.

This diversity of languages is tied to the geographical location of Oman, which has fostered maritime trading between southeast Asia and Africa, and it is also a legacy of Oman's former East African presence, which resulted in a rich and diverse intangible cultural and linguistic heritage. These intangible assets, that reflect wealth and cultural diversity, could be recognised for preservation by the international organisations because "Indigenous languages keep people connected to culture and this strengthens feelings of pride and self worth." (Parliament of Australia, 2012:8).

3.3 Oman After 1970

Oman's civilisation dates back to the third century BCE (AL Nofali, 2010; Jones and Ridout, 2013), and archaeologists in Oman continue to uncover and explore sites that shed light on the country's ancient history. For example, the recent archaeological work in Sumhuran (in the governorate of Dhofar) suggests that this ancient city was founded in the third century BCE and was a key port for the frankincense trade between Eastern Arabia, the Gulf and the civilisation of the Indus Valley (Jones and Ridout, 2013:1).

Oman has been known by various names throughout its history, the best-known being Majan, Mazoon and Oman (Ministry of Information, 2017). Sumerian manuscripts refer to a country called Majan or the Cooper Mountain (AL Nofali, 2010:14). In Persian culture, they called it Mazoon which is derived from the word *Muzn*, meaning clouds and abundant flowing water. While the name Oman is believed to originate from Arab tribes who migrated from the Uman region of Yemen, others say it owes its origins to Oman bin Ibrahim al Khalil (the prophet Abraham) (Ministry of Information, 2017).

Oman was known as the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman until July 1970 (Funsch, 2015). At that time there were few paved roads, no municipal water system, a single electrical power plant, one hospital, just three schools within the country and no means of communication with the outside world (Funsch, 2015). All this changed dramatically with the assumption of power by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on 23rd July 1970 (Ministry of Information, 2017).

In 1970, on Oman's only radio station, Sultan Qaboos made a speech promising his people the necessary means to educate themselves and to help them participate in the development of modern Oman. The Sultan "invited Omani expatriates to return home to lend their talents to the formidable tasks that lay ahead" (Funsch, 2015:66). Oil revenues helped the country prosper quickly and in just under four decades, the per capita income for Omani people rose from US\$343 in 1970 to US\$14,031 in 2007 (Buerkert *et al.*, 2010). Ninety-seven per cent of all children in Oman now attend secondary school and ninety-seven per cent of the population has access to health care (World Health Organisation, 2008, in Buerkert *et al.*,

2010). Extensive roads, power and mobile networks were built to cover the country (Buerkert *et al.*, 2010). In 2010, “the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reported that between 1970 and 2010 Oman had the fastest progress of any country in the Human Development Index (HDI)” (Funsch, 2015:117). In 2011, the HDI report, which considers health, education, standard of living and quality of life, ranked Oman 90th in the world among 185 member states (Funsch, 2015). Today Oman is considered to be one of the Gulf’s most industrialised countries.

3.4 Modern Oman’s Institutions

The establishment of a modern Oman required an infrastructure of institutions, systems and laws to advance society and support the development of the state. From 1970 onward, state institutions were established and regulatory bodies introduced (AL Mamari, 2018). In 1974, the first economic planning entity was established, with a development council headed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said (Al Balushi, 2018). A national economic development law was issued, followed by the establishment of economic and social strategies for development. This strategy aimed to ensure that profits from oil benefited all generations in Oman and to diversify sources of income with the intention of ensuring Oman’s economic future (Al Balushi, 2018).

On 6th November 1996, the Basic Law of the State was promulgated, comprising 81 articles which established the legal framework governing the functions of different authorities and separating their power, while defining the details and scope of their responsibilities. This document also specified Oman’s system of government and the guiding principles behind the state’s policies. As well as detailing public rights and duties, it also specifies provisions covering the Head of State, the Council of Ministers and Judiciary, and refers to special councils, the Council of Oman, and financial affairs (Ministry of Information, 2017).

To confirm the participation of all members of society in laws, decisions and policy-making, Royal Decree 39/2011 granted the Council of Oman (*Majlis Oman*) legislative and supervisory power (Ministry of Information, 2017). The Council which is established in the Basic Law of the State, includes the appointed members

of the State Council (*Majlis AL Dawla*) and the elected members of the Consultation Council (*Majlis AL Shura*) (AL Mamari, 2018). The Council meets at the invitation of Sultan Qaboos to study and discuss matters raised by His Majesty and makes its decisions through majority votes. At the annual meeting of the Council, which marks the start of the annual sessions of the State and Consultation Council, His Majesty gives a speech which identifies Oman's priorities for national action and the course it will take (AL Mamari, 2018).

3.5 Religious and Socio-Cultural Aspects

The cultural identity of Oman is confirmed in the Article 1 of the basic law: "the sultanate of Oman is an independent, fully sovereign, Arab, Islamic State with its capital in the city of Muscat"; Article 2 in the law states that "the State's religion is Islam and the Sharia is the basis of legislation" (Ministry of Information, 2017:74). Nonetheless, other religions are tolerated under the country's basic law, and places of worship are provided for non-Muslims to freely perform their religious rites while recognising and respecting Oman's morals, culture and traditions (Ministry of Information, 2017).

Islam has a strong impact on Omani lives and practices (Al-Hamadi *et al.*, 2007). As Omanis are a conservative community, respect for their religious values, traditions and morality is specified in the country's basic law, in Article 2 (AL Mamari, 2018). Furthermore, Oman has extended the importance of its national identity through its preliminary 'Vision 2040' document (its newest long-term plan), which has a strategic priority to maintain a society that is proud of its identity and culture and committed to its citizenship (Supreme Council for Planning, 2017).

Although Islam heavily influences Omani culture, the dress code in Oman is more relaxed than the restricted dress code in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, it is based in Sharia law which states that dress should be modest. In Oman, the norm for men is to wear traditional dress (*Dishdasha*) and a turban (*Amama*) or an embroidered skullcap (*Kumma*) (Funsch, 2015). For official and ceremonial occasions, men continue to carry a short, broad, curved dagger (*Khanjar*) crafted from silver and worn in the front of the waistband (Ibid). Women can choose whether to wear the

hijab or not, so there is variety in clothing seen on the streets of Oman as this choice depends on each individual woman's personal preference and cultural background. However, despite women's choice it is seen culturally inappropriate if a woman does not dress relatively modestly. In addition, modesty is not only expected in one's clothing, but also in people's public behaviour.

3.5.1 Tribal Structure

Tribal structure continues to play a powerful role in the lives of Omani people (Al-Hamadi *et al.*, 2007). Before the emergence of the modern state, it was the tribal sheikhs who had the authority to declare and lead war efforts; while in peacetime, sheikhs used the opinions of advisory councils to help manage tribal affairs (AL Mamari, 2018). The head of a tribe in Oman is regarded as the father of the tribe; each tribe has its own sheikh who is responsible for tribe members. This sheikhdom is usually hereditary and given to the eldest son, even if he is young (Othman *et al.*, 2009). The sheikh's role is the maintenance of justice and conflict resolution through customs and the principles of the Holy Qur'an. When sheikhs apply these two sets of values they gain the loyalty of their tribe members (Othman *et al.*, 2009).

In the current era, to implement the principles of partnership in governance and to connect tradition with modernisation, tribal sheikhs have been incorporated into local administration (AL Mamari, 2018): sheikhs now play the role of official intermediaries between individuals in the local community and the government (Valeri, 2013). Their role has changed and now mainly entails organising tribal affairs, while also participating in local councils and assisting *walis* (local governors) in areas such as conflict resolution and the certification of official documents. While responsibility for judicial issues has transferred from sheikhs to responsible authorities in the state (Othman *et al.*, 2009), the hierarchy of the tribe still plays a major role in modern Omani society (Al-Hamadi *et al.*, 2007). According to Othman *et al.* (2009) more than 130 tribes remain in Oman.

3.6 The Omani Economy

Since the 1960s, oil has been the single most important commodity in the GCC region, which collectively provides 20% of the world's oil, generating 60-90% of government revenue in the region (Lahn, 2016, in Stephenson, 2017). The Gulf states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE formed the Cooperation Council of the Arab states of the Gulf GCC in May 1981 (Stephenson, 2017). For over 12 years, starting in 1998, the GCC's GDP expanded by an average of 5.2%, resulting in stronger economies than the other Middle Eastern and North African countries (Stephenson, 2017). Citizens of GCC countries enjoy free education, medical care and even housing (in some countries), as well as many other subsidies (Sultan, 2012).

However, the GCC countries are naturally concerned about the finite nature of oil and the risks of excessive dependence upon oil exports. Since the mid-1980s, the GCC countries have faced unstable oil prices, especially in 1997 when the value per barrel fell to US\$10 (Sultan, 2012). Economic diversification policies have been introduced to move these countries away from an oil and gas-centric economy (Stephenson, 2017). Thus, Oman's government is aware that it needs to diversify its economy and to reduce its reliance on oil, which accounted for 56.3% of Oman's total exports, 68% of its government revenue, and 27.4% of its total GDP In 2016 (Al Balushi, 2018). In 1995, 'Vision 2020', an economic plan for Oman, was launched, with a key focus on three areas: economic diversification in order to reduce oil's domination of the economy, with the goal of reducing the oil sector's contribution to Oman's GDP from 31.7% in 1995 to about 10% by 2020; maintaining the policy of 'Omanisation', which aims to replace expatriate workers in the private sector with educated Omani nationals, an intended rise from 15% in 1995 to 75% by 2020; and the development of a private sector that is capable of making optimal use of Oman's human and natural resources in efficient and environmentally friendly ways, with an increase in total investment from 30% in 1995 to 91% by 2020 (Ministry of National Economy, 2007). The tourism industry was chose as a priority economic sector, so the government increased investments in its development in order to create job opportunities for Omanis with the aim of increasing tourism's contribution to the Sultanate's GDP from 0.8% in 1995 to 3% in 2020 (Ministry of National Economy, 2007).

However, the government's efforts to achieve these goals have fallen short: the oil sector's contribution to the GDP decreased to 29% in 2017 (NCSI, 2018); the 'Omanisation' policy failed to achieve its goals (Al Balushi, 2018); and the majority of private sector jobs are held by expatriates. The 'Omanisation' policy encourages Omani youth to seek employment opportunities within the private sector across all industries. However, in 2016, due to labour market distortions and practises discouraging Omani employment, Omani youth made up only 12% of the private sector, which provides 90% of the total jobs in Oman, with the remaining 88% filled by expatriates (Al Balushi, 2018). Furthermore, the available statistics indicate that the private sector did not exceed 35% total investment in 2008 (although the information available on this issue is limited) (Al Balushi, 2018).

Similarly, although the tourism sector succeeded in increasing its share of the GDP from 0.8% in 1995 to 2.6% in 2018 (NCSI, 2019c) (see Section 3.7.3), the job opportunities in this sector are lost economic opportunities for Omani nationals. Although the government has implemented the Omanisation policy, which aims to replace expatriate workers with trained Omani nationals, it has failed to meet targets for the tourism sector due to social and cultural concerns (Al Balushi and Wise, 2017). Working in the tourism industry, especially in the hotel sector, is perceived as an unattractive career path for Omani nationals. This is due to low salaries, inconvenient working hours and conditions, and its association with the negative images of serving alcohol, which severely contradicts Islamic values (Al Balushi, 2008). As a result, according to the NCSI's (2019c) statistics, in 2018, only 30.9% of workers in the hospitality sector were Omanis.

Many factors have contributed to the limited achievement of Vision 2020's goals. These factors include global crises, such as the collapse of oil prices in 1998, as well as in 2014, 2015 and 2016, which have ravaged the economies of Oman and a number of countries around the world (Al Balushi, 2018; Dorian, 2019). Furthermore, Vision 2020 set long-term goals but did not develop specific strategies, implementation plans, performance indicators and evaluation tools to achieve them (Al Balushi, 2018). Additionally, stakeholders from the private sector and local communities were not involved in the development of Vision 2020's goals, and the roles of these parties were not identified which led to a lack of

coordination and cooperation. The absence of an official body concerned with the implementation of these goals and the lack of data to measure the plan's performance have also contributed towards this limited achievement (Al Balushi, 2018).

To overcome the unsuccessful experience of Vision 2020, as part of its ninth five-year plan, the government introduced the *Tanfeedh* program covering the period of 2016-2020. With the participation of more than 250 members of the public and private sectors, the government released *Tanfeedh* to encourage the continued policy of diversifying the economy and decreasing overreliance on oil resources, as well as for job creation (Al Balushi, 2018; Supreme Council for planning, 2016). The tourism sector was prioritised for growth and support, along with the transformative industries and logistics sector. To increase the contribution of these sectors to the country's GDP, decrease reliance on government expenditure and create 30,000 job opportunities for Omanis, the *Tanfeedh* programme announced 121 initiatives to support the development of these three sectors. In addition, the government established an "implementation and follow-up unit" to monitor the progress of the implementation of these initiatives and to measure the outcomes of their participants and entities (Supreme Council for Planning, 2016; 2017). Meanwhile, a new long-term plan for the Omani economy, Vision 2040, was introduced. The following section will highlight the plan's main strategic directions.

3.6.1 Vision 2040

In 2019, with the wide participation of all segments of Omani society (including government entities, the private sector, civil society organisations and individuals), Vision 2040 was formulated (SCP, 2019). The long-term plan preliminary document for Vision 2040 includes socio-economic policies, national priorities, strategic directions and objectives within the Omani socio-economic context, all of which will be implemented through five-year plans during the period from 2020-2040 (SCP, 2019).

The preliminary Vision 2040 document highlights the development of governorates and sustainable cities as a priority strategic direction. It aims to source local

management and leadership to maintain the principles of decentralisation (a restructuring and reorganisation of authority), and to contribute to the comprehensive socio-economic development of governorates (Supreme Council for Planning, 2019).

Citizenship, identity and national heritage and culture are also identified as focuses of Vision 2040, which maintains that:

“the need for modernisation and integration in an era of advanced science and technology must be counterbalanced by a deep-rooted sense of belonging to an authentic culture, in order to enrich the Omani identity and preserve traditions and privacy” (Supreme Council for Planning, 2019:23).

The priorities of Vision 2040 support the development and positive participation of local residents in the tourism industry. However, the successful achievement of these ambitious goals requires implementation plans that determine the roles and responsibilities of different entities and stakeholders, supported by an implemented regulation.

3.7 The Tourism Industry in Oman

The Sultanate of Oman is an emerging tourist destination. Tourism is a relatively new concept, with an official tourism body only being established in the 1970s under the supervision of the Ministry of Information (AL Bleek, 2017). In the 1980s, supervision was transferred to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and in 2004 the MOT was established with the mission of facilitating economic diversification, preserving cultural and environmental resources, facilitating tourism promotion, and planning and managing the development of tourist destinations (Ministry of Tourism, 2006).

Several international reports have identified Oman’s tourism industry as being capable of strong growth, enhanced by government policies that promote political stability and security, as well as by Oman’s rich cultural, natural and historical assets. These positive factors have brought the Omani tourism industry into sixth

place among Arab countries on the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index for 2017, as reported by the World Economic Forum in Davos. Globally, Oman is ranked 66th on the biennial index (an award that was initiated in 2005 and is financed by the State of Denmark) from a pool of 136 countries (Ministry of Information, 2017).

This section will discuss Oman's national tourism industry and the country's economic objectives and plans by focusing on tourism statistics, Oman's Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), the hotel sector and Oman's tourist strategy.

3.7.1 Inbound Tourist Statistics

Inbound tourism refers to non-residents or foreign tourists. The number of inbound tourists coming into Oman continued to increase during the last eight years 2011-2018, with a growth rate 12.8% rising from 1.3 million to 3.4 million tourists (see Table 3.1) (NCSI, 2019c). In 2018, tourists from the GCC represented the largest share (45.4%), related to people visiting relatives and friends in Oman due to cultural and family ties, followed by Asia (21.3%), Europe (19%), non-GCC Arab countries (8%), and others (6.3%) (NCSI, 2019c). In 2018 the main purposes for visit to Oman were visiting for leisure and recreation (46%), visiting friends and relatives (32.1%), and business (10.8%) (NCSI, 2019c).

Table 3.1: Inbound Tourist Numbers and Expenditure in Oman (2011-2018)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Inbound tourists (in millions)	1.3	1.7	1.9	2.2	2.6	3.2	3.17	3.4
Expenditure (in OMR millions)	158.6	192.9	238.4	306.4	364.7	427.3	532.2	679.1
Expenditure (in GBP millions)	331.2	402.9	497.9	640.0	761.7	892.5	1,111.6	1,418.5

Source: NCSI, (2019c)

As can be seen from Table 3.1 above, total spending for the inbound tourists to Oman increased for more than quadrupled during 2011-2018, it jumped from (OMR)158.6 million (£331.2 million) in 2011 to (OMR) 679.2 million (£1.418 billion) in 2018 (NCSI, 2019c). The tourists highest spending in 2018 was on the accommodations services accounting for 31% of the total spending. Followed by their expenditure on Air transport accounting for 29.7% followed by the spending on food and beverages 14.7% and 8% for shopping (Ibid). According to the national centre for statistics and information (2019) in 2018, 2.3 million of the tourists stayed for more than one night accounting for 71% of the total tourists, while 29% of the tourists stayed only for one night, the average night of tourist staying was nine nights(NCSI, 2019c).

3.7.2 Domestic Tourist Statistics

The NCSI confirms that the number of inbound tourists has doubled in the period between 2005-2014, but domestic tourists have more than tripled during the same period (NCSI, 2016b). According to the NCSI (2019c), 50.8% of tourists' total expenditure comes from domestic tourism in Oman, which accounts for (OMR)699.9 million (£1.461 billion), while 49.2% comes from inbound tourist

expenditure, which accounts for (OMR)679.2 million (£1.418 billion) in 2018. For domestic tourists in 2017, shopping accounted for 33.9% of their total expenditure, followed by accommodation (15.5%), travel agencies and tourism services (10.2%), road transport services (9.7%), and air transport services (7.8%) (NCSI, 2019c). However, although NCSI (2016, 2018, 2019c) reports claim that domestic tourism accounts for the majority of tourism in Oman, limited information is available on the total number of domestic tourists visiting different tourist destinations in Oman.

3.7.3 Tourism Satellite Account (TSA)

The concept of a Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) can be described as an instrument that describes the size of a tourism industry and tourism's macroeconomic contribution, such as the added value of tourism to national productivity (NCSI, 2018). Based on Oman's national data, in 2018 tourism production totalled (OMR)1.4 billion (£2.83 billion), of which 50.8%, or (OMR) 699.9 million (£1.415 billion), was derived from domestic tourists, while the remaining 49.2%, or (OMR) 679.2 million (£1.373 billion), came from inbound tourists (NCSI, 2019c). The direct added value of Omani tourism increased to (OMR) 788.6 million (£1.594 billion) with tourism's share of the GDP reaching 2.6% in 2018 (NCSI, 2019). This was up from (OMR) 653.2 million (£1.315 billion), with a 2.1% share of the GDP in 2013 (NCSI, 2016b). This evidences an increase in the size of the tourism industry in the Omani economy during the period from 2013-2018. This might reflect that the tourism sector is a potential means of diversifying the Omani economy and reducing its dependence on oil and gas.

However, the question is whether a TSA provides information on who benefits from tourism development and how it impacts local economies. A TSA reflects the size of the tourism industry within a national economy, which could be a useful tool for advanced economies which are mature and can produce tourism products locally. However, many countries such as Oman rely mainly on imported products to supply the tourism industry and tourists needs, this is where the tourism economy leaks potential local profits. Furthermore, the tourism industry in Oman relies predominantly on expatriate workers as will be seen in the next section. Hence, a TSA cannot provide an indication of the extent to which the local

economy is benefiting from tourism development because the size of the tourism industry in a country's economy does not necessarily provide a clear indication of the extent to which tourism contributes to the local economy, or the extent to which the gains generated by the tourism industry leak out of a country's national economy. The Omani government needs to find ways to retain the economic benefits of tourism within Oman.

3.7.4 The Hotel Sector and Employment

In 2018, the total number of tourist accommodations reached 412, an increase of 53 units on the previous year 2017. The total revenues generated from hotel activities in 2018 increased by 10% compare to 2017. Of the total revenues, 47.7% of revenues generated by five-star hotels, 24% from the four-star hotels, 9% from three-star hotels, 5.5% from two-star hotels, and 13.8% from other type of accommodations such as: one-star hotels, guest houses, and hotel apartments. Table 3.2 show the growth in the hotel sector in Oman during the period 2011-2018. According to the national centre for statistics and information (2019c) Of the 412 hotels in Oman, 155 are located in the Muscat governorate, 52 in Al Sharqia South, 41 in Al Dakhliya, 34 in Dhofar, 28 in Al Buraimi, 30 in Al Batenah North, 27 in Al Sharqia North, 13 in Al Wusta, 16 in Al Batenah South, 9 in Musanadam and 7 in Al Dahira (NCSI, 2019c).

Table 3.2: Hotel Sector Growth in Oman (2011-2018)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Hotel number	235	248	266	286	318	340	359	412
Guests number in millions	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.4	2.7	3.3	3.3	3.5
Guests nights in millions	1.8	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.9	3.4	3.2	3.5
Revenue in millions OMR	153.8	179.1	198.8	216.8	226.9	230.3	236.1	259.6
Revenue in millions £	321.1	373.8	414.9	452.6	473.7	480.7	492.8	541.8

Source: NCSI (2019c)

The total number of employees working in the hotel industry reached 18.6 in 2018 which is an increase of 32.6% from 2017. Of the total employees in Oman working in the hospitality service, 30.9% were Omani, while 69.1% were non-Omani (NCSI, 2019b). The total annual growth of employees in the hotel sector has been 14.7% over the past five years (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Hotel Sector Employment in Oman (2013-2018)

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Omani	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.6	3.9	5.7
Non-Omani	6.6	7.3	7.7	8.7	10.0	12.8
Total employment	9.8	10.7	11.0	12.3	14.0	18.6

Source: NCSI (2019b)

As can be seen from the above table, although the hotel sector contributes many job opportunities in the Omani tourism industry, most of these jobs are filled by expatriates, leading to economic leakage. These expatriates are mainly from Southeast Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines) and Africa (Ethiopia, Egypt, and other African countries) (AL Busaidi *et al.*, 2019). In 2016, the overall education level of the 1,825,603 expatriate workforce in Oman was secondary or lower, with 89% of the expatriate workforce representing unskilled labour (Al Balushi, 2018).

Although the government has provided free high-quality education and training for Omani youth in hospitality and tourism, due to the misconception that no attractive career prospects exist, as well as due to social and religious perspectives and poor working conditions, most graduates from this sector seek jobs opportunities in banks, communication and other sectors, with foreign workers serving as the face of tourism industry (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b). This reflects a gap between the government's plans and targets and Omani youth's career preferences. However, in 2019 the MOT introduced a new training program for tour guiding, which succeeded in training and licensing 362 Omanis youth to speak languages, such as English, German, French, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and Korean. The success of this training reflects that this type of job may be more attractive to Omanis than working in the hotel sector, and thus more government support and regulations might be needed to organise and develop

well-trained Omanis who can provide a high-quality, authentic tourism experience.

3.7.5 Oman's Tourism Strategy

Many tourism plans and strategies have been developed towards the government's aim of increasing the tourism sector's contribution to Oman's economy and to optimise the potential benefits of the Sultanate's unique and rich natural, cultural and historical resources. However, these strategies and plans have either been only partially implemented, such as the Priority Action Plan for Tourism Development in Oman (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2002), or remained on paper, as in the case of the Oman Tourism Development Plan (Ministry of Tourism, 2006).

With increasing government attention on the tourism industry's importance for Oman's economy, new long-term tourism strategies have been developed for the period 2016-2040 (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b). The guiding principles of Oman's new tourism strategy are:

1. To improve the local community's quality of life, while benefiting tourism stakeholders in terms of generating wealth, building social values, creating job opportunities and minimising tourism's negative social and environmental impacts;
2. To cultivate Omani culture, heritage and traditions, such as forts and castles, UNESCO historical sites and intangible cultural heritage, traditional customs, the Omani character and hospitality;
3. To preserve the natural resources of the fragile environment, such as desert, *wadis*, coast and marina ecosystems and indigenous flora and fauna, such as turtles, oryx and leopards (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b:43).

To address the key issues currently facing tourism in Oman, the development of Oman's tourism strategy consisted of an extensive consultation with both public and private sectors stakeholders, as well as individuals from local communities.

This consultation processes incorporated the concerns and opinions of the wider local communities and related tourism stakeholders on tourism development issues; it involved comprehensive interviews, meetings, workshops and political campaigns conducted in Muscat and 10 other governorates between 2014 and 2015 (Ministry of Tourism, 2015). The consultation process identified 15 key issues to be tackled for a successful tourism development strategy in Oman (as presented in Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Key Issues to be Tackled for Successful Tourism Development in Oman



Source: Ministry of Tourism (2016:59)

Although there is a high level of commitment from the government regarding the development of the tourism sector “the Ministry of Tourism is still in its developing stages towards becoming a fully efficient organisation” (Ministry of Tourism, 2016:47). As Oman is relatively new to the tourism industry and the MOT was only founded in 2004, the country has limited experience in developing and managing its tourism industry. Another key issue is that although tourism can contribute to

the enhancement of local community well-being and bring economic benefits, local community awareness regarding tourism is still low and few community members benefit from it. Furthermore, despite the stable and reliable legal system in Oman, tourism regulations are complex and inadequate to support the private sector, especially small and medium entrepreneurs, due to complex bureaucratic processes for licencing and approving tourism projects (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b).

3.7.5.1 Vision and Goals

Oman's newest vision for its tourism industry is "to become, by 2040, a top of mind destination for vacations, discovery and meetings, attracting more than 11 million international and local tourists [...] by inviting open-minded travellers to experience the authentic culture of Oman and Arabia" (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b:78). The government's main socio-economic objectives are to create 535,000 jobs, to raise the tourism sector's contribution to Oman's GDP to around 6% by 2040, to simulate the growth of Omani SMEs, and to protect local communities quality of life through maintenance of local identity and cultural pride (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b).

To meet these objectives, the strategy identifies nine types of holidays and tourist models in which Oman could be expected to successfully compete: vacations to relax, touring and culture, nature and adventure, special interest, short breaks and stopovers, festivals, meetings and exhibitions, day visitors and visits to friends and relatives. In addition, strategic directions and guidance were introduced to overcome and tackle the key issues and challenges facing the active participation of tourism stakeholders in sustainable tourism development in Oman. Oman's tourism strategy report also recommends a planning framework and the development of concepts and guidelines for tourism development. The consultant team working on the strategy in coordination with the MOT team is currently at the stage of developing plans for implementation, which are expected to be applied by the beginning of 2020 (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b).

Nevertheless, as has been noted above, the Omani government has been undertaking remarkable efforts to further expand the nation's tourism sector. It

has identified the tourism industry as one of the top sectors that can contribute to the diversification of the country's economy and create job opportunities for Omani youth. The new national tourism strategy aims to see Oman welcoming 11 million tourists per year by 2040, which represents a tripling of the inbound tourists that are currently visiting Oman (NCSI, 2019c). This means tourism would account for 6% of the country's GDP in 2040 (MOT, 2016b). A positive upward trend in inbound and domestic tourists and hotel guests was already noticeable even before the new national tourism strategy was introduced; Oman's inbound tourists more than doubled from 1.3 million in 2011 to 3.4 million in 2018, which represents a growth rate of 12.8% over eight years (NCSI, 2019c), and the number of domestic tourists tripled during the period from 2005-2014 (NCSI,2017).

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI, 2019c), 3.5 million nights in tourist accommodation were documented during the year 2018, with revenues totalling OMR 259.6 million (£541.8 million); that is 10% growth rate compared to 2017 (NCSI,2019c). The number of hotels increased from 235 in 2011 to 412 in 2018, with an increase of 32.6% in employment number, which reached 18,627 in 2018 compared to 14,050 in 2017 (Ibid). The direct value added of tourism reached OMR 783.6 million (£1.594 billion) in 2018, which was a 6.8% increase over OMR 738.4 million in 2017 (£1.541 billion) (NCSI, 2019c). In 2018, the value added of tourism accounted for 2.6% of the GDP (NCSI,2019c), up from OMR 653.2 million (£1.315 billion) in 2013, when it represented a 2.1% share of the GDP (NCSI, 2016b). This might suggest that the tourism industry is a potential means of diversifying the Omani economy and reducing its dependence on oil and gas.

Despite the rapid growth of tourism, little attention has been paid to the social and cultural impacts of tourism development on the local communities' perceptions of tourism growth in Oman. While a growing body of work can be found on the topic of tourism in Oman (Al Busaidi et al., 2019; Al Sawafi, 2017; AL Balushi and Wise, 2017; Belwal and Belwal, 2010; Mershen, 2007), limited studies have explored the socio-cultural impacts of tourism and their influence on the attitudes of local community residents towards the presence of tourism, the continuation of its growth and its potential consequences. Thus, this study attempts to address this research gap by exploring Omani residents' attitudes to

the presence of tourists and tourism activities. The findings will be conceptualised through the application of the conceptual model.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of tourism in Oman and its economic importance to the development of the country. It has also described economic diversification in Oman, as well as the importance of the emergence of the tourism sector as an alternative source of income to the oil sector; due to the country's wealth of tourism assets and its aims to decrease its reliance on the oil sector. Oman's vision and objectives for tourism and the key challenges faced by the tourism industry in Oman have been emphasised, and the current situation highlighted. One of the key challenges facing the tourism industry in Oman is that although available data shows that the tourism industry is growing, limited research has addressed the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the host community in Oman. This research sheds light on the data related to the tourism industry in Oman, including increasing numbers of tourists, their expenditure, and tourism's contribution to the GDP, because the growth of tourism in Oman has created concerns among the local community regarding socio-cultural well-being and quality of life in tourism destinations.

These issues needed to be studied in Oman to discover how tourism development influence host-guest relationships. Also, as the Omani community's cultural and religious values are a core aspect of their socio-cultural well-being, investigating this issue is essential to find out whether it is linked to their attitudes towards tourists' behaviour and tourism activities. Thus, it would be useful to explore the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of tourism development in Oman.

This chapter has demonstrated that the Omani government is undertaking remarkable efforts to develop tourism in Oman. It has defined the tourism industry as one of the top sectors that can contribute to the diversification of the country's economy and create job opportunities for Omani youth. The MOT is committed to developing a strategy for sustainable tourism development in Oman, which reflects the government's belief in tourism: that it is important for maintaining

economic development in all governorates in the country. The government has also contributed in the political stability of Oman and acknowledges that its economic and legal frameworks are strong assets for attracting tourism investment and tourists into the country. Oman's beautiful desert, mountains, *wadis*, caves and natural springs, with the rich Arab cultural traditions of its people, historical and archaeological resources and welcoming locals have created a uniquely authentic tourism destination.

Notwithstanding the strength of Omani tourism, it has weak aspects as well. The absence of strategic sector planning and the lack of implemented plans are major weaknesses hindering the appropriate development of tourism facilities and the management of tourist destinations. The absence of appropriate planning and development for tourist destinations to maintain positive socio-cultural, socio-economic and environmental impacts concerning tourist activities and behaviours is one of the main challenges that is threatening the local community's social capacity and quality of life in tourist destinations.

As it is in its early stages of development, tourism development in Oman also possesses opportunities. There exists still great potential for economic benefits and job opportunities to be improved for the growing population of Omani youth. Tourism could be economically viable and socially desirable if it is appropriately managed and well developed. However, tourism faces some threats if conservative Muslim local communities continue to face Westernised approaches to tourism development, as tourism development will then fail to maintain a positive host-guest relationship due to culture clashes, which will affect host communities' support for tourism development. Therefore, there is a need to explore the factors that could encourage more positive host-guest relations and the sustainable development of the tourism industry in Oman.

Now that the Sultanate of Oman's history, geography, religion, culture, economy and tourism industry, has been outlined, the next chapter details the research design and methods used to approach this study's research question and objectives.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter first will reflect on the research methodology, presenting the researcher's long experience and concerns regarding the impacts of tourism on the local community in the Sultanate of Oman. Then it describes the research paradigms and the epistemological and theoretical perspectives, in order to justify the main reasons for adopting an ethnographic method and using a qualitative multiple case study approach. It then details the research design employed to explore the primary research objective: to determine the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the local community in the Sultanate of Oman, and whether these social-cultural impacts hinder or support local community participation and engagement, and result in economic benefits in relation to tourism development.

Second, this chapter provides an overview of the sampling procedure and the fieldwork conducted for this study, detailing the different methods used to collect the data in three stages. The first stage involved semi-structured interviews with people representing the related government authorities and private sector players who are responsible for local community entrepreneurship support and engagement in the economy. A key purpose of the interviews was to explore the extent to which local community participation and economic benefits from the tourism industry are considered in these government authorities plans and strategies. The second stage used semi-structured interviews and focus groups in Bidiyah to provide empirical evidence for the study; the third stage did the same in WBK. This was followed by document analysis of materials from different government authorities.

The final section of the chapter explains the techniques that were applied to construct the research validity, followed by how the data was transcribed and analysed.

4.2 Reflexive Ethnography of the Research

This study is connected to the researcher's personal concerns regarding the impacts of tourism on a local community's social life, cultural values, economic benefits and the environmental assets of their living space. The researcher's interest in tourism arose in 1996, when working in the planning department of the governmental authority responsible for tourism in Oman. There, the researcher dealt with feasibility studies for tourism projects, tourist statistics and masterplans for developing tourist destinations in the country. It was due to the researcher's exposure to these studies and statistics that they began to consider the impacts of tourism from the point of view of the local community.

In 2003, the researcher studied for a master's degree on the impacts of tourism, which alerted them to the importance of considering the social, cultural and environmental assessments of tourism alongside the economic benefits to local communities residing in tourist destinations. In 2004, the researcher applied knowledge gained during her master's studies to her work in tourism planning and management. As a department head in the MOT, the researcher visited tourist destinations in Oman, and observed local communities' participation and involvement. The researcher was part of a team involved in the development of research and masterplan studies examining several sites in Oman, such as Al Jabal Al Akhadar, Wadi Darbat and Banadar Al Khiran. The researcher was also involved in a national study on the development and capacity-building of Omani human resources in tourism.

As a director responsible for tourism statistics in 2006, the researcher became interested in the indicators of tourism statistics emphasised by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation. These indicators are maintained by every member country and are regarded as the main indicators of the tourism industry and its growth. However, the researcher wondered about the extent to which these indicators (such as tourist arrival numbers, the number of job opportunities created in the tourism industry and the contribution of tourism to the country's GDP) reflected (or failed to reflect) the true benefits of tourism development for a local community. More importantly, the researcher wondered, do these indicators of tourism's contribution to the GDP reflect the true economic benefits

gained by a country from its tourism industry? This issue of economic benefit was acknowledged in early studies on tourism development by Greenwood (1972) and has remained widely recognised (Ashley and Mitchell, 2008; Choudhury and Goswami, 2023; Ndivo and Cantoni, 2016). It is the central motive for countries to develop tourism and is thus worth investigating.

In the case of Oman, despite an increase in tourist numbers and the growing contribution of tourism to the Omani GDP, indicators on the ground reflect low percentages of Omani people working in tourist services, such as accommodation and restaurants. Moreover, tourism statistics do not reflect the social, cultural or environmental impacts of tourism, nor do they consider its implications on the local community's support for tourism growth.

In 2014, as a planning team member in MOT, the researcher was involved in supervising a consultant developing the new Omani national tourism strategy for 2016-2040. The process of developing this strategy involved a wide range of Omani community members across all governorates. The consultation included stakeholders from related government authorities, the tourism industry, local community representatives and local community members. Regional workshops were conducted to capture stakeholders' views and concerns regarding issues related to tourism development. Moreover, a field visit was conducted to tourist services and attractions during this consultation process in the regions, giving the researcher the opportunity to observe tourism development and limited local community presence in the Omani tourism industry.

The latter factor strongly motivated the researcher to investigate issues that are hindering local community participation and involvement in tourism development in Oman. This was a topic that had not been approached comprehensively in Oman through a field study, especially for Bidiyah and WBK.

The researcher is a government official working in the MOT (as Assistant Director General of Statistics and Information Technology in the Planning, Information and follow up directorate), and this position supported the research by providing her with holistic insight into tourism in Oman. It also enhanced the researcher's ability to access government perspectives on tourism development in the researched

areas. Thanks to her long experience and by interviewing different levels of government players and decision-makers, including the Minister of Tourism in Oman, the researcher had good opportunities to capture government perspectives on tourism development.

However, this insider status raises some issues. The researcher was aware of questions related to bias and that the opinions voiced by participants might be influenced by the status and perceived power of the researcher. Although the researcher's prior knowledge and experience was valuable, it was also important not to make assumptions. The first issue was the importance of ensuring confidentiality for all participants involved in this study. Given the researcher's position as member of the MOT, it was crucial to find techniques that would allow her to obtain data without any bias or data being skewed by one perspective. This study adopted triangulation techniques by using multiple sources of data, as information was gathered from different tourism stakeholders: government officials, local community residents, tourist business operators and international and domestic tourists. Furthermore, multiple methods were used to study the phenomenon, such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. This allowed the researcher to address the understudied subject from different perspectives and validate the data.

In addition to the triangulation approach, some measures were taken to overcome the disadvantages of being an insider researcher. Specifically, the participants were assured that data would be confidential and anonymity would be maintained, ethical procedures were applied, participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw any time. The researcher was aware of her potential influence as an employee in the MOT, and the importance of confidentiality was emphasised, in particular by ensuring that the data would not be seen by the government authorities. Issues associated with being an insider researcher will be explained in further detail when outlining the methodology.

In order to explain the choice of methodology, it is necessary to discuss the research philosophy and the philosophical differences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches. To that end, the following section discusses the

positivist and interpretivist paradigms and investigates the philosophy of these approaches from ontological and epistemological perspectives.

4.3 Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology and Methods

Research philosophy refer to beliefs and assumptions of knowledge. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018:19), a researcher's actions are related to a set of beliefs that define their worldview, which raises questions about three important matters: "the nature of reality" (ontology), the way in which that reality is understood (epistemology), and how reality is addressed (methodology). These beliefs shape how research is conducted in terms of methodology and methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

Goodson and Phillimore (2004:35) suggest that a researcher can identify her or his inquiry paradigm by answering three interrelated questions:

- The ontological question: what is the form and nature of reality, and what can be known about reality?
- The epistemological question: what is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and subject?
- The methodological question: how can the researcher find out what she/he believes can be known?

Based on the answers to the questions above, and the relationships between those answers, the resulting ontology defines a study's epistemology, which in turn defines the most suitable methods and techniques to investigate the research problem and achieve the aim of the study (Slevitch, 2011).

In the philosophy of science there are several types of philosophical paradigms, including positivism and interpretivism or constructivism (Bryman, 2016; Croty, 2014). Positivism is a quantitative epistemology based on the idea that phenomena have objective realities (Slevitch, 2011). It aims to generate hypotheses that can be tested, and allows the analysis of the relationship among phenomena without

being influenced by the researcher or influencing her/him (Bryman, 2016); namely, that the world exists separate from the researcher and their personal beliefs of it. Thus, validity is a key requirement of this paradigm to prevent biased outcomes and large sample sizes are essential (Bryman, 2016; Slevitch, 2011). Thus, empirical inquiry is relied upon to create generalisations referred to as scientific law (Saunders and Thornhill, 2009). In contrast, the interpretive paradigm assumes that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation; this paradigm holds that reality consists of people's subjective experience of the external world (Saunders and Thornhill, 2009). The interpretivist approach aims to gain an understanding of the phenomena based on the participants' viewpoints and their social-cultural reality and its emphasis on cultural context and social interpretation (Bryman, 2016; Slevitch, 2011).

In this context, the epistemological perspective of this research is rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, as its main focus is to explore human interactions in social settings within a specific cultural context. In order to construct a comprehensive understanding of how local residents of Bidiyah and WBK perceive tourism development, two case studies will be used to identify the socio-cultural impacts of tourism development and their influence on host-guest relationships in the conservative Muslim setting of the Sultanate of Oman. The interpretive approach is used to explore the experience of tourism key stakeholders to see things from their points of view.

In the social sciences, researches can be classified as quantitative studies, qualitative studies or could combine both approaches (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative research related to meanings, concepts and descriptions of things, where's quantitative research refers to statistics and measures of things (Bryman, 2016). Quantitative researchers incorporate data and find out the relationship between one set of gathered facts with another, while, qualitative researcher pay more attention to appreciating individual and group perceptions (Creswell and Poth, 2018). qualitative research uses naturalistic approach that tries to comprehend an experience in context specific- setting (Golfshani, 2003).

Qualitative research is context bound; that is, the meaning of the data provided by participants cannot be separated from its context (Slevitch, 2011). The aim of

qualitative research is to interpret the world as seen through the eyes of the people being interrogated (Bryman, 2016). This means that the researcher needs to be aware of the context and to approach participants with sensitivity and an understanding of their cultural rules and context. This is particularly important to this study, as values and social context shape how tourism development is perceived in Oman. This means the researcher needs to be sensitive to the participants' values and social context through a process of reflexivity, and also be aware of her own values and context and how this may influence the research. Bryman (2016:394) suggests that qualitative research provides "thick description" of people's social situation and events because such details provide an understanding of the context in which people's behaviours take place. Therefore, the use of quotes from the interviewees, supported by explanations of key cultural terms, will be used to enhance description and make this study more vivid, as well as providing a fuller picture of the context.

In this study, a qualitative approach was chosen due to the nature of the research problem. The researcher collected primary data to inform the development of an ethnography methodology. A qualitative approach was selected owing to the aim and objectives that call for rich in-depth qualitative data to understand the views of local residents of Bidiyah and WBK in the Sultanate of Oman in relation to the issue of tourism development and its impacts on them, and their attitudes towards tourists and tourism growth. Crotty (2014:75) states, "Only through dialogue can one become aware of the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of others and interpret their meaning", especially where culture is concerned. Thus, from an ontological perspective, investigating local communities' attitudes towards tourism requires the use of qualitative research methods (Nunkoo *et al.*, 2013). Qualitative research method includes ethnography, historical research, and case study (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

It is widely accepted that cultural research has been generally characterised by ethnographic studies (Pereiro, 2010; Punch, 2014; Sandiford and Ap, 1998; Wise, 2018). Wise (2018) explains that the term 'ethnography' combines 'ethno' (human culture) and 'graphy' (description). It is therefore defined the study of human interaction in social settings, such as tourism: a social and cultural phenomenon in which social interactions between hosts and guest occur, and the cultural

dimension influences all parties' attitudes and behaviours. Culture refers to the ideas, beliefs and knowledge that characterise a group of people (Reisinger and Turner, 2011). Herbig (1998 in: Reisinger and Turner, 2011) states that culture influences behaviour and determines what is acceptable and should be encouraged and what is harmful and should be discouraged. Culture dictates ideas and sets of rules that societies follow (Reisinger and Turner, 2011). For example, culture dictates what clothes to wear, what food to eat, what to say and how to serve tourists. Reisinger and Turner (2011) argue that culture differences can cause problems in social interaction between hosts and guests from different backgrounds; if tourists' cultural behaviour creates serious concerns according to the host community's cultural values, the hosts may reject tourists and tourism.

In destinations where the majority of tourists are foreigners, the host community perceives tourists to be different from themselves in behaviour or morality (Pizam and Telisman-Kosuta, 1989 in: Reisinger and Turner, 2011). Such differences might influence hosts' attitudes towards tourists and shape their relationship with them, which in turn reflects on the hosts' support for the tourism industry and its sustainability. Thus, there is a need to assess the socio-cultural impacts of tourism and investigate its influence on the host community's perceptions of tourism. Hence, to assess the potential social and cultural impacts of tourism development on local Omani communities, the social and cultural contexts of Bidiyah and WBK were investigated through an ethnographic approach because it was the most appropriate method to examine the cultural dimension of tourism's impacts on the local community.

Ethnographic methodology is a useful tool for tourism planners to assess the cultural impacts of tourism in the social setting of host-guest relations (Sandiford and Ap, 1998; Nunkoo and Wise, 2018; Pereiro, 2010). Its ability to explore how local communities perceive tourism, plus what irritates them and why, can provide insights on minimising anticipated negative impacts. This is particularly significant when planning tourism development as a vehicle for local economic benefits, particularly for communities with conservative cultures and values, such as Muslim communities.

In an ethnographic study, the researcher presents the emic viewpoint of categorising the world which means presenting the natives' perspectives and thoughts, such as how they categorise their culture and experiences (Hoare *et al.*, 2013). Through direct immersion, involvement and observation of the investigated community, the research data is produced (Bryman, 2016; Nelson, 2017; Punch, 2014; Wise, 2018). To understand the researched culture and values, a range of approaches is used in ethnographic research, including covert full member, overt full member, participating observer, partially participating observer, non-participating observer with interaction, and long-term ethnography (Bryman, 2016).

For these six types of ethnographic approaches, the researcher's role varies from higher levels of participation and involvement, relying mainly on observing the researched groups, to lower levels of participation, relying on interviews and/or document analysis (Bryman, 2016). However, Bryman (2016:433) highlights the potential advantages and risks inherent to each approach. For example, researchers who take on the role of full member and participating observer have the opportunity to become close to the researched people, which can help the researcher gain an intense understanding of the studied culture and values, but they might also be at risk of "over-identification and hence of going native". Therefore, maintaining a balance between emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives is essential to successful research. Nelson (2017) suggests that good ethnographers include both emic and etic perspectives in their research by first understanding the researched people's behaviour, then providing explanations for this behaviour by applying anthropological theory and analysis.

In this study, the researcher readily adopted the emic perspective, utilising the advantage of being a local, which supported her sensitivity to the cultural needs of the researched communities. Being a Muslim Omani researcher enabled her to provide insights into the local community's cultural values and their influence on their behaviour and attitudes towards tourists, as well as how these factors shape local host-guest relations. Further, as the researcher has the same nationality as the host community, it was possible to show the participants empathy and understanding with respect to socio-cultural issues related to the host participants. Moreover, the researcher is fluent in both Arabic and English, Arabic

being her first language and English being her second language. Being fluent in Arabic made it possible to communicate with the host population participants and put them at ease linguistically, and being fluent in English made it possible to investigate the international foreign tourists' perspectives regarding tourism in Oman in the specific cases studied within this research.

Despite being familiar with the local culture, the researcher had lived in the UK for more than four years and was therefore able to bring an external (etic) perspective to the research. Having lived in the UK for a period of time, as well as having an Omani background, allowed for a more objective etic perspective on the relations with participants. The etic perspective was also used in the analysis stage after empirical data was collected from the local community in its natural setting. Then the analysis of this fieldwork data applied existing theoretical models on host-guest relations in the literature, enhancing theoretical sensitivity to the cultural impacts of tourism on the local community's participation, involvement and interaction with the phenomenon of tourism.

Being an Omani and a government official working at the MOT adds value in a number of ways. The researcher has a good relationship with MOT employees and is familiar with the department, which led to higher participation rates and better access to information. However, being an insider is not without its potential challenges and limitations, and the following section will address some of the potential advantages, disadvantages and limitations of being an insider researcher.

4.3.1 Insider Researcher

Because the researcher is an Omani Muslim woman, as well as a government official working at the MOT, she is an insider in the context of this study. According to Greene (2014), when a study is conducted within the society, organisation or culture of which the researcher is a member, that person is called an insider researcher. Chavez (2008: 474) argues that "the outsider-insider distinction is a false dichotomy since outsiders and insiders have to contend with similar methodological issues around positionality, a researcher's sense of self, and the situated knowledge". Coghlan (2003) argues that insider research has a valuable

role in the development of researched knowledge. Being a Muslim Omani researcher enabled the researcher to provide insights into the local community's religious and cultural values and their influence on their behaviour and attitudes toward tourists, as the participants answered the questions in a detailed way. This confirms what Chavez (2008) argues, that participants' confidence in and familiarity with the insider researcher can enrich the study.

Being an insider researcher has positive and negative aspects. Many advantages of being an insider researcher have been discussed in the literature. Some advantages are speaking the same language, building trust between the researcher and the participants, having superior understanding of the group's culture and knowing the formal and informal structure that facilitates obtaining permission to conduct interviews and obtaining access to records and documents easily (Coghlan, 2003).

Although the insider researcher might have advantages in many aspects of the research process, it is not without its potential problems. Some of the disadvantages are role duality (in this case, simultaneously being a government official and a researcher), bias concerns, making assumptions about the meaning of issues based on the researcher's previous knowledge or experience, assuming she knows the participants' views, participants tending to believe that the researcher already knows what they know, and the researcher's inability to see all the dimensions of the bigger picture (Asselin, 2003).

To overcome the disadvantages associated with being an insider researcher, the researcher applied some of Greene's (2014) strategies for insider researchers to establish trustworthiness in research. For example, the triangulation technique was applied by gathering information from different tourism stakeholders (government representatives, local residents, tourist business operators and tourists) and by using multiple methods (semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis). She also shared findings and basics of the research with peers and colleagues to think critically about the research and recognise any aspect or emotion that might affect judgement, and she preserved the papers as well as electronic copies of all material related to the research on an encoded computer. In addition, Asselin (2003) recommends the researcher

adopt some measures to avoid the potential negative effects of being an insider researcher. First, the researcher emphasised their role as a researcher and not as a government official during data collection. Second, the participants were assured that the data gathered will remain confidential, that anonymity would be guaranteed, and they were told with whom the data would be shared (see appendix E). Finally, the researcher was aware of the potential influence of being a government official, and she therefore emphasised the issue of confidentiality and that the data would not be dealt with by government authorities.

In this study, the researcher used the case study method to explore and understand stakeholders' views and opinions on how best to promote positive host-guest relations in Oman in general and in Bidiyah and WBK specifically in order to maintain sustainable tourism development.

4.4 Case Study Method

Creswell and Poth (2018:96) define a case study method as: “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and document reports)”.

This method is a useful approach for providing a deeper understanding of a complex subject, like the social and cultural dimensions of the investigated community.

Case studies demonstrate real-life aspects of a situation from a more realistic point of view. Based on the concepts explained by Yin (2018), more details below, the researcher chose a case study method with the aim of understanding real-world issues by considering the important contextual conditions of Bidiyah and WBK. Such aspects include individual lifestyle, communities' cultural values, environmental constraints and regulations or related management procedures. Furthermore, case studies provide a precise example of a certain phenomenon by

thoroughly detailing the behaviours, relationships or practices occurring in that context.

Yin (2018:13) recommends the case study method when “how or why questions are being asked about a contemporary set of events over which a researcher has little or no control”. Since this study is mainly concerned with answering the questions, ‘*How* do local communities perceive the tourism industry as a vehicle for economic resources?’ and ‘*Why* are the local community hindered from engaging with tourism and gaining economic benefits?’, employing the case study method is the most appropriate approach.

4.4.1 Multiple Case Studies Approach

This study is primarily concerned with the extent to which a local community’s cultural values hinder or support their participation, engagement and economic benefits with regards to tourism development in Oman. Leading on from the idea of using a case study approach, a single case study focuses on only one case, whereas multiple case studies include two or more cases within the same research for comparative purposes. Bryman (2016) advocates multiple case studies to allow the researcher to extract distinctive and common features within and between case studies. This provides substantial analytical benefits, and better positions the researcher to understand or compare case studies with existing theories or a models (Bryman, 2016). Hence, the researcher undertook a multiple case studies approach to explore how people were experiencing tourism in Oman, how they were affected, how they felt about it and whether they were participating in and benefiting from its development.

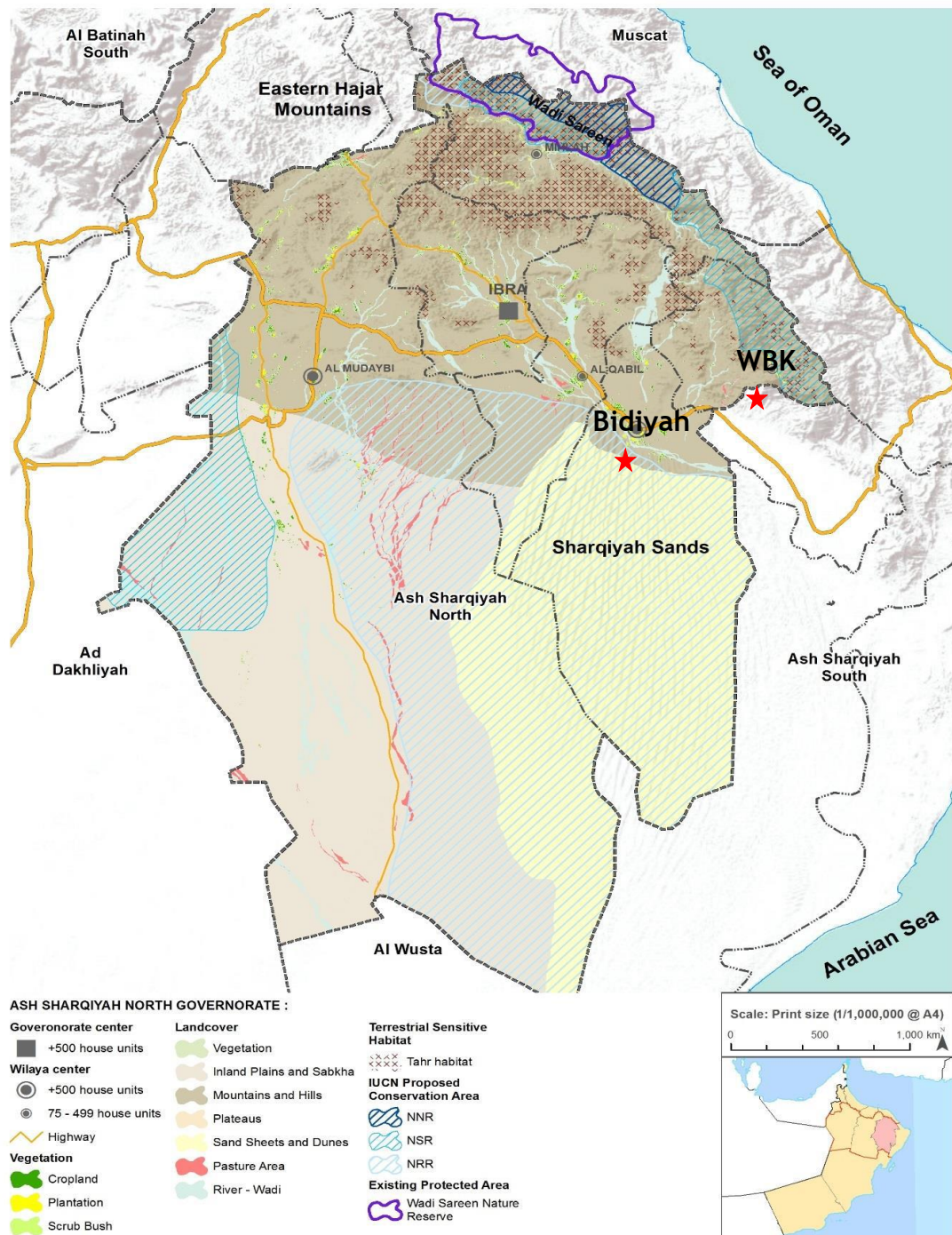
The first stage of the research was conducted with government players and related stakeholders involved in local community development in tourism as an economic sector. It revealed that limited information is available on the extent to which local communities are participating and gaining economic benefits from tourism in Oman. Hence, Bidiyah was chosen as one case study as a tourist destination, followed by WBK as a second case study towards comprehensive information gathering and comparison.

4.5 Justifications for Choosing Bidiyah and WBK

In order to attain a comprehensive understanding of the process of tourism development, its socio-cultural impacts and its influences on the economic benefits of the local community, the case studies of Bidiyah and WBK were chosen. These are appropriate for the following reasons:

- Both cases are located in the Al Sharqia North Governorate in Oman. They are located 45 km apart, which equates to an hour's drive (see Figure 4.1). Bidiyah and WBK represent key cultural tourism practices in the country. The two case studies offer comparable situations in terms of research setting, and number of stakeholders involved. Both attract thousands of tourists annually (MOT, 2018; SCP, 2018). Although both destinations are packaged by tour operators into a single tourism product, considerable differences can be identified with regards to the impacts of tourism development in these respective locations; the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts play out differently in each location, affecting host-guest relationships in different ways. While Bidiyah is associated with a desert fragile ecology and Bedouin social life, WBK is a natural water pool destination where tourists' activities and behaviours have greatly impacted the economic benefits of tourism.

Figure 4.1: Locations of Bidiyah and WBK



Source: (SCP, 2018)

- The two case studies offer contrasting situations of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism development. Bidiyah is a vast desert with a population of 40,812, a Bedouin community who preserve unique cultural traditions and a distinct lifestyle. Conversely, WBK offers natural water pools located within a narrow mountain valley with a population of 11,654 members of a conservative community residing in the

area. These areas' diverse characteristics have led to different impacts of tourism on host-guest relations. In Bidiyah, domestic tourists' activities have overexploited the fragile ecology of the desert and impacted the local community's social capacity and quality of life. Meanwhile, in WBK, international tourists' swimming behaviours clash with the religious values of the Muslim community residing there.

- Both communities want to benefit from tourism, but Bidiyah's local community is involved in tourism to a greater extent than WBK's. In terms of the economic benefits of tourism, the environmental and cultural sensitivities of the desert's ecology and the Bedouin people in Bidiyah facilitate a comparative analysis with the economic impacts experienced in WBK. Especially when it comes to the relationship between these two cases in the stages of irritation within Doxey's (1975) Irridex.
- Since analysing the cultural issues between hosts and guests is one of the main aspects that this research aims to investigate, several participants in Bidiyah (one of whom is a key government informant) recommended investigating this dimension in WBK. Thus, the researcher decided to include WBK as a second case study to obtain a broader range of knowledge and understanding of host-guest relationships in relation to the cultural values of the local community and their influence on generating wealth from tourism development.

4.5.1 The Case of Bidiyah

Bidiyah is a Wilayat, an administrative area, within Oman; currently there are 61 Wilayats across the country. It is comprised of 15 villages and has a combined population of 40,812 people, with 52% of them being Omani nationals (NCSI, 2018). Bidiyah is about 202 km south of Muscat, approximately a two-hour drive (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: The Driving Distance from Muscat to Bidiyah



Source: Google Maps (2018a)

Bidiyah merges with the westernmost part of the Ash Sharqiya Sands, a desert region which dominates the majority of Bidiyah (SCP, 2018). Because of its location, Bidiyah is one of the most popular entranceways to the desert. The Ash Sharqiya Sands, formerly known as Wahiba Sands or *Ramlat al-Wahibah*, spans an area of 1,500 square kilometres (SCP, 2018).

Bidiyah has the advantage of being the nearest desert entrance to Muscat, the capital city of Oman. Thus, it is the main Wilaya that offers tourist desert camps in the Ash Sharqia North Governorate. It is also home to Al Mentrib Fort, another tourist attraction. According to MOT (2017) annual report statistics, the majority of tourist desert camps in the Ash Sharqia North Governorate are located in Bidiyah, with Ibra having only one.

Bidiyah offers nine tourist desert camps with a total of 310 units. Seven of the camps are owned by investors from the local community, while the other two are owned by investors from outside the governorate. Long-term land leasing is one of the government's policies to encourage local community investment in tourism projects. Thus, the development of tourist desert camps in Bidiyah has benefited from the government's policy of renting land for tourism. According to the regional government interviewee:

“60-70% of the tourist desert camps in the area are developed on leased land offered by the government and rented long-term at a minimal price with a five-year grace period” (RG-MT1).

The development of these desert camps created a great deal of demand for desert tourism in Bidiyah. Plates 4.1 and 4.2 show examples of tourist desert camps in Bidiyah. However, there are no official statistics regarding tourist numbers. The only available indicator of tourist demand in Bidiyah is the estimated number of international tourists, which was around 48,000 in 2016, excluding domestic and one-day visitors (SCP, 2018). Moreover, according to NCSI (2017:2), during the last ten years domestic tourism demand has undergone a dramatic increase in the country, generally. This demand is on tourist destinations throughout Oman and Bidiyah in particular.

Plate 4.1: Arabian Oryx Tourist Desert Camp



Source: Author (2018)

Plate 4.2: Tourist Desert Camp



Source: Author (2018)

The increasing demand of international and domestic tourists for desert tourism in Bidiyah has triggered the need to evaluate host-guest relations and investigate the local community's perceptions of the economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism on their locality.

Because of the distinctive nature of the desert as well as the manner of the local Bedouin community to reside in the desert and in Bidiyah, their lifestyle and cultural traditions have made this destination one of the most important tourist destinations in Oman. International tourists are interested in relaxing in the desert and experiencing desert safaris, as well as experiencing the Bedouin lifestyle by staying in tourist desert camps, riding camels, experiencing dune bashing, visiting Bedouin houses and buying local handcrafts.

Domestic tourists are attracted to the desert in Bidiyah for the purposes of camping and enjoying nature. They are attracted to dune bashing and quad riding in the sand dunes, and some of them visit Bidiyah in large groups, staying mainly in a local *Ezba* (a traditional temporary house).

4.5.2 The Case of WBK

WBK is a Wilaya (province or administrative area) consisting of a total of 30 villages with a population of 11,654, 85% of whom are Omani nationals (NCSI, 2016c). Its valley (natural swimming pool) is one of the most popular wadis in the Al Sharqia North Governorate of Oman (Ministry of Tourism, 2011). ‘Wadi’ is a traditional Arabic term referring to an ephemeral riverbed where intermittent stream flow occurs, particularly after rainfall. WBK profits from spectacular scenery and the flow of its water continues throughout the year (Hajir, 2016). Thus, it attracts a great number of international and domestic tourists. International tourists visit the wadi during the tourism season in Oman, which runs from September to April, while domestic tourists mainly visit on weekends and during public holidays throughout the rest of the year. Plates 4.3 and 4.4 show WBK’s natural water pool.

Plate 4.3: WBK’s Natural Swimming Pool



Source: Author (2018)

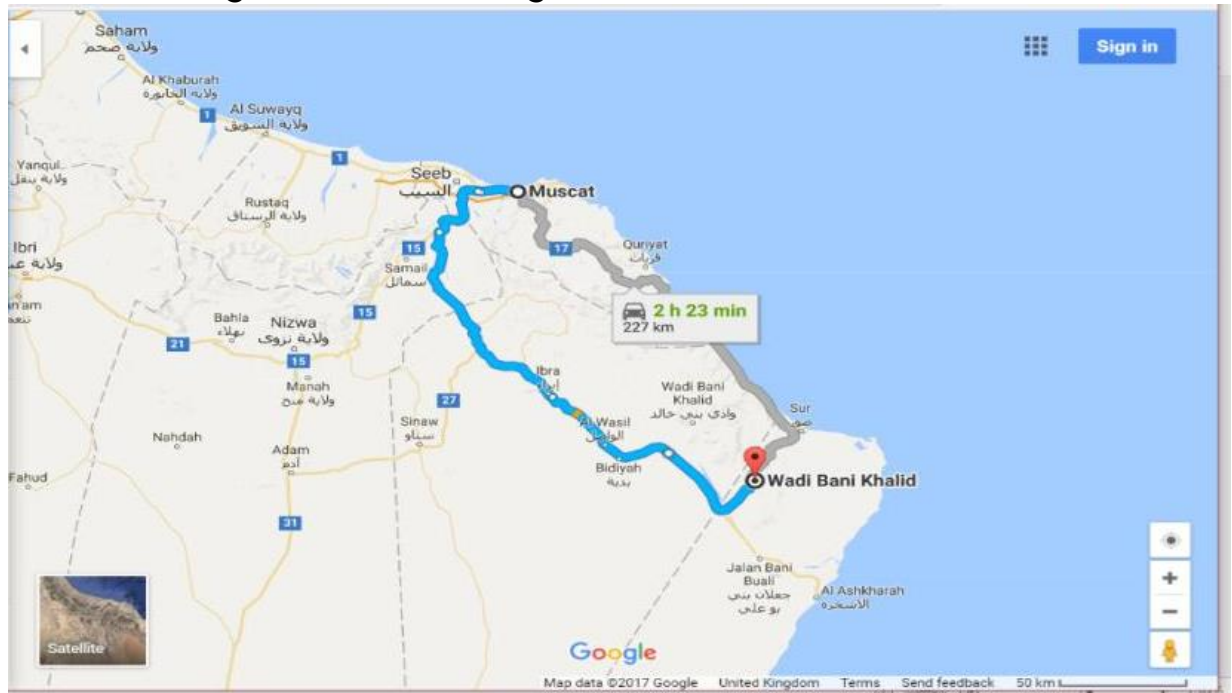
Plate 4.4: Tourists at WBK's Natural Swimming Pool



Source: Author (2018)

The majority of elderly locals are retired and actively manage their agricultural plots. Some of the younger demographic is employed in government jobs in WBK, but many seek other employment opportunities in the private and governmental sectors in other areas of Oman, such as Muscat and Sur; this is mainly due to the lack of job opportunities in WBK (SCP, 2018). WBK is located approximately 203 km from Muscat, the capital city of Oman, with a drive time of about two and a half hours (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: The driving distance from Muscat to WBK



Source: Google Maps (2018b)

It is located 35 km from Bidiyah, meaning tour operators often sell trips to WBK's water pools and the sand dunes of Bidiyah in one package that combines the oasis and the desert. A lack of tourist accommodation in WBK provides Bidiyah with a competitive advantage for those who are seeking an overnight stay in the area.

WBK's name is associated, mainly, with the Muqul water pools and cave—the main tourist attraction in WBK. According to the MOT's statistics, a 17% growth in tourist demand occurred in WBK during 2016/2017 (Ministry of Tourism, 2017), as is detailed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Tourist numbers in WBK in 2016/2017

Tourist Groups' Origins	Year 2016	Year 2017	Growth
Omani	66,063	66,492	0,6%
Gulf Council Countries	808	721	-10,8
Other Arabs	3,360	3,705	10,3%
European	85,888	111,730	30,1%
Total	156,119	182,648	17%

Source: Ministry of Tourism (2017)

However, the growth of the tourist demand in WBK disguises a number of potential weaknesses. As explained by the table above, although the total tourist demand increased by 17% between 2016 and 2017, the increase in domestic demand represents less than 1% of the total growth in WBK, meaning that while international tourists are becoming increasingly interested in visiting, domestic tourists are not. Also, market demand from neighbouring Gulf Council Countries (GCC)—one of the most important tourist markets for Oman due to shared cultural values and geography—decreased by around 11%. It is interesting to note that tourist demand from the European market accounts for an increasing share of total tourist demand in WBK, rising from approximately 55% in 2016 to 61% in 2017. This shows that European tourists dominate, while regional and other Arab Muslim tourists are minimal in WBK. This raises a question: why is there are limited demand for domestic and regional Arab Muslim tourists compared to international tourists in WBK? This important question will be addressed in the research findings in Chapter 6.

4.6 Data Collection Methods

To achieve the research objectives of this study, a variety of methods were employed using a qualitative strategy which emphasises the quality of examined processes and meanings that are not experimentally measured (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). In ethnography, data collection ranges from direct non-

participant/participant observation to conducting interviews and examining documents (Bryman, 2016).

For the purposes of the current case study research, different sources of evidence were used to collect data, including semi-structured interviews with tourism stakeholders in both Bidiyah and WBK and focus group discussions with a group of craftswomen in Bidiyah and a group of local community residents, as well as a group of craftswomen in WBK. To gain an understanding and analysis of tourism development and its influence on the local community's perceptions of tourism's impacts, the investigation approached a variety of tourism stakeholders who were selected through purposive sampling: policymakers, local community members, tourism business workers, international and domestic tourists and representatives of NGOs. Government documents were also used, such as the national tourism strategy 2040, the feasibility study report for tourism development in WBK, the data report on the Al Sharqia North Governorate, and tourism statistics from the MOT's annual report for 2017 and from the National Centre of Statistics and Information for 2018. Table 4.2 show summary of data collection stages and methods.

Table 4.2: Summary of Data Collection Stages and Methods in the Study

Stages of research	Subject	Method	Date	Data analysis
	Identification of the main theoretical aspects of addressing host-guest relationships and the data about the number of inbound and domestic tourists	Literature review and secondary data sources	Evolutionary process completed throughout the thesis	

First stage	Explore the extent to which relevant authorities plans and strategies considers host community participation in Omani tourism	Six semi-structure interviews with policymakers, funders, and developers of tourism in Oman	June 2016	Thematic Analysis
Second stage	Investigate perceptions of tourism stakeholders on socio-cultural, environmental and economic impacts of tourism in Bidiayh	Thirty-one semi-structured interviews conducted with participants from the government, host community, tourism business, NGO's and tourists. Besides, a focus group discussion conducted with four women handcraft makers	December 2017- Janaury 2018	Thematic Analysis
Third stage	Investigate perceptions of tourism stakeholders on socio-cultural, environmental, and economic impacts of tourism in WBK	Twenty-seven semi-structured interviews conducted with participants from the government, host community, tourism business, and tourists. Besides, focus group discussion conducted with a group of five host community members and a group of four handcraft makers	Between March-May 2018	Thematic Analysis

Source: Author (2020)

4.6.1 Interviews

According to Gill *et al.* (2008) researchers use interviews to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individuals regarding specific issues. Especially if they want to obtain a deep understanding of social phenomena about which little is known about a given subject. In such cases, asking people for their views and listening can be the only way of generating the required data (Mason, 2018). Thus, although interviewing, transcribing and analysing the transcripts is very time-consuming, interviews are the most commonly used method in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016).

Interviews can vary from unstructured to structured depending on the research question and available resources. Bryman (2016) classifies interviews into two main types: qualitative and quantitative. In qualitative interviews, the researcher wants rich, detailed answers and, thus, the interview is flexible, emphasising interviewees' perspectives and viewpoints; examples of qualitative interviews include unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2016). In contrast, the structured interview is classified as quantitative because the researcher has a specific set of questions to be investigated with little control over the conversation and is unable to follow up with questions about specific areas of interest, so its emphasis is on maximising validity and reliability (Ibid).

Semi-structured interviews require a specific set of questions to be applied in a social interaction between the researcher and the participant to maximise the opportunity for constructing contextual and situational knowledge (Mason, 2018). Thus, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe for answers and change questions according to the participant's responses (Bryman, 2016). Also, the use of an interview guide is important to keep the interview on track (Ibid). In semi-structured interviews, the order in which the questions are asked may differ between participants, but the researcher should ensure that all participants are asked the same questions with similar wording to gather similar information from all of the interviewees (Bryman, 2016).

In this study, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were applied with government authorities, private sector players and members of the local

community; this was an ideal instrument to explore tourism stakeholders' views on the impacts of tourism and the issues that are hindering the local community from obtaining the economic benefits of tourism development in Oman, specifically in the cases of Bidiyah and WBK. Thus, personal interviews were a valuable tool to give the participants a space to express their views in depth; especially, when the researched topic addressed a sensitive area, such as the impacts of tourism development on the local community's cultural and religious values in the context of WBK.

Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. They were oriented towards engaging the interviewees to express their opinions and to obtain information about the status of tourism development in the investigated areas. All interviews were recorded on digital recorders.

- First Stage of the Research

After a bibliographical review to determine the key issues and gaps in the existing tourism literature, the researcher undertook an exploratory field visit with the aim of exploring the extent to which local community members were participating in Omani tourism, and whether their participation in tourism development was considered in the relevant authorities' plans and strategies. This phase took place in June 2016 and consisted of six in-depth semi-structured interviews with tourism policymakers, funders and developers in Oman. The sample of the interviewees had been decided based on the principle of purposeful approach (see Section 4.8.4).

Sample participants for the first stage of the research were drawn from authorities responsible for planning, policy and decision-making for tourism development in Oman, as well as authorities responsible for providing finance, training, consulting and technical support for small and medium enterprises. Also, a member of the local community in Bidiyah was interviewed. The interviewees are presented in Table 4.3 along with their identifying codes.

Table 4.3: Interviewees in the First Stage of the Research

No	Authority	Classification	Code
1	The Ministry of Tourism	Government	G-T
2	The Authority of Small and Medium Entrepreneurs	Government	G-S
3	AL Rafd Fund	Government	G-R
4	The Sharakah Fund	Private sector	P-S
5	The Omani Tourism and Development Company (OMRAN)	Governmental company	P-O
6	Local community member	Local community	L-B

Source: Author (2020)

Interviews with the above-mentioned key stakeholders revealed opposing views regarding the extent to which the local communities are participating and gaining economic benefits from tourism. The main finding of this stage of the research was that limited information is available among investigated stakeholders about the extent to which local communities are gaining benefits from tourism and are engaged with tourism development in Oman—specifically in Bidiyah. As perceived by the following interviewee from an entity that is responsible for financing small and medium enterprises and providing them with technical support:

“There is no accurate statistic that shows the community’s benefits from tourism development [...] Although tourist numbers are increasing in the country, there is no clear way to evaluate the community’s benefits from tourism development” (P-S).

This perception confirms my understanding (mentioned in the previous section) that tourism indicators have been emphasised internationally and in national

statistics. And that an increase of tourist numbers is a limited indicator to guide planners on the actual economic impacts of tourism on local communities.

Another interviewee from the private tourism sector perceived the local community's participation and engagement in the tourism industry differently:

“The Omani community is hospitable and welcoming and is always happy to communicate with tourists, therefore they can deal with tourists easily while having a source of income and job opportunities, especially when they work as tour guides” (P-O).

This indicates a general perception of the tourism industry in Oman, that Omanis are friendly and welcoming people, and tourism is perceived to be a beneficial industry because of the above listed benefits. Yet, this again provides limited indications of the extent to which local communities are participating in tourism in Oman.

The government representative from the authority responsible for supporting small and medium enterprises with their training and technical needs stated:

“There is opportunity to benefit from tourism as the tourism industry is growing in Oman” (G-S).

Both statements above, who represent authorities responsible for local communities' empowerment and supporting their participation in small and medium enterprises, reflect ambiguity and unclear measures about the extent to which entrepreneurial tourism activities of local Omani community members are involved in tourism development, nor the extent to which these locals gain economic benefits from tourism. Hence, although the government believes in the importance of the tourism industry as a key economic sector to create economic resources for the local community, there are no clear targets, integrated plans or strategies among the related authorities to achieve the government's targets of creating economic opportunities for local communities in the tourism sector. This issue is acknowledged by Al Balushi (2018) who states that the Omani national budget is classified based on categories not on evaluating development

programmes; thus, it lacks clear relations between the related authorities that are responsible on maintaining the implementation of development plans.

In contrast to the above views on local participation in the tourism industry, a government informant highlighted an opposing view concerning the local community's participation in tourism:

“The community wants to develop tourism projects, but because they don't know what type of projects are required or how they can benefit from tourism development, they are reluctant to participate in tourism. They mistrust the government because the government does not have clear plans for specific types of projects that are needed for tourism development” (G-T).

Alternatively, investigating this matter with a local community member from Bidiyah clarified the current situation regarding the local community's participation and economic benefits from tourism:

“Yes, there are large amounts of benefits from tourists visiting the area; for Omanis who are looking for jobs, tourism is a full-time employer, and for who are working already in another job, tourism is a part-time employer as they can work after the official working hours, as well as working over the weekends and during holidays” (L-B).

This interviewee also highlighted the growth of tourism and its requirements in Bidiyah:

“We have large numbers of tourists visiting the area during the tourist season, which begins in September and ends in March. Most of the visitors are from the other regions of Oman and foreign tourists from Europe: Holland, Germany and France ... Tourism is a good industry for the area but it needs more attention from the government to meet the increasing demand of tourists for the necessary facilities required” (L-B).

These different perceptions of the key stakeholders includes authorities responsible for tourism planning, policy and decision-making, as well as authorities responsible for providing capital, training, consulting and technical support for small and medium enterprises (that could support the local community's participation and involvement in the economic benefits of tourism development), reflects the absence of a holistic, strategic local community development approach in the tourism sector. This reality indicates a lack of integrated plans with clear targets and a controlled implementation national strategy for achieving the government's goals related to local communities' development and involvement in the tourism industry. It also shows a lack of comprehensive data on local community involvement in the tourism industry and the gain—or lack thereof—of tourism's economic benefits.

This stage acted as a preliminary study to confirm the existence of the research gap. Thus, the researcher made the decision that examining existing case studies could help provide a better understanding of tourism's social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts on the local community. Sandiford and Ap (1998) suggest that gaining greater insights regarding reality can provide a better understanding of the issues surrounding tourism, and an ethnographic methodology could provide planners with useful comparative information. Especially for a community with such distinct characteristics and culture as the Bedouin community in Bidiyah, a comparative case study approach can provide useful insights on the impacts of tourism and investigate whether the local community's relationships with tourists supports the growth of tourism.

- Second Stage of the Research

In December 2017 and January 2018, the second stage of the research was carried out in Bidiyah, as this period is the peak season for international and domestic tourists visiting the desert and Bidiyah. The specific purpose of this research stage was to investigate the perceptions of tourism stakeholders concerning to what extent the local community is engaged with tourism development, and to what extent it participates and gains economic benefits from this industry. In this research, tourism impacts are also measured based on social, environmental and cultural perspectives.

The fieldwork in Bidiyah began with a visit to the MOT Department in the Al Sharqia North Governorate to introduce the research project and establish formal contact, as well as to secure their support as the “gatekeepers”, whose co-operation is critical to the success of the fieldwork. Bryman (2016:432) refers to those entities as “key informants” as they “direct the ethnographer to situations, events, or people likely to be helpful to the progress of the investigation”. Okumus *et al.* (2007) write that gatekeepers could support the researcher in gaining formal access, adding credibility to the research. Thus, the main role of the tourism department was to support the researcher to gain formal access to the target stakeholders in the region.

This research used in-depth semi-structured interviews with twenty-nine interviewees and one focus group discussion with four craftswomen. Key informants were drawn from the MOT and the regional departments of the related government authorities in the Al Sharqia North Governorate. These regional government departments included the MOT, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, the Ministry of Municipality and Water Resources, the Authority of Handicrafts and the Wali’s office (Local Government).

Of the 31 interviewees, 11 represented the local community in Bidiyah, 9 of whom were owners of local tourism businesses (see Table 4.4). These included tourist desert camp owners, tour guides, *Ezba* owners (traditional Bedouin houses), craftswomen and the owner of a local museum. Moreover, two local community members living in the vicinity of Bidiyah in the Al Rakah village were interviewed, as well as a municipal council representative of the area. In addition, a representative from the local women community associate in Bidiyah was interviewed, representing non-government organisations (NGOs). Most of the international tourists who were interviewed were from Europe and the United States, while the domestic tourists were Omani nationals.

Table 4.4: Number of Participants per Stakeholder Group in Bidiyah

Stakeholder group	Male	Female	Total number	Coding
National Government	3	-	3	NG(1-3)
Regional Government	5	-	5	RG(1-5)
Local Government	1	-	1	LG-WB(1)
Local Tourism Business	8	1	9	BB(1-9)
Local Community	1	2	3	LB(1-3)
International Tourists	2	4	6	IB(1-6)
Domestic Tourists	1	2	3	DB(1-3)
NGOs	-	1	1	NGB(1)
Total	21	10	31	

Source: Author (2020)

Between December 2017 and January 2018, exploratory interviews were conducted with tourism stakeholders in Bidiyah (see Table 4.4). They were conducted with representatives of the regional and local government, local tourism businesses, the local community and tourists in the study area.

In Bidiyah, in order to explore the impacts of tourism development on the local community and the issues of their participation in the tourism development process, regional government interviewees were interviewed in their official offices and the local community members living in the vicinity of Bidiyah were interviewed in their houses. Tourism business interviewees were interviewed in their business offices, while some tourists were interviewed in tourist desert camps or at a popular Bedouin house in Bidiyah.

The data collection stage in Bidiyah and the analysis of this case revealed that, despite handicraft makers having limited access to the tourism business, tourism is a central industry in their local economy and a great deal of local community members are participating in tourism and gaining economic benefits. Hence, most of the indigenous people invited to participate in this research maintained direct or indirect relations to the tourism economy. Thus, the findings indicate that the local community in Bidiyah perceive their cultural resources as having a positive influence to gain from the economic benefits of tourism development.

However, in order to conduct a broader exploration of the research question, the researcher chose to investigate whether cultural values hinder or support the local community's participation in tourism and its ability to gain economic benefits in different contexts. According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007:27), "multiple cases enable comparisons that clarify whether an emergent finding is simply idiosyncratic to a single case or consistently replicated by several cases". Meaning that the use of multiple cases creates more robust information and generate deeply grounded empirical evidence. Hence, the case of WBK was selected as a comparative tourist destination, as it entails a natural water-pool site located in an area with a conservative Muslim community; as previously mentioned in Section 4.6, this site is usually placed in a package with Bidiyah as one tourism product.

Moreover, in the second stage of the research in Bidiyah, more than one of the interviewees made the researcher aware of another tourist destination in the Al Sharqia North Governorate where the local community was gaining limited economic benefits from tourism due to cultural aspects; they suggested the researcher examine this issue in WBK. According to Bryman (2016) ethnographic research can combine opportunistic sampling and snowball sampling depending on available sources. Thus, in this case, snowball purposive sampling was used to select WBK as the second case study of the research as WBK was particularly suitable for examining the conservative Muslim local community's cultural values and its influence on their relationship with the international tourist.

- Third Stage of the Research

Between March and May 2018, new field research was undertaken to investigate the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in WBK. A research visit was organised to observe the water-pool site in order to examine the supply of this tourism product and its available tourist facilities. The visit also aimed to establish contact with local community members to research their perception of tourism. The researcher then conducted an extensive investigation and interviews with tourism stakeholders in WBK, as presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Number of Participants per Stakeholder Group in WBK

Stakeholder group	Male	Female	Total number	Coding
Local Community	5	-	5	LW(1-5)
National Government	5	-	5	NG(1-5)
Regional Government	4		4	RG (1-4)
Local Government	1	-	1	LG-WW
Local Tourism Business	1	-	1	BW(1)
Non-local Tourism Business	5	-	5	NBW(1-5)
International Tourists	1	2	3	IW(1-3)
Domestic Tourists	1	2	3	DW(1-3)
Total	23	4	27	

Source: Author (2020)

This investigation used in-depth semi-structured interviews with twenty-seven participants and two focus group discussions with the local community inhabitants and women handicraft makers. Key interviewees were drawn, mainly, from the

local community residents, members of the national, regional and local government, local and non-local tourism businesses in WBK, and international and domestic tourists.

More specifically, the national government was represented by key informants from the MOT and the Supreme Council for Planning. Regional government participants represented the MOT, the Ministry of Housing, the Authority of handcrafts and the local government, which was the Wali's office. In contrast to Bidiyah, the tourism business in WBK is characterised by the dominance of non-local community tourism operators. Indigenous business was represented only by the handicraft makers who participated in this research.

Conducting interviews with international and domestic tourists was not an easy task, even in a popular destination such as WBK. The international tourists visiting the natural water-pool site generally had short visits; they would arrive, swim and leave within a maximum of two hours. These short durations to WBK limited my opportunities to meet and conduct interviews with them to investigate their experience. Thus, only three international tourists agreed to be interviewed, and one of them decided to send her feedback via email.

The limited availability of domestic tourists in WBK's natural swimming pool site affected the sample. As will be discussed in the findings, this was due to domestic tourists' conservative religious values and their desire to avoid culture clashes with international tourists. So, they were not available during the tourism season in winter, when the visit was planned to interview tourists in WBK. Thus, another field visit to WBK was conducted outside the international tourists' season in May 2018, but this also yielded a limited number of domestic interviewees due to hot weather during the summer season.

As a Muslim female in an Islamic country with a conservative culture and Islamic codes, the researcher was keen to conduct the interviews in an environment which did not conflict with Islamic social and conservative values. Being aware of cultural issues around females sitting alone with strange males, most of the interviews with men were conducted in offices or official workplaces. However, some of the interviews with male community members were conducted in their

homes, but the atmosphere was restricted due to cultural values and the interviewees were reserved in their answers; it was difficult to use probing questions to explore the limited information they provided in those instances. Thus, as a Muslim female researcher, there were limitations throughout the whole process of the research, as interaction with male participants was restricted by the cultural context.

Hollinshead (2004) indicates a possible dilemma for a researcher to understand the investigated domain when the examined community's values are different than the researcher's. In this study, as the researcher is an Omani who shares the interviewees' language, cultural background and national identity; thus, she was able to capture and reflect the participants' feelings towards issues related to tourism and its impacts on the local community's cultural values and social life. If a non-Omani had been conducting this research, their local knowledge and understanding of the raised issues, especially cultural ones, may not have been as comprehensive.

4.6.2 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group is defined as “a group discussion on a particular topic organised for research purposes, this discussion is guided, monitored and recorded by a researcher” (Gill *et al.*, 2008). Focus groups are an increasingly common research method in social sciences and involve engaging a group of a small number of people to discuss a topic or set of issues (Bryman, 2016; Wilkinson, 2011). According to Bryman (2016:502), “the focus group offers the researcher the opportunity to study the ways in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it”. Thus, interaction and discussion are key to a successful focus group (Gill *et al.*, 2008).

However, focus groups interviews are difficult for a researcher to control due to group dynamics, such as potential issues surrounding dominant or quiet individuals (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, a moderator plays an important role in facilitating group discussion and in preventing the discussion from being dominated by one member (Gill *et al.*, 2008).

According to Bryman (2016), the typical group size is six to ten participants, and although they can be up to twenty, larger focus groups are harder to control. One major challenge faced by focus group researchers is individuals who agree to participate but do not attend on the meeting day. He suggests that smaller groups of participants could be recruited when they have much to say on the topic being researched. Also, he suggests focus groups could include between three to five participants for more smoothly managed interviews. In this study, there were three focus group discussions in all, containing between four and five participants; In Bidiyah, a focus group discussion was conducted with four female craft makers. In WBK, two focus group discussions were carried out: first with a group of five male local community residents, then with four female craft makers.

Focus groups were deemed the best method to gather information from the local community because the researcher required a collective answer to provide more verification for some specific issues, such as the impact of tourism on their cultural values and daily lives, as well as on their economic benefits from tourism development and their environmental concerns around the tourist activities. To improve the validity and trustworthiness of the research, and as a triangulation technique, the focus group discussion method was used in order to confirm or challenge the results of the semi-structured interviews. It was also a preferable method because it daily commitments acted as a barrier to meeting many of these people, such as craftswoman, for a one-to-one interview.

- **Focus Group Discussion in Bidiyah**

This study sought to explore how host communities perceive the socio-cultural, socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism on their locality and how these factors influence their attitudes towards tourists. In the second stage of the research, a focus group discussion was carried out with handicraft makers. In Bidiyah, a focus group discussion was conducted with four female handicraft makers. This focus group discussion was carried out in a handicraft exhibition hall in Bidiyah (see Plate 4.5), a place where female craft makers present and sell their handicrafts for tourists.

Plate 4.5: The Women’s Handicraft Exhibit Hall in Bidiyah



Source: Author (2018)

Conducting the focus group interview with the female community was not easy, even for a local woman. Access gained to interview these indigenous craftswomen through officials in the Public Authority for the Handicraft industry. However, only four of the attendees agreed to participate in the discussion and because two of them could not read or write, only two of the focus group interviewees were able to sign the consent form, while verbal consent was given by the others (they suggested using a stamp, but the researcher did not have one on site—which is a point to consider for any future research).

- Focus Group Discussion in WBK

In WBK, the researcher focused on talking with the local residents to explore the issues related to the residents’ perceptions of the development of tourism in their area. In the third stage of the research, two focus group discussions were carried out: the first was with a group of five male local community residents, conducted

in the meeting hall of a youth sport centre in WBK, while the second was with four female craft makers, conducted in a handicraft exhibition hall in WBK. Both focus group discussions were used to generate rich, in-depth data on the socio-economic, socio-cultural and environmental concerns of local community residents regarding tourism development in WBK. Focus groups were the most appropriate method for gathering information from local residents because it is difficult to meet many of these people individually due to their life commitments.

4.6.3 Documents and Secondary Data Analysis

Documents can help the researcher understand a historical issue or could demonstrate existing practices and contextualise data collected through interviews (Bowen, 2009). They could also provide data or information that is valuable for the researched subject or complement another method. According to Yin (2012), case study investigators are likely to use a variety of documents in their research. These documents might include electronic records, advertisements, agendas, attendance registers, minutes of meetings, manuals, background papers, books and brochures, diaries, letters, maps and newspapers (Bowen, 2009). However, it is important to consider that these documents are subject to bias or may be inaccurate (Yin, 2012) as they have been written with a specific purpose for a specific audience.

In this study, the data was collected from different sources, such as the MOT and the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The data obtained on the growth of international and domestic tourism demand in Oman, Bidiyah and WBK provided insights into the tourism phenomenon in all these locations. Additionally, it supported the implications that there are culture clashes between international and domestic tourists in WBK as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Further, Oman's tourism strategy reflects the Ministry of Tourism vision, goals, long term plan and strategy for the development of tourism in Oman for the period between 2016-2040 (Ministry of Tourism, 2016b). Furthermore, the feasibility study of tourism development in WBK provided by the MOT reflects the Ministry's efforts to develop tourism in WBK (MOT,2011). Also, the Al Sharqia North Governorate's special analysis report (provided by the Supreme Council for

planning) provided the researcher with a great deal of information about the geographical and environmental background of the researched areas (SCP,2018). In addition, MOT's brochures for Oman and the Al Sharqia North Governorate were examined (Ministry of Tourism, n.d.). The interviews shed further light on environmental issues in Bidiyah, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. Thematic analysis was utilised in analysing the documents in this study to triangulate the interviews and focus group discussion findings.

The amount and types of documentary material studied in this research were influenced by their availability, authors' permissions to use the documents and relevancy to issues that emerged during the fieldwork. The final document sample for analysis consisted of 6 reports dated from 2011 to 2019.

4.6.4 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling with a sequential approach was used to select participants for this research. Purposive sampling provides the opportunity to distinguish informants who can share a great deal of information about issues of central importance to the study and the investigated subject (Bello *et al.*, 2017). The sequential sampling approach begins with an initial sample; then more people are asked to participate as the investigation evolves (Bryman, 2016). In this case, for the two case studies, research participants were drawn from national, regional and local governments, the local community, tourism businesses, NGOs and the international and domestic tourist community. Key interviewees from government departments, local tourism businesses and local community members were identified throughout the investigation.

According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007:28), to limit bias in data collection:

“a key approach is using numerous and highly knowledgeable informants who view the focal phenomenon from diverse perspectives. These informants can include organisational actors from different hierarchical levels, function areas groups, and geographies as well as other relevant organisations”.

In this study, diverse stakeholders from the related national, regional and local levels were contacted: to gain a fuller picture and deeper insight into the issue of the impacts of tourism on the local community; the local community's participation in tourism development and its economic benefits in Bidiyah and WBK. Target participants also included government officials and local community members from different hierarchical levels; the Minister of Tourism was a key informant in this research, as well as local community representatives in the Shura and Municipal councils, and members of the local communities themselves.

This approach resulted in a total of 77 interviewees drawn from the government, the private tourism sector, local communities, NGOs and the tourist community. In Bidiyah, 31 individual interviews and one focus group of four female handicraft makers were conducted, while in WBK, 27 individuals were interviewed and two focus groups with five local community residents and four female handicraft makers were conducted. Also, the six interviewees with policymakers, tourism developers and funders were held in the first stage of the research.

4.6.5 Research Participant Coding

- Coding of the First Stage

The participants of the interviews in the first stage of the research were divided into three groups: government officials (the MOT, Public Authority for SMEs development, Al Raffd), the private sector (Sharakah, Omran) and a local community member of Bidiyah. Government officials were marked by the code G followed by a dash followed by a letter reflecting the government authority's name. For example, MOT's interviewee was coded as G-T, the Public Authority for SMEs development interviewee was coded as G-S, Al Raffd interviewees were coded as G-R. The private sector interviewees were assigned the code P followed by a dash followed by a letter reflecting their organisation's name. For example, the Sharakah interviewee was coded as P-S and the Omran interviewee was coded as P-O. The local community member was coded by the letter L reflecting 'local community' followed by a dash followed by the letter B for Bidiyah (L-B).

- Coding of the Second Stage

In the second stage of the research, interviewees were divided into six key stakeholder groups: national government officials (MOT, Supreme Council for Planning); regional government officials (MOT, Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Municipality and Water Resources, Ministry of Housing and Authority of Handcrafts); local government officials (Wali's Office in Bidiyah); tourism businesses in Bidiyah, the local community in Bidiyah, tourists and non-governmental organisations. These interview participants were coded as follows.

National government officials were assigned the code NG, followed by a dash, followed by a letter reflecting the authority's name and a serial number referring to the sequence of the participants. For example, one of the MOT's officials was coded as NG-T1. Regional government officials were assigned the code RG followed by a dash, followed by a letter reflecting the authority's name and a serial number referring to the sequence of the participants. For example, one of the MOT's department officials was coded as RG-T1 and the local government official of Bidiyah was coded as LG-WB.

Tourism businesses in Bidiyah were assigned the code BB followed by a dash, followed by a serial number. For example, one of the tourism business interviewees in Bidiyah was coded as BB-1. Related to this, tourism business focus groups were assigned the code BB, followed by a dash, followed by a letter F and a serial number. For example, BB-F1 is the code for one participant from the handcraft focus group in Bidiyah.

Local community participants were assigned the code L, followed by the letter B for Bidiyah, followed by a dash and a serial number. For example, LB-1 is the code for one of the local community participants' in Bidiyah. The local community participants also included a Municipal council member; however, because there was only one participant in this category, this participant given same local community participants' code.

Tourists were divided into two groups, international tourists were assigned the code ITB followed by a dash and a serial number, and the domestic tourists were assigned the code DTB followed by a dash and a serial number. For example, ITB-1 is the code for one of the international tourists and DTB-1 is a code for one of

the domestic tourists. The non-government organisation participant was coded as NGO.

- Coding of the Third Stage

Participants in the third stage of the research, were divided into five key stakeholder groups: national government officials (MOT, Supreme Council for Planning); regional government officials (MOT, Ministry of Housing and Authority of Handcrafts; local government officials (Wali's Office of WBK); tourism businesses in WBK, the local community in WBK and tourists. These interview participants were coded as follows.

Because they are responsible for both Bidiyah and WBK, the national and regional government officials that were recruited for Bidiyah also participated for WBK and the same code was used. However, because WBK has its own Wali's office it was coded as LG-WW. Tourism businesses in WBK were divided into two groups, a local tourism business group was assigned the code BW followed by a dash and a serial number. For example, one of the tourism business interviewees in WBK was coded as BW-1. The non-local tourism business group was coded as NBW followed by a dash and a serial number. For example, one of the non- tourism business interviewees in WBK was coded as NBW-1. The tourism business focus group was assigned the code BW followed by a dash, followed by a letter F and a serial number. For example, BW-F1 is the code for one of the participants in WBK's handcraft focus group.

The local community participants were coded by the code L followed by the letter W for WBK, followed by a dash and a serial number. For example, LW-1 is the code for one of the local community participants in WBK. The local community participants also included a Municipal council member and Al Shura council member; however, because there was only one participant in each category, these participants was given the same local community participant code. The local community focus group was coded by the code LW followed by a dash, followed by a letter F and a serial number. For example, LW-F1 is the code for one of the participants in the local community focus group in WBK.

The tourists were divided into two groups, international tourists were assigned the code ITW followed by a dash and a serial number, and domestic tourists were assigned the code DTW followed by a dash and a serial number. For example, ITW-1 is the code for one of the international tourists and DTW-1 is the code for one of the domestic tourists.

4.6.6 Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was used to analyse the data obtained in the interviews and the focus group discussions. A thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) with data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:79). Braun et al. (2019:845) view themes as “a pattern of shared meaning, organised around core concept or idea, a central organising concept”. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that a theme captures something important to the research question. Therefore, the researcher’s judgment is essential to determine what should be highlighted as a theme. The key feature of a theme it is not a quantifiable measure, but it is important in addressing the main research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a useful method for a researcher working with an interpretivist paradigm who is seeking a richer understanding of empirical data. Thematic analysis could be applied to report experiences, meanings and the participants’ real world views (Braun and Clarke, 2006) as it is in this study, which examines the realities, meanings and experiences of participants and their impacts on society.

Al hojailan (2012) states, thematic analysis is capable of identifying factors or variables that influence any issues highlighted by participants, as is evident in this study to explore factors that influence host-guest relationships in Bidiyah and WBK. Furthermore, thematic analysis is considered suitable for dealing with data when the researcher highlights its differences and similarities (Al hojailan, 2012). Therefore, thematic analysis is the most fitting tool for this research to identify different stakeholders’ perspectives on tourism development and its impacts on the host community. Furthermore, it was deemed appropriate to draw a comparison analysis between the different themes identified in the two cases of

Bidiyah and WBK. Hence, this research employed thematic analysis to analyse the empirical data obtained.

The data analysis of this research was employed the six-step guides of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) as following:

- The first stage entailed transcribing the digital audio recorded data into written form so I could begin familiarising myself with the data. At this stage, the recordings were transcribed in Arabic and then translated into English. Although transcribing data is time-consuming, frustrating and often boring, it is “a key phase of data analysis within interpretive qualitative methodology” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87). To ensure that none of the meaning of the data was lost, I transcribed and translated the transcripts myself, then a second person was brought in to audit the Arabic translation into English.
- The second stage was repeated reading, which involved an in-depth examination of the data while searching for meanings and patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006:87). In this stage an initial list of open codes ideas was generated from the Bidiyah data, such as economic gains, local tour guides, local drivers, cultural pride, environmental challenges, damage to fauna and flora, massive tourist waste and littering, and requirements for regulating Ezbas. During this stage, Bidiyah’s host community’s economic benefits from tourism development were identified. The perceived environmental and social problems associated with tourism development and other issues were also determined. On the other hand, the WBK data’s open codes include limited economic benefits, culture clash between the local residents and the international tourists, congestion, limited accommodation and tourist facilities, and lack of implemented regulations. In this stage of the WBK data analysis, the host community’s limited economic benefits from tourism development were identified. Perceived socio-cultural problems, the host community’s social capacity and quality of life challenges of tourism development, and other issues were also identified.

- The third stage was identifying codes from the data that could be used to categorise it into key themes. During this stage, the researcher coded the data using different colours to denote topics; thus, for each new topic, a different colour was used and a new code was given. For example, the colour red was used to denote “economic” and the colour yellow was used for “culture”. At the end of the coding process, every transcript was subsequently organised to exclude unwanted data.
- The fourth stage entailed reformulating the above codes into main themes and subthemes and into more theoretical concepts; this includes principles of sustainable tourism development that are focused on analysing the social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects revealed from the interviews. Also, the interviews uncovered issues associated with tourism planning dimension and regulations. The data analysis for every category of the stakeholder participants in each case study was undertaken separately at the first stage. Appendix A provides an example of the coding carried out on the data of the government participants in Bidiyah. To facilitate an effective analysis, for each case study, a table was generated for every theme. These themes included socio-economic impacts, socio-cultural impacts, environmental impacts, regulation challenges, planning aspects, and other issues. The different categories of participant included government officials, local community residents, tourist business operators, and international and domestic tourists; these occupied the rows of every table. Every participants’ quotations were then copied into the relevant intersection cells.

This tabular form was also analysed with utmost care in order to interpret the relations between different participants and themes, and to determine similarities and differences. Appendix B provides an example of coding for the theme of socio-cultural impacts, presenting quotes from some tourism stakeholders in WBK. At this stage, a set of codes was also found that did not belong any theme, and it was placed under an ‘other issues’ theme, which was later discarded from the analysis in a data reduction step to focus on themes that are related to the research questions.

- The fifth stage involved comparisons of the data that was obtained from the two cases to determine similarity and distinctions. Appendix C is an example of coding for a comparison of the socio-economic impacts of tourism in both cases.
- After reassembling the data, the interpretation of the findings of the study and the results of the final stages are presented in the next two chapters. This is based on condensing the large volume of information and categorising the key themes of the data. The data was interpreted using the researcher's knowledge of the Omani community with reference to existing academic literature.

4.6.7 Validity Construction

To assess the quality of the qualitative research, examining its trustworthiness is crucial (Decrop, 2004; Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln and Guba, 1986). According to Golafshani (2003), the trustworthiness of qualitative research is conceptualised in the validity and reliability of the study. Bryman (2016) states that for qualitative research to be trustworthy, it must have internal validity, external validity, dependability and confirmability. Internal validity shows the research is valid in context as well as being truthful regarding the respondents' views concerning their reality, while external validity refers to the possible transferability of the findings. Dependability requires keeping an "audit trail" of the research records in an accessible manner, whilst confirmability is to maintain research objectivity (Bryman, 2016:384). .

- Internal Validity

Triangulation is an important technique that helps maintain the internal validity of qualitative research. According to Decrop (1999), triangulation means looking at the same phenomenon from the perspective of more than one source of data. Yin (2012:104) clarifies that the use of multiple sources of evidence in a case study approach means "to ask the same question of different sources of evidence, as well as asking the same questions of different interviewees". The main aim of

triangulation is to confirm data as well as to gain a broader and richer understanding of attitudinal and behavioural issues.

Triangulation in qualitative research can take four forms: combining sources, methods, investigators and theories (Decrop, 1999). First, the triangulation of data sources involves collecting data from secondary sources as well as the empirical data collected in the fieldwork. Second, methods triangulation involves the use of multiple methods to study the phenomenon (Janesick, 1998). Third, investigator triangulation is characterised by the use of different researchers or evaluators to balance out the objective influence of individuals (Decrop, 1999). Forth, theoretical triangulation means approaching the data from multiple perspectives (Janesick, 1998).

In this study, the researcher used two types of triangulation. First, data triangulation was employed by gathering information from different groups of respondents: government officials, local community members, tourism business operators and tourists. Second, the researcher studied the phenomenon using multiple methods: semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis. These triangulations allowed the researcher to look at socio-cultural, economic and environmental challenges from different perspectives and they considerably enriched the information gathered and ensured the validity of the research findings.

- **External Validity**

External validity can be attained through the use of purposive sampling (Decrop, 2004), and by including a 'thick description' that outlines details regarding issues of concern (Bryman, 2016:384). To maintain the representativeness of the study to contexts wider than its particular case, a second case study was added to the research based on its potential to offer new insights regarding the research question. Based on that, the data analysis and interpretations were contextualised by describing the various stakeholders being interviewed, taking into account the particularities of each research context. Data themes and concepts were continuously compared and checked against the empirical material in order to

maintain credible findings and conclusions. As a result, a comparative analysis of the obtained data on the two cases was developed.

Additionally, this study uses ‘thick description’ in the form of participant quotations and local community members’ stories about their experiences of the issues that hinder them from participating in the tourism industry (in the case of WBK) or threatening their economic benefits from tourism development (in the case of Bidiyah). Also included is a ‘thick description’ of the effects of tourism on the local community’s quality of life and well-being in Bidiyah and as well as on locals’ social capacity and their religious values in WBK.

- **Dependability**

Dependability is another technique used to enhance research credibility. This criteria maintains an audit approach that requires the researcher to take part in sessions with peers regarding various aspects examined by the research (Bryman, 2016; Decrop, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 1986). During the peer debriefing regarding this research, the researcher presented written and oral summaries of emerging themes and data interpretations of the research. Continuous discussions with colleagues, research experts in tourism development and other PhD students were utilised throughout the research process, and were helpful in assessing the reliability of the research data.

- **Confirmability**

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher built trust with the participants by being introduced by key informants and gate keepers from the MOT in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. the researcher spent time in the field, which allowed for the development of personal and interpersonal relationships so that the researcher’s presence in the field did not cause the participants to act differently due to her presence. In addition, to ensure reliability, the purpose of the research was explained to participants using a participation information sheet (see Appendix D) to ensure that they understood the researcher’s motives for conducting this study. Furthermore, the researcher provided the participants with an information sheet approved by the University of Glasgow’s Ethics Committee

that outlined the research details for their further reference. Furthermore, this research was continuously discussed with academic advisors to ensure conformability. Finally, to achieve internal validity, the interviews were digitally recorded to minimise the possibility of misinterpreted answers during the data transcription phase.

4.6.8 Ethical Considerations

All potential interviewees were informed about the aims of the research, what procedures would be followed, and how the findings would be used. All participants were assured of the confidentiality of their comments during the interviews to make them feel free to speak freely about the topic under examination.

All interviews were conducted in the Arabic language—the official language of Oman. Accordingly, interview materials, such as the consent forms and the research information, were translated into Arabic to ensure participants understood the motivations behind conducting this research. Appendix C entails the participant information sheet used for the informants from the government, the local community and the tourism business in Bidiyah and WBK.

Considering a voluntary participant who consents to participate in research might differ from those who do not; this sampling method is likely to lead to a sample representing people who are more interested in the topic and willing to participate than the general population (Robinson, 2014). This research found that in terms of local community participants in Bidiyah, tourism business owners were most interested in participating. This segment of tourism stakeholders reflects the presence of the tourism industry in the local economy of Bidiyah, revealing that tourism receives, largely, positive support at the local community level, but that there are environmental and social concerns among the local community. This bias of tourism business owners can be easily counteracted by including other non-tourism business owners within the purposive sampling frame, ensuring both business and non-business representation. More systematic biases in differences between participants and non-participants are harder to deal with. A self-selection bias is unavoidable in interview-based research, as voluntary

participation is central to ethical good practice. Therefore, the researcher is aware of the possibility of bias and its impacts on the findings. Hence, the researcher conducted interviews with a key segment of tourism stakeholders in Bidiyah, including the local host community who reside there, government participants from key authorities responsible for the management of tourism development in Bidiyah (such as the MOT, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, the Ministry of Municipality and Water Resources, and the Wali's Office), in addition to international and domestic tourists. The interviews were conducted to avoid research bias that could stem from the majority of interviews being with tourist business owners in Bidiyah as they were more than willing to participate in the research. Such inclusiveness of key stakeholders was crucial in order to avoid any bias.

In October 2015, the research commenced. Three stages had been planned which are outlined in the following three sections. All of these stages were necessary to identify indicators that reflect the local community's participation in tourism development and to investigate the issues that are hindering them from gaining economic benefits from tourism growth in Oman.

4.6.9 Limitations of the Research Methodology

This study represents a significant step towards the development of an in-depth qualitative approach to gain both insight and understanding of tourism development and host-guest relationships from key stakeholders, as well as understanding issues that are preventing the local community from participating in tourism development, or that are causing concern during tourism development in Oman. However, a few limitations inherent to this study should be identified and considered.

- The literature on host-guest relationships and local community participation and economic benefits from tourism specifically in Oman is limited at best, and unavailable in many cases. This limits the extent of my evaluation of tourism's social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts in the context of Oman.

- It is crucial to have accurate, timely and reliable data to obtain better analysis and understanding. For this research, information about the number of tourists in Bidiyah is only an estimated number based on statistics of international tourists for the year 2016. However, there is no available data about domestic tourist numbers. Moreover, apart from hotel employees, there is no definitive data on the number of workers in the rest of the tourism industry in Oman.
- The limited availability of domestic tourists in WBK affected the researcher's sample. Due to domestic tourists' conservative religious values and their desire to avoid culture clashes with international tourists, they were not available during the tourism season in winter, when I planned my visit to interview tourists in WBK. Thus, the researcher had to plan another field visit to meet domestic tourists. That was conducted in May 2018, yet due to the hot weather in summer season, tourist numbers dropped, and the researcher managed to interview only three Omani visitors.
- Besides, interactive tourism experiences that the researcher gained in Bidiyah and WBK, through visiting local inhabitants in their respective spaces, spontaneous conversations with tourists and local residents, and examination of local handcrafts, the researcher had planned to conduct a three-daytrip crossing the desert from Bidiyah. This would have allowed her to experience tourism in Bidiyah, meet tourists during the trip and observe host-guest relationships. However, due to time constraints, it was not possible to conduct this visit because of conflict between the period that the trip was organised and the researcher's availability in Oman.
- The researcher intended to interview stakeholders with experience of tourism development and its impacts on the local community in Bidiyah and WBK, so purposive sampling was used; in particular, snowball and sequential sampling. In this approach, participants who met the criteria were invited to identify other possible participants who fit the criteria. While this sampling strategy was effective in recruiting participants with the best knowledge of local community participation and benefits from tourism development in Bidiyah and WBK, it has limitations related to how

representative the research participants are of the local community. Amongst the local community, sampling included local residents and representatives, related regional and government authorities and tourism businesses; however, for example in WBK, there is the risk that the views of the farm owners were not captured (due to their unavailability). Therefore, including them in future research is necessary to highlight any related issues, such as the impacts of tourism on farms' irrigation, as farms are irrigated with water from the same sources where tourists swim.

- It is an advantage to conduct interviews in one's home country with people of the same cultural background and who have a shared language. However, due to societal construction and the norms faced by the researcher as a female, it was challenging at times to interact with male interviewees in a conservative community, especially when cultural issues were raised.
- The researcher was based in the UK and a limited amount of time was spent in Oman to conduct the interviews. She was also required to travel from her hometown (Muscat) to Bidiyah and WBK (2-3 hours by car) to conduct interviews with local stakeholders, which took a lot of time and effort.
- One of the challenges the researcher faced was the difficulty of reaching the study areas. Because they are a desert and a valley, driving to either destination requires a 4X4 car and a skilled driver. Hence, international tourists visit the place mainly with tour guides.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the aims and objectives of the study contributed to the selection of the research methodology. Section 4.2 highlighted research reflexivity, then Section 4.3 outlined why this project is best suited to the interpretivist paradigm, as it attempts to investigate the perspectives of a variety of stakeholders in Oman through a qualitative research approach.

A multi-case study approach (Section 4.4) was applied to explore the impacts of tourism facing the local community, as well as being a means to compare the main

issues that are hindering them from participating in tourism development in Bidiyah and WBK. In Section 4.5, reasons were given for the selection of these two areas being appropriate to offer a contrasting situation of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism development.

The chapter has detailed the methods used for data collection and the sampling techniques followed (Section 4.6.4). In Sections 4.6.5 to 4.6.9, issues of participant coding, the thematic analysis stages were detailed, as were validity construction, ethics, and research limitation.

The next three data analysis chapters present the key issues related to tourism development in the case of Bidiyah and WBK. Chapters 5 and 6 illustrate tourism stakeholders' perspectives on socio-cultural and socio-economic impacts, the local communities' participation, and their views on the environmental and social drawbacks of tourism growth. Then Chapter 7 engages with theoretical host-guest relationship models to discuss and compare the main findings of the Bidiyah and WBK case studies to present some implications about the socio-cultural, socio-economic, and environmental dimensions of tourism development.

Chapter 5: Host-Guest Encounters and the Perceived Impacts of Tourism Development in Bidiyah

5.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to focus on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism development and to present broadly the socio-economic and environmental aspects of tourism in Bidiyah. It will highlight the effects of tourism development on a highly fragile ecology of a desert destination, and a distinct Bedouin community to explore the influence of these impacts on the local community's perceived attitudes towards the development of tourism in Bidiyah. These issues will be investigated by considering different perspectives, including national government officials, regional government representatives, local community residents, local tourism businesses, one local NGO and tourists. The results will be discussed in relation to issues identified in the literature to show that although tourism has been a great source of economic benefits for the local community, the increasing demand of tourism and irresponsible domestic tourist activities and behaviours is destroying the very resources that tourists came to enjoy in the desert. This chapter will also determine the negative impact of tourists' activities and behaviour on the social capacity of the Bedouin community residing in the area. Furthermore, the findings will demonstrate that although, tourism has been a positive source of economic impact for the local community, many local handcraft makers have not benefited from tourism growth.

The research identified five main themes from the fieldwork in Bidiyah: (1) the perceived socio-economic impacts of tourism, (2) the cultural impacts of tourism, (3) the social and environmental impacts of tourism, (4) environmental regulation challenges, and (5) planning aspects. After summarising the desert landscape, tourist type and scale, in Bidiyah, each of these main themes will be discussed in turn.

5.2 Background About the Desert and Tourist Type and Scale

According to Edgell (2006), desert developed over thousands of years and is rich in diverse fauna and flora. The key to the biodiversity of the Remal AL Sharqia desert is due to the variety and quantity of trees, shrubs, annual vegetation and plants that exist there; as well as all the animals which have been recorded in the desert: insects, lizards, a vast number of birds, Ruppell's foxes, sand cats, white-tailed mongooses, gazelles, cape hares, red foxes and Arabian wolves (SCP, 2018).

However, desertification, a process by which areas lose their productive capacity, is a challenge threatening the desert (Edgell, 2006). This process results from the removal of vegetation, which leads to the depletion of nutrients from the soil, thus rendering the land infertile (SCP, 2018). Vehicular use on fragile soils and desert pavements are the two main causes of soil destruction in the desert (Edgell, 2006).

The desert has always been an important aspect of the culture and way of life of the Arab Gulf countries (Mahgoub, 2007). Following the discovery of oil in Oman in the 1970s, along with the provision of schools and a modern infrastructure, many of the Bedouin people became urbanised and moved to the desert adjacent to newly constructed cities and towns. Their cultural practices are still connected with the desert and they visit the place during the winter season that spans from September until April.

Over time, the desert became one of the more popular leisure and entertainment destinations for international and domestic tourists. Unfortunately, it has now become an endangered environment because of the increase in tourism development and tourist activities.

Bidiyah's people are well known for breeding camels and Arabian horses. In addition, the town hosts camel and horse races during Eid, during National Day celebrations and in yearly festivals. It also hosts the Bidiyah Challenge which takes place every February, the aim of which is to scale the sand dunes in the least possible time driving 4X4 cars. International tourists are attracted to Bidiyah to

experience the desert and the Bedouin lifestyle during winter. The owner of a tourist desert camp described their activities as follows:

“We have two types of international tourists; one of them comes through the tour operator companies—they are budget tourists who stay for one night only and spend a very minimal amount. We organise an entertainment programme for them; this includes camel riding, dune bashing, watching the sunset and sunrise, visiting Bedouin houses to buy handcrafts, organising folklore performances. The other type of tourists contacts us directly and they stay in Bedouin houses, these tourists stay longer and spend more” (BB-1).

Cohen's (1972) typology of tourists can be identified in Bidiyah: the institutionalised organised mass international tourists are groups of tourists that usually arrive by bus and are transferred from the petrol station to the campsites by the local drivers. In the afternoon they are taken dune bashing and sunset watching, then on the following day these tourists watch the sunrise and return to the petrol station where they are picked up by buses. This type of tourist stays in the tourist desert camps (a type of tourist accommodation built with permanent materials in a traditional style, providing all required Western amenities). While non-institutionalised explorer tourists, visit Bedouin houses and stay with Bedouin families to experience the traditional local lifestyle.

Two other types of tourists visit Bidiyah: domestic tourists in large families or friends groups, and stay in locally owned *Ezba* or they camp in the desert, they are attracted to the desert for camping, dune bashing, sand surfing and quad biking. This type of tourist is not identified in Cohen's (1972) or Smith's (1977;1989) typologies of tourists (see Section 2.4.2). They cannot be classified as non-institutionalised drifters in Cohen's (1972) typology nor as unusual tourist in Smith's (1977;1989), as their typology is related to Omani characteristics as they travel in a collective groups. The last type is large groups of organised mass international and domestic tourists who cross the desert from east to south with specialised tour operators provides fixed itineraries, for two to three days.

5.3 Socio-Economic Impacts of Tourism

According to Cooper *et al.* (2005), foreign currency, income generation and employment creation are the primary motivators for tourism to be included in a country's development strategies. Similarly, in Oman, the government chose tourism as a priority economic sector with the aim of diversifying the economy and creating job opportunities for local nationals.

5.3.1 Job Creation for the Local Community

The increasing demand for tourism and desert excursions made by international and domestic tourists has impacted positively on the local economy. It has increased employment opportunities and, as such, has become a source of income diversity for the local community. The following statement exemplifies a local tour guide from Bidiyah providing an overview of the types of tourist activities he offered:

“I work only in tourism; although it's a seasonal activity, it provides me with my personal economic needs all year round. I organise several activities, such as camel riding, crossing the desert and camping. Sometimes I offer Omani lunches at home and other times I organise Omani folklore performances. I deal with different companies” (BB-4).

Undoubtedly, tourism provides economic benefits to several segments of the local community's residents in Bidiyah, and thus it is perceived positively by the local community.

Tourism in Bidiyah also helped with the materialisation of family business entrepreneurs through the coordination between family members and participation in tourism product development. This, in turn, created additional income sources and produced an arena for exhibiting the Bedouin cultural tourism product. Some of the local community members expressed strong positive feelings towards tourism due to their long-term relationships with the industry, as one local female resident of Bidiyah demonstrated:

“I have been receiving tourists for 30 years now. Before any businesses started in the area I developed my project. Most of the big international tourist companies know my Bedouin house. I offer traditional meals, I provide camel rides and if tourists want to stay in the tourist camp I prepare the camp for them. Although the competition has now increased, the income is still very good. We are used to tourists and we do not have any dissatisfaction with them. We want them to come happy and to leave satisfied” (BB-9).

This example represents a successful family entrepreneur in the Bidiyah tourism industry. The mother displays and sells local handcrafts in a Bedouin house; her son organises tour guiding and camping in the desert; her daughters provide Omani hospitality through serving tourists with Omani coffee and dates; her youngest son takes tourists on camel rides.

Every member of the family supports each other to sustain their source of income by offering tourists a way of sampling the Bedouin lifestyle and its cultural traditions. Their business has developed a positive long-term relationship with the tourism industry and has remained an important component of a tourism product in Bidiyah.

Furthermore, the collaboration of Bidiyah tourism and the local community is represented by the coordination between tour guides and their neighbouring youths, working together to organise trips for tourists and providing transportation for them. This finding supports the conclusions of Wilson *et al.* (2001) who purport that cooperation between tourism businesses and the local community is a key factor to ensure successful tourism development. This perception was confirmed by a local female resident who said:

“The tourist trade is supporting the economy and creating job opportunities for youths. Some locals do not have any other source of income except from tourism. For example, my son works with our neighbours as a driver; they organise camping trips, thereby creating valuable returns for the local community. My son is gaining good

experience and his English language has improved which will help him in the future” (LB-2).

One of the important findings of this research is that Bidiyah demonstrates a significant success story of local community cooperation between business owners and the youth. This is widely regarded as being an important contributory factor which helped encourage the local community to participate in tourism development and resulted in positive, local socio-economic benefits. Through direct communication, coordination and cooperation, the community came together and organised themselves on different levels. For example, desert camp owners contracted local youths in the area as drivers and tour guides, capitalising on their knowledge of their locality and understanding of sand dunes and the easiest and safest access to the desert. This collaboration created a successful and flourishing tourism business for the local community in Bidiyah, as supported by one desert camp owner and a local tour guide who both stated:

“For the Omani citizens who are looking for jobs, tourism offers full-time employment; for those who are already working in another job, tourism offers part-time employment. It enables them to work after their official working hours, as well as working over the weekends and during holidays. For some of the locals, tourism is their only source of income. They are married and they have families relying on tourism. They don’t want to work in Muscat as they are happy to work from their home base” (BB-1).

“Transferring the tourists from the petrol station to the desert camps as a driver, or working as a tour guide and crossing the desert are the most beneficial activities that take place during the tourism season” (BB-4).

This positive cooperation and networking between owners of the tourist desert camps and local youths generated job opportunities for national youth and reduced the challenges faced by jobseekers in the area.

The tourism industry has also indirectly contributed to the success of other businesses in Bidiyah. For example, many Bedouin women have experienced increased sales in local handcrafts and arts. Furthermore, local livestock owners have gained economic access to the tourism industry through supplying desert camps and restaurants and by selling directly to domestic tourists. Economic benefits have also extended to petrol stations and other local commercial shops whose profits have risen due to the increased demand for their services by international and domestic tourists during the winter season. This has resulted in the local community having a more positive perception of the development of tourism in the area.

Positive perception towards the tourism industry's economic benefits are supported by a senior government official in the MOT who stated:

“Generally, most of the tourism projects in Bidiyah are owned by the local community. Some of the locals work as drivers to transport tourists to the tourist desert camps. They are experts in driving in the desert as driving in the sand dunes requires skilled drivers who know the best ways and safest access for the tourists and the cars [...] We've also observed a lot of tour guides from the local community gaining benefits and more doors are open for the locals to invest in tourism projects. At the moment, the demand for developing tourism projects is huge, but we try to control the growth of the project in the area as we want to balance development and the [preservation of the] desert environment” (NG-T1).

Again, these remarks reiterate the perceived positive socio-economic impact of tourism in Bidiyah, particularly in the generation of employment for local youths and the creation of income sources for different segments of local community residents. This demonstrates that tourism development and host-guest relationships in Bidiyah are in the apathy stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, especially in terms of attracting national youths into the tourism industry, as they found that the youth are mainly interested in working as tour guides or drivers for tourists.

The positive perceived socio-economic impact outlined in this subsection, suggest that a local community who receives benefits from tourism perceive a high level of positive impacts, and this is generally supported in Bidiyah by most local community residents who engage and participate in tourism development. This validates the work of Tosun (2002) and Andereck *et al.* (2005) who discovered that local people who are more engaged with the tourist industry are inclined to perceive tourists and tourism growth positively and to hold more supportive attitudes to tourism. This is especially true of those who are involved in the tourism business and who have gained economic benefits from its growth.

5.3.2 Examining the Links Between Handcraft Makers and the Tourism Industry in Bidiyah

In contrast to the successful coordination experiences of local business stakeholders in Bidiyah, on examining the participation of handcraft makers to the tourism industry, there is an evident lack of coordination between business stakeholders which has limited the benefits they have received from the tourism trade.

Wool weaving from goat's wool is a traditional craft in Bidiyah. Its products are mainly produced by Bedouin women who sell handmade items which include small woollen carpets, handbags, key holders and traditional cosmetics. Unfortunately, from an economic perspective the wool weaving and handcrafts industry in Bidiyah has not gained wide recognition from tourists. This was confirmed by a group of local women who display their traditional weaving products at one of the most active entrances to the sand dunes in Bidiyah. They complained of not being able to access the tourism market. One of the local women from the local community claimed:

“The benefit of selling handcrafts is very limited [...] Although lots of tourists' cars pass by, very few people stop [...] The tourists need to be informed about our handcrafts by their drivers and tour guides” (BB-F1).

A regional government informant added:

“We have handcraft houses and training centres, but they are not linked with the tourism industry... We need to improve coordination with the related authorities and the private sector to bring tourist groups to these sites” (RG-H1).

Most of the handcraft makers in Bidiyah who were interviewed highlighted the need for tourist guides and local drivers to provide tourists with the opportunity to learn about local handcrafts, so as to create a link between tourist demand and the local handcraft industry. The lack of collaboration among local tourism businesses in Bidiyah and handcraft makers has limited their participation in the tourism industry and their ability to share in the benefits of tourism.

This issue also reflects the lack of action which has been taken among government officials to convene with related parties from the tourism businesses and the local community to develop a relationship which includes local handcrafts as part of the area’s tourism product. Thus, there seems to be some resentment from local handcraft makers arising from inequalities in how the financial returns from tourism are being shared. Plate 5.1 shows a handcraft exhibit at one of the most active tourist entrances to the sand dunes in Bidiyah.

Plate 5.1: Handcraft Exhibit in Bidiyah



Source: Author (2018)

The lack of coordination between tourism planners and local craft makers is another significant factor which contributes to local craft makers' ability to benefit from the tourism industry in Bidiyah. A local government official stated:

“In Bidiyah, the government developed a factory to produce handcrafts from bones, such as camel bones. However, it is located significantly far from Bidiyah and, as a result, it has not been actively utilised in local tourism programmes and on many occasions it is often closed” (LG-WB).

It is clear that, despite the growth of tourism and the government's financial support and training which is available for handcraft makers in Bidiyah, the lack of collaboration and coordination between the tourist industry's planners and local handcraft producers has resulted in virtually no economic benefits being afforded to the local community. This situation is exacerbated by the disconnection between local handcraft makers and other tourism businesses in Bidiyah who do not include local products and skills in their tourism products. This validates the work of Fabeil *et al.* (2015) and Dhamija (1981) who found that marketing challenges is most important problem hindering handcraft makers to sell their crafts.

Bidiyah is known for its authentic Bedouin weaving products, however, the main focus of promotion is on selling key holders. Thus, handcrafted products in Bidiyah need more attention and better marketing. It is also worth noting that Bedouin women are well known for their special traditional cosmetics that they are keen to sell. These include items such as Henna, Sandalwood powder, *Wars* (a herbal cosmetic) and handmade *kajel* (Kohl). However, these handmade products are not developed well enough to be incorporated into the tourism industry. The quality of the products needs to improve to ensure that they are hygienic and safe to use. Their packaging and presentation also needs to be enhanced to meet tourists' desires and expectations.

In spite of the complaints made by some handcraft makers who feel they are being excluded from the growth and subsequent benefits of tourism, there is, in fact, a common agreement among the majority of interviewees that tourism is having a

positive impact on the local community's economy in Bidiyah. Thus, there is a highly tolerant attitude towards tourism, especially among those who are involved in the tourism business and who have gained economic benefits from its growth.

5.4 The Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism in Bidiyah

It has been argued that tourists' culture can have a negative impact on the community and can contribute to the demise of the host community's culture (Canavan, 2016). In contrast, Bidiyah has credited tourism as having a positive influence on the community arising from the cultural contact between hosts and guests. The local community maintains a strong sense of pride in presenting their Bedouin cultural traditions to international tourists, while tourists perceive their time in Bidiyah as being an authentic experience because of the desert's natural resources and the local community's lifestyle.

Tourists visiting Bidiyah have described this as a learning interest and have continued to show their appreciation of the Arabic and Islamic cultural traditions and the hospitality of its citizens as the following quotes will show. However, host-guest interaction in Bidiyah is an experience limited only to the international tourist and local hosts working in tourism; mainly tour guides, drivers and handcraft makers.

A key a senior government informant said:

“In Bidiyah, we did not observe any changes in the local community's cultural traditions or lifestyle, as tourists in the desert do not come in contact with the local community directly. They go to the desert camp and their contact is primarily with the tour guides, where most of them are from the local community or with the individual responsible for organising events in the camps ... Although tourism could have negative cultural impacts, we did not receive any complaints on the matter” (NG-T1).

From local community perspectives, it was commonly agreed by the majority of the interviewees that there are positive cultural interactions between hosts and

international guests, which promotes a feeling of satisfaction in the local community about the positive role of tourism in the area. This was confirmed by a local community member who commented:

“We are happy that the foreign tourists are interested in our culture... We are proud to present our cultural traditions” (NGO).

An owner of one tourist desert camp confirmed that mutual respect is the basis of host-guest relationships in Bidiyah when he said:

“The tourists have their culture and we have our culture, and everyone has their own respective form of privacy ... No negative cultural impact exists” (BB-1).

These comments generally reflect the local community’s satisfaction towards their international guests and their interaction with tourists. This is consistent with the research of Ap and Crompton (1998) and Besculides *et al.* (2002) who found that tourism socio-cultural impacts on the host community can have many benefits, such as local community pride and an increased understanding of other cultures on both sides.

Furthermore, tourists also conveyed positive feelings about their experiences in Bidiyah. A German tourist expressed the pleasure of his experience when he said:

“The desert is very special for me; it is something mythical. Seeing camels and meeting local people with traditional dress is very authentic. Walking on the sand dunes on foot is the ultimate experience” (ITB-1).

Another experience by an American tourist highlighted that her main motive for visiting Oman was to learn about another culture and to experience the Arab-Islamic world. She said:

“I have wanted to come to Oman for long time with my two friends, they like to explore unusual and different cultures; it’s a source of education. There aren’t many Arab countries [where] people feel as

safe as here, so this is the reason why we chose to come to Oman; to experience the Muslim world, the Arab world and because we knew that it is a safe place to visit” (ITB-4).

This shows that tourists have an appreciation of other cultures and demonstrates international tourists’ interest in gaining knowledge and learning about authentic Arabian and Islamic culture. This confirms the finding of Besculides *et al.* (2002) about tourists learning and appreciating other cultures.

Following her experience in Bidiyah, an Austrian tourist described tourism as a platform for understanding different cultures. She expressed:

“I would recommend everybody from Europe to come here. At the moment, in our country and region we have a lot of problems with the current immigration phenomenon; people are afraid because they do not know the reality of Muslims and Arabs. People are afraid because they do not know the culture. Even if people believe in different religions they are still people. I think it is important to learn to live together whilst respecting each other. If you come here you will see a beautiful country and culture which I really like. I think tourism gives people the opportunity to understand each other; to open their mind and realise that we can learn a lot from each other” (ITB-3).

The above statements suggest that hosts and guests perceive the cultural impact of tourism in Bidiyah positively. The local community express their satisfaction and support for tourism development and they maintain their feelings of pride in presenting their cultural traditions and values. International tourists reveal that their primary motivation for visiting this part of the world is to experience authentic Arab culture and lifestyle in a peaceful country.

Tourists appreciate learning and gaining knowledge about Muslim culture, and see tourism as an instrument that provides education and understanding between different religious and cultural traditions. In order to enhance their experience, tourists researched the local culture and historical background of their destination prior to their visit. They arrived prepared to ensure they enjoyed the richest

cultural experience of the host country and its Islamic values. These cultural tourists were seeking an authentic experience and were keen to visit places of significance with their Omani tour guides. It is evident that they valued the local community's customs, traditional clothing and way of life. Some of them expressed their desire to repeat this experience and return in the future.

However, due to limited host-guest interaction, an opposite viewpoint arose from a German tour guide in Bidiyah:

“We do not have experiences with the local community in Bidiyah; we have seen only a museum and a small fort which are not attractive and are not promoted for tourists. The only thing we visit is a Bedouin lady's house which is the only activity that provides us with the opportunity to meet local people in Bidiyah and experience the local culture” (BB-3).

According to McIntosh and Ryan (2013), limited contact between indigenous people in their daily lives and tourists might impact negatively on the quality of tourists' experiences, especially for those who aim to fully explore this new and different culture. However, the issue here is that the guide may have limited access to, and limited background knowledge of the local community's cultural displays and traditional activities due to being a non-native tour guide.

According to the fieldwork, tourists do not only visit tourism sites, they are also interested in being involved and included within the daily lives and activities of the local community. For example, tourists have the opportunity to experience and participate in the Tuesday market where locals exhibit and sell traditional products, such as livestock, agricultural products, handcrafts and traditional cosmetics. Another popular activity held in Bidiyah is the horse and camel racing event which is occasionally organised by the locals. When this coincides with tourists' visits, they are invited to attend and participate in this event.

As has been mentioned previously, the perceived positive impacts of tourism development in Bidiyah were due to its generation of a source of income and job opportunities for local youths and different segments of the local community.

Citizens are proud to show the beauty and diversity of their culture to the outside world, giving others the chance to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of their traditions and way of life. However, there is also a downside to the increasing demands of tourism in Bidiyah which raises environmental and social concerns. The overconsumption of tourists, especially domestic ones, has exceeded the social and environmental capacity of the desert's natural resources and local residents' quality of life and well-being, and this is threatening the sustainability of tourism resources in the desert.

5.5 Environmental Threats to the Tourism Industry in Bidiyah

Environmental resources are fundamental assets for tourism products and play an important role in attracting tourists (Sharma *et al.*, 2016). The desert is an environmental resource characterised by a unique ecological biodiversity (Eshraghi and Ahmed, 2010). The sand dunes, flora and fauna and unique cultural and natural attractions have resulted in the desert becoming one of the most appealing attractions for tourists (Ibid).

The Omani government has always stressed the importance of maintaining the country's natural resources and, thus, a selective strategy aimed at attracting responsible tourists from Europe and Asia was one of the key principles that guided the development of the tourism industry (Mershen, 2007). Cooper *et al.* (1998) and Gunn and Var (2002) maintain that the implementation of capacity strategies for the management of vulnerable destinations is crucial for the success of tourism development.

Hence, in Bidiyah the MOT has only approved nine guest houses in an attempt to balance the demand with the approved capacity of the desert's fragile ecology. According to a key government official:

“In Oman we do not concentrate on the number of tourists so much... Instead, we focus on the quality of the tourists, especially for this area, as the sands are a fragile resource. Therefore, we maintain a certain number of tourists by controlling the number of facilities available. As

a result, tourists with no prior reservation tend not to visit the area” (NG-T1).

These facilities are used mainly by international tourists. They visit places with guided tour companies in organised trips, usually staying for one or two nights in tourist desert camps or camping in the desert. Thus, a controlled number of international tourists are able to engage in environmentally friendly activities which are focussed on experiencing nature.

Although the government has succeeded in managing the number of international tourists and activities in the desert, they have failed to control domestic tourists. The massive increase in the volume of domestic tourists, coupled with irresponsible entertainment activities, has endangered the fragile desert environment and the local community’s social life, thus causing the pollution and degradation of nature and resulting in irritated host-domestic guest relationship. This poses a threat to the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in Bidiyah. The following sections discusses tourism’s impacts on Bidiyah’s environmental resources and wildlife, its social life, and the challenges of noise pollution and those facing environmental regulations.

5.5.1 Overcrowding, Littering and Harming Wildlife

According to NCSI (2017:2), “Inbound tourism has doubled in just under a decade, during the period between 2005 and 2014; however, in the same period, domestic tourism has more than tripled”. Bidiyah is one tourist site that has been extremely negatively affected by the rapid increased demand of the domestic market, as stressed by a regional government informant:

“This year we were surprised by the dramatic increase in the number of tourists and by the amount of waste. Although we have allocated a large number of cars to collect waste, the head of the cleaning department and the cleaning supervisors who experienced this season were shocked by the number of tourists, especially during the National Day holiday” (RG-M1).

In addition, a local community resident of Bidiyah claimed:

“We are not disrupted by the international tourists because they take care of the environment and its cleanliness, they are very responsible and do not irritate us. The problem is with the Omani tourists. In increasing numbers they are coming in groups of fifteen in noisy jeeps, driving close to the animals and irritating them. They often leave their litter behind which is eaten by the animals and then they become sick” (LB-2).

The ever-increasing number of domestic tourists is unmanageable. It exceeds capacity limits needed to preserve the fragile ecology and environmental resources of the desert and has a negative impact on the local community. Domestic tourists visit Bidiyah in large groups of families and friends. Some of them fix their tents on public land and sand dunes, as this is an affordable alternative to the exorbitant prices charged for accommodation in desert camps, Moreover, the litter they leave behind causes pollution in the desert and creates discomfort for the local community.

This problem was reiterated by the majority of the interviewees from the government, local community, local businesses and international tourists. The latter highlighted the importance of government intervention in dealing with this problematic situation, as detailed by a tourist desert camp owner who commented:

“The government is not considering Bidiyah with regards to the impacts of tourism growth. There are not enough facilities for the local tourists or regulations to penalise those who destroy the environment. In addition, the local residents are affected by campers and their waste. In certain circumstances, this waste is digested by their livestock, resulting in their death” (BB-2).

These concerns were echoed by a local tour guide:

“There are negative impacts caused by overcrowding during the tourist season and the disturbance caused by cars as they enter the desert through the community. However, the most negative impact affecting the residents is the litter that the tourists leave. This happens mostly when they are domestic tourists, not international tourists. They also disrupt the animals’ lives, I heard one story that a camel had been killed by a tourist car accident” (BB-4)

Camel breeding is a key aspect of Bedouin identity. It is regarded as a very important part of the local lifestyle in Bidiyah and is a key source of income. Desert plants and grass are a camel’s main source of food. However, food littering and other waste left by tourists now poses a significant threat to camels and other livestock’s lives. According to Eshraghi and Ahmed (2010), because of their exposure to waste left by tourists, animals’ eating habits have changed from eating the desert’s vegetation to eating food, litter and other tourists’ waste, causing them to get sick. This is another important issue which is of major concern for the local community and the impact of tourism on their lifestyle.

Excessive littering by desert campers also severely endangers the fragile ecosystem of the desert. It is a critical problem highlighted by the tour guides in Bidiyah and has led to concerns about the sustainability of the tourism industry in Bidiyah. One Omani tourist guide stated:

“We complain about the excessive littering, especially during the weekends. If you enter Bidiyah from any entry you will see water bottles and waste everywhere. This is affecting tourism negatively. If it continues, the tourists will stop coming” (NBW-1).

This issue was also raised by an international tourist who maintains the importance of enforcing the required regulations:

“I think Oman is really starting to open up. However, my concern with your tourism is not to ruin what you have. I was surprised with the amount of trash here when tourism is just beginning. I would be concerned to keep some regulations perhaps, so the cars are not

allowed into this area. The sand dunes should have some restrictions” (ITB-4).

The responsibility lies with the tourists and the responsible authorities who do not enforce laws and regulations. The authorities claim that they are providing litter bins necessary to solve the problem; however, this step in itself does not serve any purpose if they do not punish those responsible (will return to the challenges faced from a regulation perspective in Section 5.5.4). This view was echoed by a regional government interviewee. They commented:

“Our challenge is the random littering. Although we have provided litter bins and provided tourists with garbage bags to be collected in the evening, there is no obligation” (RG-M1).

Another challenge created by the domestic tourist is the excessive use of vehicles, such as 4-wheel drive cars and quad bikes. This is destroying fragile topsoil and vegetation and killing wildlife. This issue was addressed by a regional government official and by a local tourist desert camp owner respectively:

“If tourism remains as it is, where tourists, especially domestic tourists, drive everywhere, disturbing the animals and causing noise pollution to the local residents and to the camp guests, I believe that the vegetation and the environment will be destroyed within five to ten years, which will result in negative tourism growth in Bidiyah” (RG-T1).

“I have 20 years of experience in desert tourism and I’ve concluded that all the places where the cars pass by do not see plants again, even if it rains. Therefore, we hope that tourists crossing the desert do not drive off the directed tracks” (BB-2).

It appears that the government and the local community’s main concern is for the desert’s fragile ecology, as much of the impact tourism has on the desert’s natural habitat is observable in the damage caused to the fauna and flora and natural soil resources. In Bidiyah, most negative impacts are linked to domestic tourists’ activities, such as dune bashing, quad biking and 4-wheel drive cars crossing sand

dunes in the desert in large groups. These leisure and adventure activities for tourists were identified by many researchers (Mahgoub, 2014; Eshraghi and Ahmed, 2010; Edgell, 2006), as one of the sources of environmental problems responsible for causing the destruction of desert vegetation and the erosion of the soil in some Arabian deserts such as the Kuwaiti desert (Mahgoub, 2014). This was also highlighted by Eshraghi and Ahmed (2010) who highlighted the threshold of tolerance for the Iranian desert environment has been breached by overcrowding and the trampling of dunes by 4x4 vehicles, consequently destroying the rare vegetation.

Therefore, the establishment of regulations and guidelines to manage tourist numbers and their activities in the desert is an important requirement. These guidelines should be enforced by laws designed to protect the desert's fragile ecology and the local community's quality of life. A senior government interviewee voiced a concern for the environment in relation to the growth of tourism in Bidiyah; they confirmed the introduction of new procedures to overcome this problem:

“We received several complaints from the local community in Bidiyah about tourists' disturbance to their livestock and grazing areas. In addition, they raised concerns regarding the dramatic increase in tourist numbers, especially domestic tourists. Therefore, we started campaigns to create awareness through television programs; however, with the lack of regulations and punishments, the problem is unresolved. Therefore, we are speeding up the introduction of a new management and Land Use Plan to control the tourists' activities in the area” (NG-T1).

The MOT's proposal for the Management and Land Use Plan for the Al Sharqia Desert is expanded upon by a government interviewee:

“The proposed Management and Land Use Plan will designate areas for tourist activities, grazing areas, and residential areas. In addition, it will administrate camping and will include management regulations. The land use plan is awaiting the cabinet's final approval. It will be

implemented by all the stakeholders that contributed to developing this plan, such as MOT, Ministry of Regional Municipality and Water Resources, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Royal Oman Police” (NG-T2).

The government’s proposed Land Use and Management plan for the Ash Sharqia sand dunes is probably a good step towards protecting the desert’s scarce resources and wildlife from the activities of visitors, as well as preserving the local community’s lifestyle. In addition, it is evident that there should be more restrictions on the number of tourists and their associated activities to preserve the environment for sustainable tourism. However, this land use and management plan is urgent, as the damage caused cannot be repaired especially to the desert fauna and flora, as mentioned earlier by informant BB-2.

The MOT spent more than three years drafting this plan and coordinating with the related authorities to endorse this regulation yet, to date, it still has not been implemented. The lengthy procedures and bureaucracy to introduce urgent tourist regulations are contributing to the demise of the tourism industry by degrading the area’s natural resources. Thus, there is a need for urgent action to be taken by the authorities concerned in order to overcome these prevailing environmental challenges.

It appears that there is recognition of the impacts of overcrowding, littering and wildlife disturbance in Bidiyah across the different respondents. This concurs with Brunt and Courtney (1999) and Mbaiwa (2003), who report that littering, overcrowding and animal life disturbance are often significant issues associated with tourism development. What is also apparent is that most of the respondents believe that the main cause of the negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism in Bidiyah are the domestic tourists’ activities and travel behaviours.

5.5.2 The Impact of Noise Pollution

This subsection is divided to focus on three impacts of noise pollution: the local community, livestock and the tourism industry.

5.5.2.1 The Impact of Noise Pollution on the Local Community

The economic benefits tourism development brings to the local community does not necessarily have a positive impact on its well-being. Andereck and Jurowski (2006) state that the value of continuing economic growth is questionable when the local quality of life is impacted negatively. In Bidiyah, one factor which is harmful to the local community is noise pollution from tourists. This has resulted in feelings of dissatisfaction towards them, as claimed by a local tour guide:

“Some people are happy with the economic gains of tourism; others, however, are uncomfortable with the disruption caused by tourists” (BB-4).

The findings show that the majority of the interviewees raise concerns related to noise impact from an array of vehicles. This noise is disruptive for the local residents and their livestock and ultimately for the tourism industry itself. One regional government interviewee stated:

“The tourists could be divided into two categories: Omani tourists and foreign tourists. Some of them are well educated and have a high awareness of the environment and others don't. For instance, some tourists use cars equipped with loud sounds and very advanced facilities to drive on the sand dunes, which is destroying the vegetation and irritating the residents and their livestock” (RG-M1).

In agreement with the above statement, a local tour operator complained that the disturbance caused by domestic tourists has resulted in some local community members developing resentment towards domestic tourists' irresponsible activities:

“Foreign tourists come on organised and regulated trips and activities, but domestic tourists arrive any time: at night, sometimes at 12 midnight, or one, two, three a.m., early morning, especially over the weekends—they do not have specific arrival times—with loud car sounds, and sometimes loud music, crossing the desert close to the houses, annoying people, scaring the camels and destroying the vegetation” (BB-4).

Noise pollution from domestic tourists’ activities places further pressure on the local community’s well-being and is compromising the future enthusiasm of the local community towards the development of the tourism industry in Bidiyah. The uncontrollable noise of domestic tourists’ sports cars, especially during the night, causes an unbearable disturbance to the local community and has a negative impact on their quality of life. This urgently needs to be addressed by the tourism industry’s official planners who need to take action to control the negative impact of tourism and to eradicate these problems for the local community.

5.5.2.2 The Impact of Noise Pollution on Livestock

The detrimental impact of noise pollution from tourism to the local community’s livestock in Bidiyah has also been observed. The impact of tourists driving sports cars and quad biking close by the camels is now considered as a critical challenge for the local community. The camel has an iconic status in the Bedouin lifestyle; it reflects their traditional identity where there is a strong local interest in camel breeding and racing (Ryan and Stewart, 2009). Some local people are severely affected by the tourists’ irresponsible behaviour, as is demonstrated in the following story from a local tour guide:

“One camel owner lives 100 kilometres inside the desert. When the tourist groups arrived, crossing the desert, the camels disappeared, fearing the noise. As a result, he lost them for 25 days. Every day he was searching for them in the desert, from morning until night. Thankfully he found them” (BB-4).

The local community's suffering as a result of the tourism industry is confirmed by a key government official:

“We have received several complains from the Bedouin people that their camels miscarried, fearing the loud sounds of the desert bikes. They are used to living in the quiet desert” (NG-T1).

The presence of too many tourists' and their noisy cars crossing the desert causes a disturbance to the local community's livelihood and livestock. Cars and quad bikes are sources of noise pollution which disrupt the camels' and goats' lives. This can be compared to a study by Mbaiwa (2003) in the Okavango Delta, where it was found that crowds of tourists and their noise pollution led to a decrease in animal population; the noise from tourist's boats and small aircraft engines caused population decreases among the wild animals and nesting birds. The noise introduced by crowds of tourists in Bidiyah could also lead to social, economic and environmental problems. The current issue involves domestic tourists maximising their desire for enjoyment and pleasure at the cost of the local community's social capacity and quality of life. Tour operators' tendency to maximise profit and cross the desert with large groups of tourists is also detrimental to the local community and its livestock.

As Uysal *et al.* (2012) emphasised there is a critical point of tourism development where increasing resentment among the local community residents creates a conflict between the host and the guest which will ultimately result in the local residents opposing tourism development.

5.5.2.3 The Impact of Noise Pollution on the Tourism Industry

In addition to the negative impact noise pollution causes to the local community and livestock in Bidiyah, it has also upset some international tourists visiting the desert. As a result, it is having a detrimental effect on local businesses. One desert camp owner asserted:

“Last month my camp was rated 8.3 on booking.com. However, on 23rd December, while I had guests in the camp there were nuisance sounds

due to tourists crossing the desert close by the camp all night and until the morning. As a result, one of the guests could not sleep during the night. This resulted in them complaining about our camp on the website, which ultimately affected our business negatively and the rating dropped” (BB-1).

Thus, the absence of control over those who disturb the tranquillity of the desert can be seen to have adversely affected some international tourists who were unable to relax in the desert environment. According to one international tourist:

“The noise is an issue. We want to stay in nature to enjoy the quietness but there is a lot of noise. They started very early in the morning today, it was irritating. I can’t understand what fun such quads bike on the dunes is, and I think it’s not good to drive a car or quad on the dunes. It was amazing to me that there is a lot [of that activity] here. I can’t understand this” (ITB-2).

As seen from above statements, domestic tourists’ behaviour has a negative impact on the tourism industry and this has resulted in feelings of resentment from desert camp owners and their guests. This could lead to tourists having a negative perception of the experience offered in Bidiyah, as tourists are seeking a relaxing and spiritual atmosphere in the desert. Ultimately, it could lead to a decline in demand from international tourists and threaten the tourism industry in Bidiyah. A key MOT official emphasised the Ministry’s plans for tackling this obstacle:

“With the aim of creating more balanced tourism development in the desert and to ensure the desired quietness by the tourists and the local community livestock, we included those who are practicing desert sports in the new Land Use and Management Plan. We will designate specific areas for desert sports in zones that do not intersect with the grazing lands or areas where people are relaxing” (NG-T1).

Based on the above, that the range of negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism frequently cited within the literature is clearly evident in this

research. It is also apparent that there is recognition of the impacts across the different respondents, including government representatives, local community residents, tourist business operators and international tourists. The biggest problems are overcrowding, littering, wildlife disturbance and noise pollution in Bidiyah. This concurs with Brunt and Courtney (1999) and Mbaiwa (2003), who report that littering, overcrowding, animal life disturbance and noise pollution are often significant issues of tourism development.

However, this research also shows that most respondents believe that the main cause of the negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism in Bidiyah is the domestic tourists' activities and travel behaviours. These perceived negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism result in irritation and resentment among most of the interviewed local residents, reflecting that tourism development and host-domestic guest relationships in Bidiyah are in the Irritation stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model. This suggests that the government in collaboration of other tourism stakeholders may take social and legal measures to transform these negative perceptions of the host community into more favourable attitudes.

The Desert Management and Land Use Plan proposed by the government has the potential to be a useful tool to control the negative impacts of tourists' activities in Bidiyah. However, it should be designed to use tourism resources in the desert to benefit present generations while at the same time, it should not compromise the opportunities for future generations to obtain economic benefits from the same resources. Therefore, any Desert Management and Land Use Plan should ensure that the desert's capacity levels for tourists' activities are not exceeded. If tourists' activities and growth continue to be unmonitored and unchecked, the natural balance in the desert dune areas will never be regained.

Regulations and codes of conduct to ensure that tourists act in a responsible manner are urgently required. Thus, the government's establishment of the Land Use and Management Plan could be the boundary and the framework to develop and regulate the tourism industry. However, the implementation of this regulation requires a cooperative and collaborative manner between tourism stakeholders in

Bidiyah. The next section discusses the challenges that are facing the implementation of environmental regulations.

5.5.3 Environmental Regulation Challenges

In Bidiyah, overcrowding, littering, unsettling the local community's livestock and noise pollution are key issues resulting from the weak enforcement of regulations designed to manage the negative impact of tourism. As presented so far in this chapter, tourists' activities appear to be unmanageable and are threatening the tourism industry as a source of income for the local community residents, as well as harming the local community's quality of life. Environmental regulations are the control system for managing the interaction between tourism, environmental resources, production and consumption; alternatively, uncontrolled tourism development will result in a negative impact on a destination's environmental resources (Tosun, 2001). However, environmental regulations on tourism are challenged by three major structural issues which will be outlined in this section: the inability to enforce the rules, bureaucratic procedures and a lack of a collaborative approach, are the main challenges that prevent the related authorities from successfully controlling negative tourist behaviours.

- The Limited Ability of the Responsible Authority to Enforce the Rules

The authorities responsible for the area's cleanliness are challenged by a lack of ability to control the tourist littering problem in Bidiyah. There are several reasons for this. According to one regional government interviewee:

“When we are going to collect animal waste or tree residue or furniture waste, or tourist litter, our abilities are limited, and I have cars that cannot reach the desert” (RG-M1).

From these comments we can see that access issues due to improper equipment (a vehicle) and the scale of the problem evidence the lack of physical structure in place to deal with this littering problem. According to Bramwell (2005), a gap between stated regulations and the ability to enforce these regulations commonly exists due to unexpected potential challenges in dealing with target objectives.

This is consistent with the situation in Bidiyah, as the limited availability of staff and equipment is one of the most important challenges that leads to the inability of the responsible authorities to police and monitor irresponsible tourist behaviours.

The unexpected dramatic increase in the number of domestic tourists has made controlling the problem almost impossible, especially taking into consideration the nature of the destination: a geographically vast desert. Therefore, for better tourism management and effective control of tourist activities, law enforcement needs to be backed up by the required resources.

- The Administrative Workability of the Enforcement of the Law

Another issue challenging the authorities in their attempts to control tourists' littering behaviours is the administrative workability, or rather the unworkability, of enforcing the law, as described by a regional government interviewee:

“The problem is, even if there are regulations, there is no law enforcement as it requires specialised staff to follow up on implementing the law. If you enforce a law towards people violating the regulations, you will use a form. Then the auditors will ask you why you penalised them, for what reason and what the result was. Then you have to send a letter to the public prosecution, the legal advisor and the police whilst the problem remains unsolved. Hence, I need an instant solution for this challenge” (RG-M1).

Bramwell (2005) proposes that such administrative barriers, highlight issues that should be considered when selecting policy instruments: policy tools to monitor or regulate specific problems should be simple and easy to implement. If excessive administrative tasks make it time-consuming for authorities, environmental regulations will not be workable (Bramwell, 2005). In Bidiyah, complex and time-consuming administrative work related to the process of regulations enforcement hinders law enforcement; therefore, there is a need to simplify regulation enforcement procedures and to find alternative ways of maintaining the cleanliness of the desert's sand dunes.

- Lack of Collaboration Among Government Authorities

The lack of a collaborative approach among related government authorities is another key challenge forming a barrier against controlling problematic littering, as a local business owner in Bidiyah stressed:

“We need strict regulations to keep the area clean after camping, and I contacted the related authorities regarding this issue; the Ministry of Tourism maintained that it is not under their authorisation, while the Ministry of the Environment does not have regulations on this subject. The Royal Oman police also lack penalty regulations for such matters” (BB-2).

This challenge was further clarified by a regional government interviewee:

“When a person litters, the Ministry of the Environment asks the Ministry of Municipalities to issue a penalty. However, the Ministry of the Environment has its own legislation to penalise those who are violating the law where the undergone act constitutes polluting the environment. The problem is that neither the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Tourism nor the police are informed regarding the responsibility of controlling tourist behaviour towards the environment” (RG-M1).

The problem at hand is complex and beyond the capability of a single authority to solve; it requires a multi-governmental authority response since they are the authoritative stakeholders in the domain.

The regional government interviewee above, put the blame on a lack of cooperation among the government stakeholders responsible for managing the development of the tourism industry in Bidiyah. However, an interviewee from another regional government authority held a different perspective on their role and responsibilities:

“We never penalise people for littering; this is the Ministry of Municipality’s and Water Resources specialised area. We penalise

projects if they do not manage their waste properly. The laws of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Affairs are mainly concerned with how projects deal with their waste during their development and operation. For the desert tourist camps, we require these camps to estimate the expected yearly waste that will be produced from these projects and based on that they pay environmental fees. We also ensure that these projects are kept away from residential areas” (RG-E1).

Alternatively, a key interviewee from the MOT confirmed the importance of collaboration among related authorities to manage the growth of the tourism industry in the desert:

“We have been working for more than three years on developing the Desert Management and Land Use Plan. We obtained approval from all related authorities, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Wali’s offices and the related government authorities, so no one can say their view is not represented. Also, we agreed with the related authorities, such as the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Affairs, the Ministry of Municipality and Water Resources and the Ministry’s department in North Ash Sharqia that the required staff will be provided. The Desert Management and Land Use Plan has now been proposed for cabinet approval so we can proceed with implementing the plan” (NG-T1).

According to Getz and Jamal (1994), collaboration can be a useful approach to tackle environmental challenges, as regulation through collaboration can reduce turbulence without being restrictive. In the fragmented tourism industry, no single authority can resolve strategic tourism problems acting alone, as the goal of achieving sustainability requires dynamic collaboration among the stakeholders of tourism development and management (Jamal and Getz, 1995).

The management of cleanliness and tourist crowd sizes and the ability to control noise pollution are necessary; not only for long-term tourism sustainability, but also to preserve the local community’s quality of life, which is important to ensure their continued support and acceptance of the tourism industry. Moreover, local tourism business interviewees confirm that tourism could be more beneficial for

the local community if a range of regulations were introduced to manage and support the benefits of tourism growth reaching the local community. In addition, there are several challenges limiting the ways in which the local community benefits from tourism growth; these are related to the planning aspects of the tourism industry in Bidiyah.

5.6 Planning and Development Aspects

This section discusses four main challenges of planning and development aspects, such as a lack of infrastructure, the problems surrounding winter houses, a lack of communication and coordination between policymakers and local tourism-based businesses, and a deficiency related to local business capacity building.

5.6.1 Lack of Infrastructure

One challenge limiting the local community's attainment of benefits from tourism development in Bidiyah is the scarcity of important infrastructure to support tourist desert camps. This is an issue that viewed from differing perspectives by the government interviewees and those involved in the tourism business in Bidiyah. While the government maintains concerns regarding the environmental sensitivity of the area, local investors highlight their concern for the needs of tourists, a viewpoint exemplified by the owner of a tourist desert camp:

“The accommodation in the area is developed by investors' efforts, depending on their financial abilities, as 70% of the accommodation lacks important services such as electricity, telecommunications and roads. This is problematic as tourists nowadays are luxury tourists who require everything; therefore, it's important for the authorities responsible for this sector to provide the required services” (BB-2).

However, governmental policy on tourism development in the fragile ecology of the desert is to preserve and manage this natural site. These priorities were stressed by a key government official:

“The investors want to have infrastructure, such as electricity and water. This does not correspond with the nature of the desert ecology, so we resist” (NG-T1).

In keeping with Weaver’s (2005) findings, the government’s policy of limited infrastructure limits tourist numbers in sensitive environments by constraining the supply. Another government interviewee highlighted the cost of providing such infrastructure for tourist camps located in the middle of the desert:

“The lack of proper roads and other infrastructure in Bidiyah is due to the high cost of providing them in the middle of the desert, especially if the camp is located 30 km, 40 km or 50 km inside the desert. Even if it’s developed, during summer the road will be completely covered by sand due to the strong summer winds” (LG-WB).

The issue of providing tarmac roads in the middle of the desert is not only one of financing for the government. It is mainly a matter of the appropriateness of developing such infrastructure in an area whose essential attractiveness is related to protecting nature from overdevelopment. Moreover, the development of roads will increase access, which will increase the degradation of the fragile ecology of the desert environment.

The emergence of challenges associated with a lack of infrastructure for some desert tourist camps is not only a recent issue, but goes back to the beginning stages of tourism development in Bidiyah when the government’s land allocation for tourism projects was not in accordance with a Land Use Plan. The development of the tourism sector in Bidiyah is based on a fragmented investor’s request for specific land designation to build tourism projects, such as tourist camps, restaurants or hotels. The MOT coordinated with the Ministry of Housing to allocate the requested land for tourism projects based on a long-term lease or short-term rent. This procedure resulted in developing tourism projects without considering the sensitive nature of the desert (see Section 5.5). For instance, some tourism projects were developed 40 km into the heart of the desert requiring infrastructure such as roads, utilities and water to be connected.

To overcome this challenge and other problematic tourism issues, the MOT proposal of the new Land Use Plan for the Remal Al Sharqia desert will tackle these issues. As a government interviewee explained:

“This Land Use Plan will designate areas for tourist activities, grazing areas and residential areas in addition to administering camping and management regulations... This Management and Land Use Plan is awaiting the cabinet’s final approval. It will be implemented by all the stakeholders that have contributed to developing this plan, such as the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Municipality and Water Resources, Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Royal Oman Police” (NG-T2).

Although such plans might resolve some environmental issues related to tourist activities and the local community’s lifestyle in Bidiyah, it does not consider domestic tourists’ needs and requirements for affordable facilities, as domestic tourists are characterised by large numbers of family members who come to camp in the desert.

5.6.2 The Challenge of Winter Houses (*Ezba*) in Bidiyah

According to Edgell (2006), in many Arab countries, such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, it is customary to camp in the desert during the winter season as a form of entertainment. In Bidiyah, the Bedouin people used to develop winter houses (*Ezba*) for their families to spend the winter season in the desert. These winter houses were built on public lands and although Bedouin people do not own the land, agreements remain through common understandings that they have the traditional right to camp on this land. The government acknowledges such traditional land-use rights as long as no permanent structures are built (Mershen, 2007).

Ownership of this type of house is a distinctive part of the Bedouin lifestyle, as explained by one winter house owner:

“An *Ezba* is a winter house, owned by the locals and their families on public land; it is our lifestyle. Although we moved from the desert to live in the city in modern houses, we are still connected to our traditions and heritage. We miss the Bedouin life, therefore, in these houses we practice the Bedouin life by breeding livestock and producing Bedouin handicrafts, which are sources of income. Over the weekends we rent these houses to tourists” (BB-8).

Winter houses were known to the local community before Bidiyah became a tourist destination. The rapid increase in domestic tourists (see Subsection 5.5.2) has created a shortage of tourist facilities and the need for updated management regulations. This has encouraged the owners of winter houses to convert them into tourist accommodation; thus, creating a serious problem, as explained by a regional government official:

“Due to the nature of our work there is a growing number of tourists which indicates an increase in awareness among domestic tourists, especially during recent national holidays. This season has reached its peak and full occupancy rates in tourist accommodation. This has led others to violate the system and establish unauthorised accommodation through converting their winter houses into tourist facilities due to the demand being so high in comparison with the supply. Also, some of the tourists cannot afford to stay in the tourist desert camps; it is expensive for some Omani families” (RG-M1).

The increasing popularity of tourism in Bidiyah has changed the way such houses are used, particularly because of the increase in domestic tourists with large families being a new, growing and demanding market in the desert. For these families, staying in the tourist desert camps is too expensive; hence, this has motivated the local community to convert their winter houses into accommodation for domestic tourists, without having an official license to do so.

The motivation of the local community to benefit from tourists has subsequently increased. They have exploited, the absence of government regulations on this

matter and the lack of authorities' firmness, resulting in numerous developments of winter houses distributed randomly across the sands, as Plate 5.2 shows.

Plate 5.2: Example of a Winter House in Bidiyah



Source: Author (2018)

One of the winter house owners shed light on the reasons behind converting their winter house into accommodation for tourists:

“Tourism is growing in the area, but there is a lack of available facilities for tourists. Most of the tourist camps are targeting foreigners, while the domestic tourists are not considered. They are also very important. We must attract them and meet their requirements. We have the same culture and communicating with them is easier for us. We are like one family, and embracing them is important, which is creating a source of income for us, while offering them a relaxing area. The Omani community from other regions love the desert's environment, but they are caught between two choices: either they bring their tent with them and deal with the heat and lack of bathrooms, cooking and other facilities, or they can benefit from these houses with huts, bathrooms and kitchen facilities besides water and electricity” (BB-8).

However, an opposing view was presented by a regional government interviewee who stressed their concerns over safety issues:

“At the moment we need to conduct an in-depth study, in coordination with the concerned government authorities, to evaluate the present problem of the over-distribution of winter houses, that have been used by domestic and a few foreign tourists, and which are not licensed entities. The lack of regulations reduces the benefits gained by the government from these winter houses. In addition, the owners of winter houses and their tourists are faced with a wide range of safety and security issues” (RG-T1).

This view was supported by another regional government official:

“The issue of the winter houses must be thoroughly discussed from all perspectives. At the moment we are taking action against the owners of such winter houses as they are not licensed by the Ministry of Tourism and other related authorities. They are currently developed in random places and if a fire occurs, or any other unfortunate events take place, who will be held responsible? In addition, a large majority of the community are dissatisfied with the growing phenomenon of the winter houses “(RG-M1).

These findings show that the government official’s perspective differs from the winter houses owners’ when it comes to a winter houses’ abilities to serve visitors as a type of tourist accommodation in Bidiyah. The government interviewees view these projects as illegal facilities that are unlicensed by the government, thus making them a security and tax issue. Alternatively, the owners see these projects as an opportunity for their economic benefit and the provision of essential facilities for domestic tourists.

However, the owners of the winter houses are willing to pay the required taxes and other associated costs. In fact, they would prefer to have rules and guidelines in order to organise their projects more formally. The problem relates to the

government authorities in introducing the required regulations, as the following statement from a winter house owner reveals:

“My experience in developing tourist winter houses started five years ago. It was highly successful, attracting large numbers of domestic tourists which resulted in increased demand. Therefore, I opened my second winter house which also experienced high demand levels. However, my main challenge is that I do not have a license from the Ministry of Tourism... We as winter houses owners do not have governing authority; the government does not have specific classifications for us at the Ministry of Tourism. As a result, we are violating the regulation system but I do not think we are in the wrong. We always try to follow the rules, but the regulations do not serve us and the doors are always closed” (BB-8).

This problem of the lack of regulations for managing winter houses was also addressed by a regional government official who stated that it may “create gaps” between the stakeholders involved in tourism development in Bidiyah. The absence of essential regulations and the lack of responsible authority over this matter has resulted in the situation worsening and created other issues of concern. The following statement made by a key government interviewee supports this view:

“We support initiating regulations, even if they are in the form of guidelines and the winter house owners are willing to cooperate and pay associated taxes. However, the challenge is with the government authorities; they do not accelerate the process in solving this issue. It has been discussed in every meeting and now when we raise any issues, they say that the Ministry of Tourism is responsible for that. They drafted a law to regulate the land use of the Remal Ash Sharqiyah but this law not been issued yet which is negatively affecting the situation” (RG-M1).

The lengthy process of formulating the MOT’s Management and Land Use Plan for Remal Ash Sharqiyah has resulted in an increase in random building and

distribution of winter houses, as well as random camping which creates an income for the local community, but impacts the environment negatively.

With high tourist demand randomly spreading throughout the area, the controversial matter of winter houses has consequently developed. The continuous growth of this type of project will exacerbate an already complicated situation which is difficult to resolve, especially when the law is violated.

For their part, the MOT expresses a different perspective on the inclusion of winter houses in the new Management and Land Use Plan for the Remal Ash Sharqiyah, as emphasised by a national government interviewee:

“The winter houses that have been used by some of the tourists constitute a violation of tourism law. In this regard, it might be winter houses for personal use only and since the area will be covered by legal cover it will be treated as illegal possession on government land... If the land is owned by the local people, they can develop a bed and breakfast or green lodges or boutique hotels. If they don't own the land, then this is affecting the quality of the tourism service and also affecting the occupancy rate of the tourist desert camps where the regulations are required to be applied” (NG-T2).

All the statements above illustrate a conflict between winter house owners and government regulators. The gap between the government's plans to manage tourist activities and local community needs from tourism growth requires consideration to overcome such situations. Although such plans might resolve some environmental issues related to tourist activities and the local community's cultural practices, government officials do not consider domestic tourists' needs and requirements for affordable facilities. In addition, they do not consider the local community's lost economic opportunities if their ability to meet this demand is taken away.

Therefore, the growth of domestic tourism in Bidiyah has created an urgent need for alternative tourist facilities that adhere to recent tourism demand

requirements. Thus, the government should consider economic opportunities for the local community that are presented by domestic tourists' demand.

It appears that the Ministry of Housing will organise arrangements for land use concerning personal winter houses by designating two camping areas in Bidiyah and Al Qabil (an area near Bidiyah). A regional government interviewee stated:

“We will not deprive the local community of practicing their cultural traditions of enjoying the winter season in temporary camps in the desert; thus, we will provide specific areas for four to five months with more regulations” (RG-H1).

According to Malek and Costa (2014), collaboration and coordination between the government, business owners and the local community residents is important for managing and operating a tourism destination. However, the current state of winter houses in Bidiyah clearly illustrates that there is a lack of communication between the government as a regulator and the local community residents as a service provider. It also seems that there is a neglected aspect which needs to be taken into consideration: the requirements of domestic tourists (who are a source of income for the local community residents) versus what the industry actually offers.

5.6.3 Lack of Communication and Coordination Between the Policymakers and the Local Tourism Business

According to Grybovych and Hafermann (2010:357), “the involvement of those affected in the planning process not only helps ensure public support, it can also help to build bridges of trust and confidence among planners, the general public and the private industry”. Wilson *et al.* (2001) maintain that for successful tourism development, coordination and cooperation between policymakers and tourism businesses is a crucial factor (see Subsection 2.2.1).

According to the fieldwork observations of this study, tourism development in Bidiyah lacks coordination and two-way communication between national policymakers and local businesses. Tourist business operators in Bidiyah complain

that their limited involvement in planning for tourism development in the area has resulted in a gap between their desires for tourism growth and tourism planners' initiatives. This deficit of communication between tourism business owners and policymakers has raised concerns regarding the sustainability of tourism resources in the area. A local business owner in Bidiyah claimed:

“The Ministry of Tourism has a view and tourism businesses have another view, yet they never meet each other. Only if the Ministry came and met us would they know what the place needs; they cannot see what is on the ground through Google Maps. Their background about us is only from reports and this is wrong. These reports do not reflect what is on the ground. They must visit us to know what difficulties we face. If this miscommunication between us and the Ministry continues, tourism will disappear within five years in Bidiyah. We are already observing a decline in tourism” (BB-2).

This opinion is supported by another tourist camp owner:

“We need field officials, not only administrative officials in their offices. We need to talk about the positive and negative impacts of tourism. They must know what is on the ground. Unfortunately, the communication between the Ministry and tourist camp owners is missing” (BB-1).

The above statements reflect a feeling of dissatisfaction towards the government's efforts towards the tourism industry in Bidiyah. The absence of effective administration and feelings of exclusion from decision-making processes about tourism development and the future of their business in tourism has caused feelings of frustration towards policymakers. A prime example, below, shows that the lack of communication between tourism planners and business owners in Bidiyah has created conflict in the tourist desert camp classification system. A tourist desert camp owner claimed:

“The Ministry of Tourism classified my accommodation as a luxury tourist desert camp; does this make sense? If I promote it for

international tourists how I will explain this? If I wanted to put my rate on the website, what am I supposed to write? This is not an international classification. They want us to pay accommodation taxes and they classify us as a luxury camp. There is no such classification in the world. This is injustice and nobody cares” (BB-1).

The above statements display feelings of resentment towards the government as its policy of classifying tourist desert camps and the manner in which this is executed negatively affects owners’ incomes. This, in turn, creates a feeling of distrust for the official decision makers and their insufficient experience and expertise which do not meet the expectations of the desert camp owners in relation to the economic benefits they receive from tourism.

In contrast to the desert camp owners, one government official provided an explanation of the classification process that reflects a positive government view on diversifying the type accommodation available to tourists:

“We have normal camps and luxury camps to differentiate between the two types. However, we use star ratings for the hotels which have different facilities, and that system is not applied to the desert tourist camps. Nevertheless, if they want, they can apply for a resort classification which involves more requirements [...] Officially, we have not received any complaints about these classifications, and he is welcome to discuss this with us. Basically, we apply this system in consultation with the accommodation business. We conduct workshops with the industry and take their feedback before applying it, but we need this diversification of accommodation. Tourists do not come to stay in a five-star hotel in the desert” (NG-T3).

The research data in this subsection shows that the views of business owners and the government have not been communicated due to the lack of coordination between the two parties. This data also reflects the lack of coordination with the regional element of the tourism industry in Bidiyah. Thus, the operators of the tourist desert camps are facing difficulties in developing their businesses which is hindering their ability to maximise the benefits they obtain from the growing

tourism industry. This data also demonstrates the limited inclusion of the regional government department by the central authority as they have a limited role in tourism planning and limited decision-making power. The centralised administration of the regional tourism industry means the communication process is slower and more complicated than it should be.

5.6.4 Lack of Local Business Capacity Building

Wilson *et al.* (2001) found that technical assistance and advertising are essential components for the development of rural tourism. Unfortunately, however, small communities cannot afford to pay for professional marketing and advertising. Some businesses, such as desert camp owners, have identified the lack of capacity building in Bidiyah, as being one of the problems which obstructs their participation in the tourism industry. This occurrence was confirmed following an examination of the producers of handcrafts, who also struggle to fully engage with the tourist industry in Bidiyah.

Local business owners have established that the government should meet with all stakeholders to discuss the best ways to make tourism beneficial to the local community as a whole. These business owners perceive themselves as lacking experience in the tourism business and want the government to advise and help them so that they can be an integral part of the tourism industry. The owner of one desert camp stated:

“The Ministry of Tourism must maintain the role of the advisor, the director, the partner and the supporter for us and not only impose regulations and complicated procedures on us. We all must cooperate so that all projects can become successful and then all the country will benefit from them” (BB-1).

The need for support from the MOT was also expressed by another desert camp owner:

“The camping industry is a strong economic sector in the area and they are investing a great amount; therefore it is important for the

government to collaborate with them. If they pay taxes or any fees, in return they require government help, support and marketing initiatives which will promote their products and projects” (BB-2).

The above statements reflect the desert camp owner’s desire for empowerment through means such as the acquiring of skills which are essential to run a successful tourism business, with access to the marketing channels needed to promote their business. They would like to see tangible returns and value for the tax they pay for the government. Therefore, they suggest that the government’s communication with the tourism industry in Bidiyah should fulfil the aim of creating a beneficial tourism industry for all.

In order to improve the level of local community participation in, and benefits gained from tourism, tourism planners need to endeavour to build the technical capacity of tourism development for all stakeholders in the tourism business in Bidiyah. Therefore, communication channels between tourism planners and the industry must be open in order to retain effective relationships that enable the industry to develop and prosper.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the perceived positive socio-economic and cultural impacts of tourism development and their influence on host-international guest relationship in Bidiyah. The positive socio-economic impacts of tourism in Bidiyah mainly include the generation of employment for the local youth and the creation of income sources for different segments of the local community. Moreover, the cultural impacts of tourism are also perceived positively by local community residents who take pride in presenting their cultural traditions and Bedouin lifestyle to international tourists. This has resulted in further tourism development and the growth of host-international guest relations in Bidiyah, which are situated in the apathy stage of Doxey’s (1975) Irridex model.

Environmental and social challenges are a core factor threatening the tourist industry in Bidiyah. Overcrowding, littering, livestock disturbance and noise pollution due to the irresponsible behaviour of some domestic tourists harms the

fragile ecology of the desert and adversely affects the local community's social capacity and quality of life. This has led to feelings of irritation amongst local residents towards domestic tourists' activities. This reaction presents a real possibility that antagonistic host-domestic guest relationships will develop due to the damage caused to the desert's natural resources, local community residents' social capacity and disturbance to their livestock through the practice of irresponsible tourism and due to deficient regulations. This has resulted in tourism development and host-domestic guest relationships in Bidiyah reaching the Irritation stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, posing a threat to the long-term sustainability of tourism development.

The weak enforcement of national regulations designed to monitor the treatment and respect afforded to the natural resources, coupled with the inability of officials' responsible to police and supervise tourists' negligent behaviour towards the environment, has led to irritated relationships between domestic tourists and the local community, which has insufficient social capacity and environmental resources.

Limited collaboration among the related authorities for controlling tourists is also a factor which contributes to the deterioration of the environment. The lack of a Land Use and Management Plan for Bidiyah has resulted in fragmented tourism development. Overall, resulting in the discontent of the local community residents towards domestic tourists.

The lack of regulations for winter houses is one of the key obstacles standing in the way of local community businesses benefitting from tourism growth in Bidiyah. The limited availability of facilities for domestic tourists has added to the chaos of randomly distributed winter houses in the desert, thus resulting in environmental damage and disturbance to the quality of life for the local community.

Furthermore, the absence of a collaborative approach among tourism business stakeholders towards tourism development is another key issue standing in the way of handicraft makers benefitting from tourism. Moreover, the lack of a holistic approach to tourism business planning and development has created a gap

between the needs of local businesses and government initiatives. This limited coordination and communication has resulted in tourist businesses becoming dissatisfied with the government's approach. However, this could be overcome by the introduction of better communication channels between the government and the owners of local businesses and support being made available to businesses for the sustainable development of tourism.

Policies to enhance responsible tourism development, visitor management measures and environmentally based management could be useful tools that take a multi-stakeholder approach. This could include, for example, camp site developments with facilities that meet domestic tourists' characteristics and needs. Central to this development is the introduction of regulations, management plans and zoning for tourist activities, such as quad biking and sports vehicles driving in the desert. The implementation of such measures would serve to improve host-guest relationships and the sustainable development of tourism in the area. Table 5.1 summarises the perceived positive and negative impacts of tourism and planning and regulations issues related to tourism development in Bidiyah:

Table 5.1: A Summary of the Perceived Positive and Negative Impacts, Planning and Regulation Issues Related to Tourism Development in Bidiyah

Aspect	Description
Socio-economic impacts	The positively perceived socio-economic benefits were found to be the generation of employment for the local youth and the creation of income sources for different segments of the local community. Consequently, host-international guest relationships are situated in the apathy stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model in Bidiyah.
Cultural impacts	The positively perceived cultural impacts were found to be the local residents' pride in presenting their cultural traditions and the Bedouin lifestyle to the international tourists.

Social and Environmental impacts	The negatively perceived social and environmental impacts were found to be overcrowding, littering, livestock disturbance and noise pollution caused by some domestic tourists who damage the fragile ecology of the desert and adversely affect the local community's social capacity and quality of life. This has resulted in host-domestic guest relationships in Bidiyah being in the Irritation stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model.
Planning and development	Poor planning of tourism development is a key obstacle standing in the way of local businesses benefiting from tourism development in Bidiyah. The limited coordination and cooperation between local business owners and the government has created a gap between the needs of the local businesses and the government's efforts to meet these needs.
Regulations challenges	Lack of regulations is a key obstacle that has contributed to the random distribution of unlicensed winter houses in the desert, resulting in environmental damage of the fragile ecology of the desert.

Source: Author (2020)

Chapter 6: Host-Guest Encounter and the Perceived Impacts of Tourism Development in WBK

6.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the socio-cultural impacts of tourism and their influence on host-guest relationships and the sustainability of tourism development in WBK, a conservative Muslim community. It will also report on the perceived socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism in the area, and issues related to tourism planning and development. These particular issues will be illustrated by exploring the different perspectives of government officials, local community residents, tourism business owners and International and domestic tourists in WBK. The results are discussed from the perspectives of these different stakeholders and in the context of the issues identified within the literature (see Sections 2.3.3 and 2.7.4).

This chapter is structured around five main themes that can be identified in the findings from the fieldwork in WBK: (1) The perceived socio-economic impacts of tourism development, (2) the socio-cultural and religious impacts, (3) regulations enforcement and policy formulations, (4) planning aspects, and (5) natural and environmental constraints. These factors shape host-guest relationships and local community attitudes towards tourists and tourism development in WBK.

6.2 The Perceived Goals for Socio-Economic Impacts of Tourism in Oman

According to Cooper *et al.* (2005), a country's main motive for including tourism among its development strategies is the potential of this industry to contribute to the economy through foreign exchange earnings, job opportunities and income creation for the local community. Hence, the Omani government chose tourism as a priority economic sector, in order to create job opportunities for Omanis with the aim of increasing tourism's contribution to the Sultanate's GDP (Ministry of National Economy, 2007).

In Oman, economic diversification has recently become more pressing. Taking into consideration fluctuating oil prices, it is becoming increasingly important to develop more stable sources of income and job opportunities for the local nationals. For the government, the aim of job creation and local community stability in people's places of residence outside the capital city of Muscat are the key objectives of tourism development, as clearly stated by a national government official:

“Oman’s Vision 2040 aims at achieving the welfare of the local community through the development of the regions and the stability of the people in their areas. Therefore, the government established the infrastructure for tourism development, and now local communities must utilise this opportunity to generate stable income without the need to travel to Muscat to maintain a stable livelihood. Community members can work in their local areas, especially in areas with the advantage of raw tourism resources” (NG-P1).

Oman’s Vision 2040, is a long-term vision for the Sultanate of Oman introduced in 2019 based on the Omani socio-economic context with wide, local community participation across the country (Supreme Council for Planning, 2019) (see section 3.4). The preliminary Vision 2040 document identifies Oman’s national priorities as overcoming challenges, keeping pace with regional and global changes, generating and seizing opportunities to foster economic competitiveness and social well-being, stimulating growth, and strengthening economic, social and developmental relationships nationwide (Supreme Council for Planning, 2019). The implementation of this vision is based on partnerships between the government, the private sector, individuals and civil society organisations (Supreme Council for Planning, 2019).

WBK, is one example of tourist destinations that the government seeking to develop to create a source of income and sustainable job opportunities for the local community residents in their area of locality. As its claimed that tourism in WBK is a round year tourist destination, the natural water pools in WBK attracts the international and domestic tourists all over the year, as the following section will show.

6.2.1 Tourism Scale, Country of Origin and Seasonality in WBK

Most of the interviewees, including government officials, the local community residents, tourism business owners and tourists, agreed that tourism in WBK is a growing industry. It attracts international holidaymakers in winter, while in summer domestic tourists come from Oman and neighboring countries. Tourists travel to the area to see and swim in the area's natural water pools (see Plate 6.1).

Plate 6.1: Wadi Bani Khalid's Natural Water Pools



Source: Ministry of Tourism (2011)

One local community member explained the growth of tourism in recent years:

“I am from Muqul village and I lived through tourism development in WBK [...] Tourists used to come only over the weekends, but now they visit all year round and in all four seasons, while international tourists visit only during winter. They come in large groups [...] previously tourist numbers were small, but nowadays the numbers are continuously

increasing [...] For example, according to the Ministry of Tourism statistics, there were 12,000 tourists in four days during Oman's National Day holiday. In addition, 16,000 tourists were counted during *Eid Al Adha*, which is more than other tourism sites in Oman" (LW-2).

A regional government informant agreed:

"Tourism in WBK is active all year round. In winter it's international tourists, while in summer it's the Omani tourists and people from neighbouring countries" (RG-1).

Another member of the local community also supported this view:

"Tourism is seasonal: the foreign tourists visit during winter while the Omanis [visit] all year round, and according to the statistics, a large number of tourists are seen, especially during the holidays" (LW-5).

These sources' agreement about tourism in WBK reflects the government's success in promoting this destination internationally (see Table 4.1 in Chapter 4). This growth is supported by the MOT's plans for increasing international tourist demand through the Omani national tourism strategy, which aims to generate 11 million tourists by 2040—up from 3 million in 2017 and to raise the tourism sector's contribution to Oman's GDP to around 6% by 2040 up from 2.6% in 2018 (Ministry of Tourism, 2017).

However, the central question remains: has the increase in international tourists achieved the government's desired goals for tourism growth in WBK to create economic benefits and job opportunities for the local community residents and support their social well-being?

6.2.2 The Perceived Socio-Economic Impacts of Tourism in WBK

In the case of WBK, although the growth of tourist demand and the development of tourism represents potential for economic income through job opportunities for the local community, the majority of the interviewees strongly agreed that limited economic benefit is gained by the local community, considering the large number

of tourists. This viewpoint is demonstrated in the following statements from two local community residents in WBK, a local tourism business owner, and a national government informant:

“Apart from the tips that the children receive from carrying the tourists’ gear on their carts, there is almost no economic return for the local residents of the area” (LW-4).

“The tourists leave the area without even buying a bottle of juice or a cold drink... They come prepared from their initial starting point” (LW-1).

“There are great numbers of international and domestic tourists visiting WBK ... Every day I see hundreds of tourist cars passing by, but I do not benefit from that tourism at all” (BW-1).

“High tourism demand for WBK exists, but local community benefits from tourism are incomparable to those in Bidiyah” (RG-T2).

MacCannell’s (1992:175) findings on the economic structure of ethnic tourism in Locke can be identified in WBK, where “most of the money does not change hands in the site”. Most of the tourists’ money is spent on airplane tickets, tour guides and accommodation before and after their actual visits to WBK. Hence, these statements from the majority of the interviewees convey great dissatisfaction with the tourism industry due to its failure to deliver on its desired aims and the lack of links between tourism growth and socio-economic benefits for the local community residents; such views are widely held in WBK.

Similarly, a number of researchers like Murphy (1985), Sharpley (2008), Choudhury and Goswami (2013) and Mbaiwa (2005) argue that although tourism has been included in many countries’ economic strategies, tourism has often failed to promote local community economic development. Some researchers argue that tourism development in new destinations often suffers from a lack of domestic planning experience and expertise (De Kadt, 1979; Cooper *et al.*, 2005; Tosun, 2000). Others suggest that lack of local community participation in the decision-

making process is a key cause of limited local community involvement and enjoyment of the socio-economic benefits of tourism (Dadvar-Khani, 2012; Saarinen, 2010; Tosun, 2000). Thus, it is important to understand issues that are limiting the local community from participating and gaining the economic benefits of tourism growth in WBK.

6.3 Socio-Cultural and Religious Impacts of Tourism

Oman and the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) are an integral part of the Muslim world (Khalifa, 2012). They are characterised by similar social, cultural and political conditions and by their economies' heavy reliance on oil and oil-related revenues (Sultan, 2012). The flow of oil income has led these countries to establish welfare programs that provide their citizens with free healthcare, free education and subsidies on daily commodities without any system of taxation (Karolak, 2018). In addition, the oil income has supported the development of the vast infrastructure and services that exist in these countries (Ibid).

However, the fluctuation of oil prices in the 1980s affected the GCC's economies. From that time, the GCC governments made a commitment to economic development independent of oil resources (Sultan, 2012). Hence, the GCC governments started considering potential methods of economic diversification (Belwal and Belwal, 2010). Tourism was one potential economic sector seen as a way of developing more stable sources of income that are unlikely to experience such fluctuations. Commenting on this issue, a national government representative stated:

“The instability of oil prices made tourism a key sector for economic diversification in Oman. However, Oman and other oil-producing countries face challenges of identifying priorities, especially when opening countries with a conservative culture to international tourists ...This might conflict with one of the important pillars in the country's vision which is protecting the Omani identity and culture ... How we promote Oman for international tourists whilst aiming to protect the Omani identity and culture is an important factor” (NG-1).

No part of the GCC countries has developed tourism to its full economic potential, with the exception of Dubai which is part of the UAE and is home to luxury attractions such as the world's only seven-star hotel, as well as shopping and stopover- and event-based tourism (Belwal and Belwal, 2010). Consequently, the UAE is considered a pioneer of leisure tourism in the Arab Gulf region. However, the model of tourism development in Dubai is not one aspired to by Oman (AL Balushi and Wise, 2017). Stephenson (2014), argues that the Dubai model challenges the local culture, as it manufactures local heritage based on global perspectives and develops new forms of tourism that disregard local cultural identity. This creates concerns of over modernisation and cultural changes (Stephenson and Ali-Knight, 2010). Therefore, due to the amount of tourism development in Dubai and its social and cultural implications, it has been indicated that the local community are unhappy (AL Balushi and Wise, 2017). Sharpley (2008) critiques the Dubai tourism industry as an unsustainable mass tourism development model. Similarly, Bahrain has adopted a liberal tourism approach, catering to Western tastes by relaxing the rules regulating the sale of alcohol, improper dress and prostitution (Karolak, 2018).

Alternatively, Saudi Arabia has for decades represented an opposite tourism model to Dubai's. Giving little attention to international leisure tourists, it specialises solely in religious tourism concerning Muslims coming for pilgrimages, the Hajj or Umrah. Their tourism strategy's main concern has been to attract Muslim tourists worldwide, while non-Muslim tourists were historically deterred due to cultural sensitivity (Sadi and Henderson, 2005). However, very recently, Saudi Arabia opened their doors to international tourists by introducing a new tourist visa system and easing restrictions on female tourists' clothes (BBC News, 2019). Meanwhile, Kuwait, in adherence with Islamic religious values, remains a dry country, experiencing limited international tourism (Karolak, 2018); whereas Oman and Qatar allow the provision of alcohol in licenced hotels, and although sun bathing and bikinis are not allowed in public, they are permitted in closed swimming pool areas. These examples show that in the GCC counties, although the development of tourism can be a potential path to economic diversification, there is scope for cultural and social tension between Muslim hosts and their international guests. This is especially true when tourism planning does not

effectively consider the core aspects of Muslim hosts' religious values when developing tourism for non-Muslim visitors.

In the case of Oman, the development of the tourism sector represents a potential opportunity for the country to meet the challenge of overdependency on a non-renewable source of income, oil and gas (Henderson, 2015). However, the Omani culture is heavily influenced by the Islamic religion, which influences individuals' values and beliefs and different aspects of their lives. Therefore, behaviours that contradict these values must be considered carefully. For example, if the way people dress fails to respect such cultural values, it may irritate local conservative communities.

The following four subsections explore the idea of cultural clashes further related to religious values, residents' irritation, opposition to tourism projects and encounters between domestic and international tourists.

6.3.1 Religious Values and Culture Clash

The interviews with various stakeholders conducted during this study's fieldwork have revealed that tourists are welcome in WBK, but they should maintain respectful towards the local community's religious values. As a local community resident put it:

“The tourists must respect the Muslims who live in this place. They have values and cultural traditions” (LW-1).

Failure to respect local values has been known to create a situation of discomfort, leading to a reaction among the local community to close in on themselves and avoid contact with international tourists. On the subject of religious values, another local community interviewee stated:

“We are Arab and Muslim. We have different a religious culture than the tourists. They should be directed to respect our feelings ... To some extent the local people accept the tourists, but we are conservative; therefore, in the tourist season, we avoid going to the water-pool site

or taking our families there because this contradicts our religious values” (LW-3).

MacCannell’s (1992: 176) concept of empty meeting grounds is identifiable in WBK, “a place where people live and tourists visit” without the formation of human relationships or bonds due to clash of cultures between the religious values of the Muslim host residents and the international guests’ swimming attire and behaviour. According to Cooper *et al.* (2005), inappropriate dress in Muslim countries or nude sunbathing in conservative communities and lack of adherence to local codes or social behaviours can cause tension between tourists and local residents. Among the Muslim community residents of WBK, the issue of improper dress while swimming in public spaces is highly sensitive and unacceptable conduct, such as the *Awrah* covering for men and women is central to Islamic dress codes of conduct (Boulanouar, 2006).

Therefore, as the interviewee described above, local community residents choose to avoid being present at the pool sites to avoid contradicting their religious values. This reaction of contact avoidance with international tourists reveals a strong feeling of anxiety among the local community concerning the survival of their religious values. As detailed in Doğan’s (1989) framework, the retreatism stage of destination development occurs when dissatisfied residents choose to avoid tourist contact rather than engage in direct resistance. This also reflects Islamic guidance of “lowering the gaze” to avoid having a prohibited look at an improperly covered body (Eniola, 2013), see section 2.7.4.

Hence, if locals are avoiding interaction with tourists to avoid embarrassing encounters, it will discourage them from investing in any project that is based on serving and interacting with tourists. This consequently leads to a loss of economic opportunities on the local community’s part, while it simultaneously limits tourist experience and interaction with host cultures. This issue is confirmed by a regional government representative:

“Last year WBK received more than 100,000 tourists, but the local community’s economic benefits from tourism were almost zero. This

resulted from the community being highly conservative; hence, not wanting to come in contact with the tourists” (RG-T1).

However, differing views are highlighted by two interviewees from the local community in WBK, as they perceived cultural issues differently:

“The old people are very upset by tourism because they are not educated, but the new generation, with access to advanced technology and the internet, they see this situation everywhere, which makes them more accepting of the tourists’ culture ... However, the old people are very conservative in their cultural traditions and they do not accept the tourists. They say that they didn’t receive the negative impacts until the roads were paved and the tourists arrived” (BW-1).

“The tourists have their freedom to do whatever they want because this is their culture and we cannot force them to change their culture ... Similarly, if I travel to their countries, they don’t force me to change my dress code” (BW-F1).

Hardy (2005) argues that local communities are not homogeneous in their perceptions; their views differ based on their interests. However, this perspective represents only two out of 15 informants drawn from the local community and local tourism business in WBK. The prevailing viewpoint was one of irritation regarding international tourists’ swimming dress and behaviour.

Generally, culture clashes in WBK reflect large cultural differences and misunderstandings between international tourists’ behaviour while swimming and the norms of a Muslim community with a conservative culture. As Pountney and Maric (2015:234) state, “Tourism is a form of cross-cultural communication in which misunderstanding and miscommunication may play a central role”. In WBK, the difference between the local community’s religious values and international tourists’ attire and swimming behaviour is a central factor discouraging the local community residents from interacting with international tourists and from participating in the tourism industry and gaining economic benefits.

6.3.2 Cross-Cultural Clash and Residents' Irritation Over Tourist Misbehaviour

According to Lewis and Chambers (1989, in Swarbrooke, 2002:41), the attraction of a product is “a bundle of benefits designed to satisfy the needs and wants, and solve the problems of specific target markets”. The provision of tourism facilities not only satisfies tourists and creates sources of income, but also helps avoid problematic situations that might arise as a consequence of lacking facilities. As a natural water-pool site, WBK’s main draw for tourists is swimming, but the site has no changing rooms, a necessary service related to the nature of tourist’s activities. A tour guide touched upon this issue:

“The facilities are okay, but tourists are missing changing rooms, proper changing rooms for ladies, because there are only toilets available and it is not an appropriate place for changing” (NBW-3).

The absence of proper changing rooms for both genders leads to some tourists changing into and out of their swimming suits in the carpark, which has created irritation among the local community, as voiced by a local community member:

“There is a lack of adherence to the customs and traditions of the community and to the Islamic religion by the tourists. You find them changing their clothes in the carpark, which is located next to a highly populated area, hence, gaining the disapproval of the locals towards the tourists visiting and swimming in inappropriate apparel” (LW-2).

This inappropriate behaviour from the perspective of Arab-Islamic culture not only offends the morals of the local community residing in the area, but also deters Omani tourists and tourists from neighboring Muslim countries from visiting the site during the international tourist season. This indicates that the lack of essential tourist facilities is creating cultural clashes between locals, international tourists and tourists from Arab-Islamic countries, which has been reflected in the decrease in demand among GCC tourists, as shown in statistics from the MOT (see Table 4.1 in Chapter 4). Although international tourists’ numbers grew by 30% in 2017, the increase in domestic tourists was only 0.6%, while the number of GCC

tourists decreased by 11%. This reflects the government's failure to maintain the domestic tourism demand due to the lack of facilities and the creation of cultural obstacles, as well as its failure to attract tourists from the neighboring GCC region to WBK (which is an important tourism market for Oman).

The culture clash between international tourists' swimming behaviour and the local community's religious values is at the heart of the conflict that limits the local community's participation in tourism development in WBK. The presence of unacceptable international swimming attire in a Muslim community has created a clash of culture between host values and guest behaviour. This has resulted in the local community's avoidance of the tourist site, and therefore losing out on the potential economic opportunities brought by tourist demand. These negative perceived socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the religious values of the local community residents have caused tourism development in WBK and host-international guest relationships to enter the last stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model: antagonism. The local community residents of WBK are very irritated with the irresponsible swimming behaviour of the international tourists, resulting in antagonistic attitudes of the host community towards the international tourists. The host community's attitude and feelings towards tourism development could result in the loss of their support for tourism development in the area, as the next section will show.

6.3.3 Individuals Opposing Tourism Projects

The gap between economic opportunities in WBK and the local community's efforts to capitalise on them raises the questions: 'why are key facilities lacking?' and 'why is the local community reluctant to invest in such feasible (and necessary) projects? During the fieldwork, participating stakeholders revealed different views. One of the business providers in WBK described an accommodation project that had been canceled in WBK:

“There was an investor who used to have approval from the Ministry of Tourism to develop tourist accommodation on the site, but when he started developing the project, the local community opposed it and they said that they would not like to have hotels in the area as they

associate hotels with providing alcoholic beverages. Such reasons resulted in the hotel project being cancelled” (NBW-4).

However, when the government interviewee was questioned about the reason for cancelling this project, he maintained:

“This project was canceled because the investor delayed its implementation ... However, the Ministry of Tourism has given approval for another two accommodations in WBK, but neither of them have been implemented. I don’t know why.” (NG-T2).

Despite the MOT’s efforts to cooperate with the local community by providing licenses for tourism projects and helping them gain benefits from the growth of tourism, the locals still face other obstacles when it comes to developing tourist facilities. This was highlighted by a local community member:

“Most importantly, what requires the government’s extensive consideration is that there are lots of individuals opposing new developments in the area. Hence, anyone wanting to develop new projects will face this issue ... I have approval from the Ministry of Tourism for a hotel, but I did not develop it because I’m afraid to invest my money only to have the local community complain. Such complaints end up being brought to court, and such cases take up to three years in proceedings ... Overall, this will hinder the development of my project and my ability to repay any loans the bank has provided me to finance my project in time. This is a real concern which the government should consider” (LW-3).

When the interviewee LW-3 was questioned on the reasons behind this conflict with the local community, he argued that if he were to build the hotel, the locals would claim that it brings foreign tourists with unacceptable attire into the middle of the residential area, where they do not want their families to be exposed to such scenes. This clearly reflects cultural concerns among the local community, and fears that tourism brings different cultures to WBK that might be completely different from Omani cultural values and norms. Therefore, they are opposing any

tourism development in the area. Doğan (1989:221) describes this response as a “resistance” reaction towards tourists and tourism facilities, which reflects negative feelings among the host community. Such a reaction is employed by the local community as a strategy for coping with the culture clash (Doğan, 1989); in WBK it is related to the international tourists’ swimming behaviour.

This conflict of interest between the local community members and the tourism industry has created an uncertain environment for tourism investment which has led to lost business opportunities. It is, therefore, these cultural matters in WBK that hinder the formation of tourism projects, which is a major concern within the local community. As has been seen, it can prevent those who have approval for a tourism project from utilising the opportunity.

It is clear, from the above, that the issue of proper planning for tourism product development is vital and needs to be addressed wisely by decision-makers in relation to each local community’s cultural context. According to Reid (2003:122), “Planning is a transactive activity which features an open dialog between the planner and those for whom the plan is being constructed”. Therefore, a plan which calls for tourism businesses to achieve their economic goals in isolation from the local community’s cultural values will not succeed, especially if the community is a conservative one.

As WBK is a conservative community, the gap between the government’s economic aims and the local community’s cultural concerns has resulted in a community reluctant to engage with tourism development. Consequently, limited economic benefits have been gained by the local community from the tourism industry.

6.3.4 Encounters Between Domestic and International Guests

Cross-cultural impacts in WBK do not only affect the local community, but cultural encounters between domestic and international guests is another key dimension of cultural misunderstanding. Differences in culture between Omani guests’ religious values and international guests’ swimming behaviour has created a misunderstanding and, like the local community in WBK, Omani guests are experiencing a clash of cultural values with international tourists. Their

discomfort increases if they are accompanied by their families, particularly female family members, as maintained by a regional government representative:

"Inappropriate dress is a challenge because not only it is affecting the local community, it is highly problematic for Omani tourists ... we have tourists from the north and south of Oman and other regions, they come with their families. Unfortunately, the inappropriate attire exhibited by large numbers of international tourists results in alienating Omani tourists ... We do want to attract foreign tourists, but we do not want Omani tourists to feel estranged within their own country ...especially those individuals who are accompanied by their families to WBK ... I met some Omanis who advise others to not visit WBK during the tourist season or over the weekends just to avoid such sights" (RG-T2).

This issue was confirmed by a domestic tourist in WBK:

"We are a group of young people, we have visited this place several times ... Usually, we visit the place as a male group rather than with our families because in the summer the place is hot and becomes an inappropriate destination for families ... While in winter we come with our families but only for short visits ... Although the weather is better, the place is full of foreigners, so we cannot stay with our families ... If they designate a specific time in winter for Omani families it might be better ... As you know foreigners do not maintain the value of *Al Hayaa* [modesty], as they swim in extremely inappropriate clothing. It is unacceptable for your wife or your family to see such sights ... It is difficult to let your mother or your sister see people swimming in very revealing clothing ... Unlike Omanis, they appear without covering themselves properly ... Therefore, if tourists are directed and provided with the required dress, the place will be more appropriate for families" (DTW-1).

In conservative Muslim countries, there is no exposure of certain parts of the human body permitted, so Muslims will avoid this (see Subsection 2.7.4). Breaking

this value is an extremely serious issue in conservative Muslim communities in public areas, and many Muslim countries perceive such acts to be against the law.

Omani males are mainly concerned with their families; specifically, female family members whom they are responsible for protecting from any possible harm or immorality. They are also jealous and cautious about exposing them to such liberal cultures. According to AL Amari (2013), “it is jealousy of the husband regarding his wife and his family to preserve their dignity and not expose them to places of suspicion”. The jealousy of female family members is an Arab behaviour that was practiced even before Islam, and which is affirmed by Islam through the modest behaviour of men and women to protect their communities. Therefore, Omani tourists are requesting dedicated, private places for their families during their visit. Furthermore, domestic tourists are concerned their family members may imitate such behaviours, if they like it, which goes against their cultural values. Thus, it has been found that Muslims have limited interest in beach holidays, particularly in locations where Western tourists exhibit unacceptable dress according to Muslim morality and cultural values (Klemm, 2002).

This situation limits the options for Omani tourists to visit WBK, as only two choices are viable but both remain undesirable: either they come with their families in winter when the weather is pleasant, but they face the discomfort of culture clashes with international tourists, or they come during the summer when these tourists are not present but the weather is very hot. In both cases, the quotations that have been cited above illustrate that Omani tourists feel constrained within their own country and uncomfortable in their visit to WBK. This also applies to all the regional tourists from the GCC countries and other neighboring Arab countries who share the same cultural values.

The effects of this issue show themselves clearly in the decreasing tourist demand for WBK among Omani, the GCC and other Arab tourists. According to the MOT's annual report (Ministry of Tourism, 2017), the Omani share in the total number of tourists visiting WBK decreased from 42.3% in 2016 to 36.4% in 2017, while the GCC and other Arab countries' share decreased from 2.6% in 2016 to 2.4% in 2017. Meanwhile, the international tourists' share in the total number of tourists visiting WBK increased from 55.1% in 2016 to 61.1%, which shows that international

tourists are dominant in WBK. This situation requires governmental decision makers to address the issue of cross-cultural differences and to take the local cultural and religious context into account when planning for tourism development. It is also essential to introduce necessary policies and regulations to manage the site and limit cultural misunderstanding affecting the local and regional demand on WBK in order to ensure sustainable growth of tourism demand.

The local Omani community, especially in rural areas, is governed by conservative tradition and their restrictive cultural values led them to avoid visiting attractions where tourists are likely to be uncovered or dressed improperly—in order not to contradict their religious values. This big cultural gap regarding modesty between guests and hosts creates a culture clash, resulting in the local community's avoidance of participating in tourism development, which has limited successful interaction between the two groups and led to limited economic benefits being gained from tourism growth in WBK by the local community. However, Oman's national tourism strategy is concerned with local identity and cultural values. Therefore, Oman needs to develop a sustainable economic tourism sector that makes it a model nation for the Islamic Arab Gulf region, as well as the world.

Thus, it is necessary to develop a key relationship between people across cultural boundaries, adapting the protocols of hosting within the local cultural context. Guests need to know what is accepted and what is not, and to accept these guidelines within the local community framework. However, according to Bunten (2010), many local people want to present their culture according to local cultural values, but they understand that they must adapt for the international tourist industry in order to gain economic benefits. However, a paradox arises when the local community feels that they are pressured to present their tourism product to appeal to tourists' desires while contradicting their own cultural values. Therefore, there is a need to maintain a balance between tourists' expectations and the local community's cultural values so that both sides benefit.

At the same time, many international tourists who are seeking an authentic experience respect the host community's cultural values. They are moving away from the international standard experience, by seeking to experience local culture. According to Bunten (2010), a new type of experience tourist capitalises

on local knowledge and authenticity; these are special interest groups that are willing to pay more than mass market tourists. This means that they are responsible tourists who are fully prepared to respect the laws and the local cultural values of the countries they visit. Furthermore, in the case of WBK, it is important to recognise that not all non-Muslim tourists fail to respect the local community's cultural values, as half of WBK's tourists do adhere to the local culture's swimming behaviour, and respect the regulations posted at the site.

One example of responsible international tourist is exemplified by a Western tourist explaining his experience of drinking alcohol in Oman:

“There are some hotels where I can buy alcohol. I think it doesn't fit with the country because if you come to Oman, you think you shouldn't drink alcohol ... personally enjoy drinking alcohol when I'm home ... But now I'm not at home ... I'm in Oman so I have to adapt” (ITB-1).

A number of lessons have been learned from this study when assessing two models cited as being useful in the literature: Doxey's (1976) and Dogan's (1989) models for classifying and understanding the level of impacts of tourism growth based on host-guest relationships. These models could contribute to the planning and introduction of policies to manage tourist destinations for a specific host-guest context. However, Doxey's index of Irritation (1976) model does not take into account the contextual aspect of destinations. For example, for the case of WBK, where the conflict of culture over conservative Muslim hosts' dress codes and Western guests' swimming behaviour, has resulted in placing WBK's locals in an irritation interrelation with tourists at early stage of tourism development. The *euphoria/welcoming tourists' stage* (stage one) has been followed by the irritation of cultural values and resulted in the *antagonism stage* (stage four) (see Table 2.1).

Also, this model does not touch upon levels of critical contact of cultural values between domestic guests and international guests, which transform behaviour. For example, irritated Omani tourists avoiding visiting WBK during the international tourists' season. Therefore, there is a need to look at this important aspect of irritation that resulted in avoidance as it relates to different cultural

values in different segments of the demand market, and to improve Doxey's model by including this area of concern.

6.4 Policy Formulation and the Enforcement of Regulations

According to Gunn and Var (2002), national policy for tourism development is often influenced by a country's key cultural and economic values. Because tourism has impacts on the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of a destination, there is a significant need for policies and regulations that are implemented to control these impacts; however, the most important aspect of policy formation is the enforcement of policies and regulations through public mechanisms.

In Oman, Islamic values play a significant role in shaping the local community's culture, life and identity. Therefore, when developing the tourism industry, this dimension is a core aspect that requires attention from the government. The Omani government has given cultural and religious values great consideration when determining the country's economic development priorities, as expressed by a member of the government:

“Tourism development in Oman is encountering an unclear vision, plan and policies, as it is unclear what they want to achieve from tourism, what type of tourists and activities ... We do not want to be promoted internationally without considering our conservative community and culture. However, I believe we can proceed on both tracks of tourism development as well as the preservation of identity and culture while contributing to the social well-being of the community” (NG-1).

Therefore, a set of regulations and tourism policies have been formulated to maintain Oman's national cultural and religious values, while developing the tourism sector. A range of instruments and regulatory actions have been unveiled on several levels to implement this identity and cultural values policy: on the national level through the Omani penal code, on the ministerial level by the MOT's policy (as stated in their promotional materials), and on the site level in the

interpretations of tourist destinations. This section will discuss Article 294 (a national regulation concerned with appropriate dress) and compare the MOT's and WBK's interpretations of these regulations.

6.4.1 National Regulations on Dress

One of the most important regulations in Oman that deals with the ethics of appropriate dressing in public places is found in Article 294 of the Omani penal Law, which was issued in 1974 and renewed in January 2018 (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2018). This law punishes anyone (both Omanis or individuals within Omani territories) who appear in a public place in a way that undermines public modesty or contradicts the local community's cultural values. This includes any inappropriate behaviour that harms public morality and any transgressive practices related to values and decency (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2018). The punishment for appearing "in public places in an immodest manner or contrary to societal traditions and customs" is one to three months imprisonment and a fine of 100-300 OMR (approximately £200- £600)(Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2018).

Despite the existence of this law, it is ineffectively enforced in the tourist site of WBK, creating a situation where some foreign tourists still behave as if this law does not exist. Although the residents are negatively affected by tourists' behaviour, the local community continue to behave in a lenient manner with tourists in order to avoid conflict that may arise out of any negative encounter regarding inappropriate attire. As a member of the local community explained:

"When I went to the public prosecution to consult them about this issue, they said that you have the right to inform the police, who in turn will punish the tourists as they are violating a public order which must be respected ... However, we respect the tourists and do not want to create a negative image" (LW-2).

Policy implementation requires administrative coordination between policymakers and regulators. However, the current situation in WBK reflects a gap between the regulations and the effective enforcement mechanisms of these regulations and policies. In this situation, a physical presence is required on site

to manage potential areas of violation in WBK, ensuring that regulations are upheld and preventing misunderstandings and culture clashes. The reliance of officials on the local community's complaints is an ineffective mechanism to maintain positive relations between hosts and guests.

In the present situation, the responsible officials and the local community are avoiding a potentially problematic situation with foreign tourists by overlooking such behaviours. However, the question is to what extent such avoidance will continue, especially with a growing number of international tourists. The continued avoidance of this issue by stakeholders only contributes towards fostering negative host-guest attitudes and encouraging undesirable behaviour, which will potentially lead to further problems in future.

Implemented regulations for managing tourist behaviours in destinations such as WBK is central to the policy-making process, as the non-implementation, or lack, of regulations means that tourists' unacceptable behaviour will not change; thus exacerbating the problems of unacceptable behaviours.

In WBK, if the problem of dressing and behaving appropriately while swimming is dealt with it will positively impact tourists' behaviour and lead to continued and sufficient levels of destination management and policy maintenance. As a result, enforcement of this regulation will be highly beneficial in solving cultural clashes and behavioural misunderstandings. It will make the local community feel more comfortable to interact with tourists and gain economic benefits, rather than avoiding them and losing available income opportunities. Therefore, the enforcement of the Omani penal code is a critical issue for sustainable tourism development in the area.

6.4.2 MOT's Interpretation Policy

The MOT's policy for maintaining the country's cultural values was implemented in its promotional materials, such as brochures and tourist leaflets. For example, one of the Ministry's leaflets is *Marhaba Oman* (MOT, no date), which generally outlines Oman's cultural values and includes this message on the Omani dress code:

Oman is a Muslim country and respect for local customs is recommended. Omanis are not obliged to cover up fully in public, but most wear long, loose, modest clothing, and visitors are advised to do the same. Women should cover their head with a light shawl when visiting the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque or traditional rural communities.

This message gives some indications of what tourists might wear, but it does not provide a clear picture of what dress is and is not acceptable. Also, it seems that this message provides the tourists with choices of what to wear but it does not mention any penalties for non-compliance.

In another brochure, *Marhaba to the Governorate of North Ash Sharqiyah* (MOT, no date), these general guidelines are provided: “Please observe the social customs of the Omani society and dress decently”. Again, this message does not provide information concerning what decent attire entails, what is appropriate and what is not, which creates confusion for the tourist rather than guiding them.

Clearly, the lack of definition of what is inappropriate attire is a major issue in the messages found in the MOT’s brochures. Thus, the message is open to being interpreted differently by tourists, who are likely to hold dissimilar views about what they consider appropriate attire, particularly for swimming. This has resulted in diverse tourist behaviour, revealing misunderstandings depending on how each individual understands the concept of “acceptable” swimming attire. Therefore, to avoid any cultural misunderstanding behaviours in WBK, the concept of acceptable swimming attire needs to be clearly explained and illustrated so tourists avoid relying on their own individual subjective interpretations.

6.4.3 WBK Interpretation

Specifically, for WBK, two noticeboards requesting that tourists “dress properly while swimming” have been placed on site by the MOT (see Plate 6.2).

Plate 6.2: The Ministry of Tourism's Noticeboard in WBK



Source: Author (2018)

These two noticeboards have only contributed towards the conflict between international tourists' swimming behaviours and the local community's religious values. It requests that they "dress properly" but it does not specify the appropriate attire for swimming. Also, it allows them to swim without identifying the location of the pool site in which they can swim.

These signs not only confuse tourists, but they also confuse government representatives themselves, resulting in misunderstandings of WBK's swimming policy:

"By assembling the noticeboards on the site, we created a problem: some of the tourists adhere to the board's message, but others do not. We encountered a guide who maintained that it was not fair that some tourists respect the rules whilst others do not; hence, we need clear legal control and enforcement policies" (RG-T2).

According to Weaver (2005), the effective conveyance of a message can have transformational consequences, making people more culturally careful and helping to achieve the desired aims of the message. For destinations with conservative cultures, providing important information in advance about the

cultural backgrounds of the area, the local customs, dress codes and behaviour creates a better understanding of behaviour and encourages tourists to maintain an acceptable attitude. However, when limited information is provided or a confusing message is presented, it will create misunderstandings, as explained by a German tourist guide:

“All the German tourists have read the instructions that are presented on the noticeboard and follow them. However, the Ministry of Tourism internationally promotes Oman and WBK, and such promotions result in attracting numerous tourists to come and swim in Oman. Yet, when the tourists arrive, they are surprised to see such information boards, hence creating a misunderstanding. The tourists are unsure if they can swim or not. They are coming from Muscat, a two-hour drive, to swim, then they see this board and they ignore it” (NBW-3).

This issue of misunderstanding the message reflects a mismanagement issue and also confirms cultural differences and a lack of familiarity with local customs among tourists. This is confirmed by a government representative:

“The mistake is when we wrote for tourists, ‘You are kindly requested to dress properly while swimming, as you are in a public conservative place’ because my cultural understanding as a Muslim with Arab culture is that in public I am allowed to swim, but only with clothes that cover the *awrah* [*awrah* is an Islamic term that refers to the area of the body that must be covered] ... Foreign tourists, based on their cultural background and understanding, think what they are wearing is considered to be ‘covering’” (NG-T2).

Clearly, cultural differences reflect another important aspect of communicating information about how to adhere to the local community’s religious values. Common norms among Muslim people make the words “appropriate, proper dressing, decent, modest clothing” understandable, while the same words can be confusing among non-Muslims. However, as Oman, in general, and WBK, more specifically, are attracting tourists from different cultural backgrounds, the

message has not been conveyed at an international level of understanding and as a consequence has not been interpreted clearly.

Apart from signs and unclear messages regarding how to adhere to the local community's cultural values, there is no regulation enforcement to support the management policies of the site or to avoid misunderstandings and cultural conflicts between international tourists and the local community. This issue requires the Ministry of Tourism to work in cooperation with other stakeholders to implement a management plan that considers the local community's cultural values.

In addition, the unclear law enforcement mechanism has created conflict between tour guides, the local community and police. Questions arise over who should take responsibility for enforcing the law: tour guides, local residents or the Royal Oman Police? The MOT's absence makes the situation much worse, reflecting the government's lack of experience in managing tourist activities.

Interviews with governmental, local community and tour guide stakeholders revealed different views about who is responsible for site management and the enforcement of regulations in WBK. On one hand, government officials and some local community members supported the opinion that tour guides are responsible for controlling tourists' behaviour in WBK. On the other hand, tour guides and one of the local community interviewees supported the opinion that the MOT is responsible for managing the site and regulating tourist behaviour.

Considering the first opinion, a majority of the interviewees, particularly the MOT representatives, the local community and one of the tour guides, strongly agreed with the important role of tour guides in controlling tourist behaviour to help maintain the cultural values of the community in WBK. As one of the MOT interviewees stated:

"The issue of dressing appropriately can be resolved effortlessly if we control the tour guides as they bring the tourists, so they are responsible for their actions" (RG-T2).

The MOT's belief that this is tourist guides' responsibility is demonstrated by a circular (Ministry of Tourism, 2018) issued in 2018 to tour operator companies in Oman, bringing to tour guides' attention to the importance of directing tourists on appropriate clothing while swimming in WBK, and threatening penalties if the guides failed.

The tour guides' responsibility for managing tourist behaviours was also supported by many local community interviewees:

“Tour guides are obliged to clarify the Omani culture for the tourists, and the tourists usually respect our culture” (LW-4).

“The main responsibility is the tour companies'. They must tell the tourists about respecting the local culture” (LW-2).

This notion was also supported by one Omani tour guide:

“It depends on the tour guide. My company, for example, has a commitment, where tourists are obliged to dress properly from the carpark to the water pools as there are Omani families and other Muslim people living and passing by the site and they do not like to see this. Hence, we must advise the tourists and usually they commit to wearing appropriate clothing” (NBW-5).

In contrast, the idea that enforcing compliance with rules and regulations is the responsibility of the MOT was voiced by a number of tour guides, revealing the interpretation gaps this issue creates among various stakeholders involved in the tourism industry. This divergence of views leads to policy failure and in turn results in the failure to achieve the desired goal of managing the site with national legislations. As one of the Omani tour guides detailed:

“We can tell the tourists about the desired attire, but we cannot force them. I tell them that it is not permitted to swim with improper dress: you can swim in a T-shirt and trousers, otherwise, you cannot swim ... Some of the nationalities commit to my guidance, they respect the country's rules and culture, but others do not care and they do not want

their freedom around the pools to be limited by rules regarding clothing. On the other hand, others express their approval of such rules, however, they later hide and swim in inappropriate clothing. I am not responsible for watching them, my responsibility is guiding them and helping them to be safe ... As a guide this is my main source of income. I do not want to be in conflict with the tourists. If they get upset, they could easily express their bad experience with me as their guide on social media, hence resulting in me losing my business. I am responsible for a family and I need to feed them ... Hence, implementing such rules and regulations cannot be the responsibility of the tour guide alone. The Ministry of Tourism must play a major role in providing such guidance as well as providing tourism police" (NBW-1).

Policy implementation requires power to enforce regulations. However, it is hard to enforce policies in swimming destinations compared to destinations that offer other activities. As one tour guides argued:

"When tourists arrive in Oman, they respect the local culture, but when it comes to swimming, this is their culture, and everything has its price. If the government wants to open tourism, then the country should pay the price" (NBW-2).

Many members of the local community stress the importance of officials having the power to enforce the rules. As one of the local community respondents argued:

"There is a need for legal statutes to enforce the regulations" (LW-4).

Another local community respondent supports this perspective:

"There is a legislative loophole in the law of the Ministry of Tourism and the tourism police do not exist" (LW-2).

One of the local community respondents shed light on another problem:

“Some of the tour guides are not Omani, they are Tunisian, or Egyptian or Indian without an official guiding license. There is no supervision over them” (NBW-2).

Based on the above, the researcher proposes that the main reason for governmental failure to maintain responsible policy implementation is a lack of regulatory power, and a lack of effective dialogue channels between policymakers and personnel involved in WBK’s tourism industry. As a result, despite the existence of public regulations, the tourism policy and the MOT’s actions towards the development of an industry that is sensitive to the local community’s cultural values, most of international tourists visiting WBK do not comply with cultural sensitivities and local rules. An international tourist described her visit to WBK:

“We went to WBK by car and we swam there ... It was very nice, nice water and a nice place ... And yes, we saw the noticeboard with the swimming times and the other one to respect the local community’s culture and not to swim with short clothes, but it was full of people who were swimming in bikinis and very short shorts” (ITB-1).

Another international tourist who was interviewed maintained that she enjoyed swimming in the natural water pools, and when questioned if she had any information about swimming in the country, she said:

“Yes, I know that swimming is only allowed at the private beaches, but not in public places”(ITW-1).

The findings from the fieldwork reflect a lack of government efforts regarding regulation enforcement, and vague/undefined terms create misunderstanding and conflict between hosts’ cultural values and the behaviours of guests in WBK. Government policies and regulations have failed to prevent clashes of culture between international tourists’ swimming behaviours and hosts’ cultural values. This is due to several reasons: unclear mechanisms for the enforcement of national regulations, unclear messages that have been communicated to tourists regarding acceptable swimming attire, and the inadequacy of tourism regulations and policy tools to manage the site. Overall, these factors are contributing towards a lack of

local community participation in tourism development. As will be discussed in the following section, a way to improve this situation is to introduce appropriate planning measures.

6.5 Planning Aspects

A number of countries that are newcomers to tourism development lack local expertise in tourism planning (De Kadt, 1979; Sharpley, 2008; Tosun, 2000). Therefore, some employ external consultants in a long- or short-term advisory role (Sharpley, 2008). Others employ international experts to advise the government on developing tourism (Tosun, 2000). In Oman, the MOT employs international consultants in short-term advisory roles, whereby they provide consultancy services in tourism plans and strategies for tourism development. They also hire experts on the implementation of tourism strategies and plans. However, although the government makes an effort to develop beneficial tourism in Oman, it lacks expertise in social planning related to the employment of the local community and economic benefits. This situation challenges the participation of the local community in the tourism industry in Oman, as reflected in this quote from a national government representative:

“Tourism is a new industry in Oman. We do not have accumulated knowledge, but we can learn” (NG-P1).

According to De Kadt (1979:22), “most small countries have limited planning capacity, because they lack experts with appropriate training”. Sharpley and Ussi (2012) realise that one of the challenges hindering the local community from benefitting from tourism development in Zanzibar concerns the lack of planning implementations and generic policies to manage and direct the development of tourism in line with the local community’s economic needs. Furthermore, Tosun (2000) stresses that lack of expertise in the field of tourism is a significant barrier in the developing world, and suggests that involving the local community in decision-making processes during the development of tourism in their locality is an essential condition to structure a beneficial tourism industry for the local community. This section outlines 12 planning aspects in WBK which are

contributing to limited local community participation, including gaining economic benefits from tourism growth.

6.5.1 Negative Impacts on the Local Community's Quality of Life

The increasing number of tourists in WBK has reached a stage where it is negatively impacting the local community's daily life, restricting their daily movement during the tourist season. One local community member highlighted the congestion of the carpark during the tourist season:

“In the tourist season, the area becomes congested and bottlenecked with tourist cars and their drivers, who park behind local residents' cars or in prohibited places, blocking the entrances and the exits of the villages, which makes the local people's movements difficult and is problematic in emergency situations ... Therefore, we always resort to the police to ensure that the movement does not stop, especially in the case of someone being sick or something happening” (LW-2).

This issue is confirmed by a local government interviewee who maintained the importance of solving this problem:

“Entering the carpark over the holidays and on weekends is a difficult situation due to the inadequate capacity of the carpark which does not accommodate the tourist's numbers. The road itself is narrow, it is very difficult; especially if there is somebody who is sick or in a critical condition ... The services are required to be improved for the village as long as the site is classified as a first-class tourist attraction and promoted internationally” (LG-W).

Such an irritated host-guest relationship can be related to Cohen's (1972) and Smith's (1989) categories, where the socio-cultural disruption of the host community depends on the number of tourists and the type of tourism they engage in. In WBK, a majority of interviewees, including local government officials, local community members and tourism businesses, agreed on the importance of the provision of additional tourist facilities. This issue has caused growing irritation

among the local community as pressure is placed upon them by the lack of facilities and the rising number of tourists—similar to congestion issues facing the Isle of Sky (Butler, 2019), where the large number of tourists has created pressure on the local community. These issues of traffic, congestion and parking problems have led to tourism development in WBK reaching the irritation stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex, which suggests that a destination reaches its saturation level when the local residents cannot cope with tourism growth. In WBK, the factors that have pushed the community to its saturation level are insufficient parking and roads.

6.5.2 Lack of Tourist Facilities

The provision of tourist facilities is key to developing a tourism product that satisfies the needs of tourists and creates income sufficient to meet financial targets (Swarbrooke, 2002). Barron (2005) argues that accommodation constitutes an integral part of the tourism product, without which tourists would not visit the location, as they need a place to rest and revive during their visit. Mill and Morrison (2002) maintain that tourists spend 1/5 to 1/4 of their total visit expenditure on accommodation, while most of their budget is spent on food and beverages. Therefore, tourist destinations promote local community food and lodging services to link the local economy to the tourism industry.

However, WBK's lack of tourist facilities, such as accommodation and food (there is only a small restaurant on site), leads the tourists to bring all their supplies, resulting in minimal expenditure on site.

The findings show that the majority of the local community interviewees are unhappy about tourists' limited expenditure in WBK. As a local government respondent stated:

“At the moment we are not benefiting from tourists in the area. The tourist groups come and pass by while bringing their own supplies with them, and some of them even bring camping gear if they want to stay overnight. They do not spend anything in the area” (LG-WW).

A business provider elaborated on this issue while detailing that there is limited provision of necessary facilities in the area:

“There is a need for accommodation as some tourists would like to stay overnight and take photos at night. Therefore, they bring their camping gear with them due to the lack of accommodation available” (NBW-4).

Another local community member confirmed the above statements:

“In WBK we receive coaches of 40 or 50 tourists. They come with their lunches, thus the local businesses do not benefit from them” (LW-F2).

However, tour providers assert that the issue is a lack of tourist facilities in the area. They complain that the inadequacy of tourist services accessible in WBK, such as restaurants, forces them to prepare in and cater for tourist meals in advance. One WBK tour guide stated:

“There is high demand but limited facilities [...] A need exists for alternative restaurants, as the present one is barely serving the needs of the tourists. There is a need for other choices” (NBW-2).

This statement is confirmed by another tour guide, who also maintained the need for improving restaurant services:

“There is a nice buffet offered at the water-pool site; however, it provides very limited options. Tourists require better options that include sandwiches and dessert. As a result, this restaurant must upgrade its services to provide for all needs, such as by including small snacks” (NBW-3).

The above statements are also confirmed by a national government interviewee:

“WBK has a great number of tourists, but it lacks in facilities” (NG-P2).

In WBK, because a complete tourism product including small local business that cater to tourists (e.g., shops, traditional restaurants and coffee shops) has not

been developed on site, great potential rewards for the local community are lost. The provision of tourist facilities is limited to only a small restaurant, a partially shaded area and toilets, with non-local employees serving in the restaurant, resulting in minimum tourist expenditure being spent on site.

However, in contrast to the above-mentioned views on the limited availability of tourist facilities in WBK, a regional government informant stated that in his experience at WBK, international tourists are happy with the current facilities:

“I have been working at the WBK site for eight years. Most of the foreign tourists’ advice is to keep the place natural ... We did a survey to ask the tourists for their views on the site and their recommendations, and the majority of them want the water pools to remain naturally untouched, with the same facilities” (RG-T2).

For their part, the international tourists interviewed during the fieldwork confirmed the adequacy of the facilities at the water-pool site. An Italian tourist stated:

“The place is nice, and the facilities are good” (ITW-1).

A German tourist agreed:

“The facilities in WBK are okay, but we did not visit the restaurant” (ITB-2).

However, an Oman resident originally from India stated that:

“WBK is a great destination, but the facilities require improvements” (DTW-4).

In contrast to these comments, none of the Omani tourists who were interviewed emphasised the need for accommodation or restaurants, as they mainly focused on the importance of tourists’ privacy. Their main concern regarding facilities was that they should be provided to ensure private shaded areas for families. As a domestic tourist explained:

“We enjoyed the place and prepared our barbecue, then we will visit the cave and spend the rest of the time swimming ... If they provide private settings for families or if they designated a specific time in winter for Omani tourists, it might be better ... Also, we need prayer places for males and females” (LTW-1).

This example reflects the characteristics of Omani tourists, who usually enjoy preparing their own food on trips, and rarely use restaurants on site (they might have a general understanding that a restaurant is only for foreign tourists' use). Moreover, if they are accompanied by their families, they prefer to have dedicated places, particularly to ensure women's privacy. This clearly reflects cultural differences associated with Islamic cultural values, but WBK is a water pool destination associated with foreign tourists swimming in inappropriate clothing from a Muslim perspective. Also, the tourist quoted above mentioned the need for prayer places, which again shows an Islamic influence on the Omani tourists' needs. In Al Sawafi's (2017) study on the motivations for Omani tourists' travel behaviour and destination choice, he found that the availability of *Masjids* (places of worship) is one of the key factors, which demonstrates the influence of Islamic teachings on Omani travel behaviour.

Another Omani tourist highlighted the limited availability of children's facilities:

“There is a need for children's swimming facilities ... Also, it would be great if a children's playground was provided” (LTW-2).

Another Omani tourist was pleased with the natural surroundings:

“The place is very nice and clean ... We opened our mat and enjoyed sitting under the shade of the tree” (LTW-3).

Based on the above discussion, in WBK, the limited provision of accommodation, local restaurants and other tourist facilities has led to lost economic opportunities from tourism growth. Most statements from tour organisers point to the lack of provision of facilities, while the Omani tourist maintains the needs for family privacy, shaded areas, prayer places and children's facilities. However,

international tourists are more concerned about preserving the natural beauty of the place. This reflects the different characteristics of the tourists visiting WBK, revealing different priorities and needs. However, neither the tour guides' needs nor the domestic tourists' needs are being met. As a result, tourists spend little money in the area, and the demand among domestic tourists has only increased slightly. This situation encourages a shortened stay at WBK, making it a daytrip stop.

6.5.3 A 'Brief Stop' Destination

The lack of tourist facilities available in WBK has converted the destination to a short-stay trip site which tourists visit only for a few hours (e.g., domestic visitors for 1-5 hours, and international tourists for 1-2 hours). They come to swim, take photos, have lunch or snacks and then leave. This was confirmed by a tour guide in WBK:

“If I have a round trip for camping in the desert for two nights or more, then usually I conclude it with a stop in WBK for tourist bathing in the water pools, as the tourist do not take baths in the desert ... If I have an overnight trip with a large group of tourists, I give them only one hour or a maximum of two hours for a photo stop and coffee or drinks in WBK, then we leave for the desert for an overnight stay as WBK does not offer accommodation services. If accommodation was provided, tourists would stay overnight in WBK ... There is a demand for accommodation in WBK. I am sure if there were accommodation, even if it were only ten rooms, it would be fully occupied all year round” (NBW-2).

It can be seen that WBK has been downgraded by tour operators to only a bathing stop. This is also indicated by another tour guide who perceived that the site does not require accommodation, but needs an upgraded restaurant:

“If there were accommodation, it would be good, but we do not need accommodation. For years we have not stayed overnight in WBK, the tourists only come for bathing, they usually stay overnight in Bidiyah ...

If they were to spend a night in WBK and a night in Bidiyah, it would cost them more. We only need a better restaurant with air conditioning to serve the summer season’s visitors” (NBW-1).

This shows that although WBK has the potential to be a more economically viable destination, its ability to generate economic benefits from international tourists has been downgraded. The lack of tourist facilities has resulted in the area’s potential being underestimated and this high-quality oasis destination has been undervalued as a tourist bathing stop.

However, none of the domestic tourists interviewed in the fieldwork complained about limited choices of restaurants or a lack of accommodation. Most Omani tourists visit the site only for a short visit or a daytrip, and they usually bring their supplies with them, as stated by the following two domestic tourists:

“We came to bring the children to swim and enjoy their holiday, the summer school holiday ... It is just a short visit of around two hours” (LTW-2).

“We came to visit relatives in this region, so we decided to stop in WBK for a short break, then we will continue our visit after the children swim in the water pools” (LTW-3).

This shows that tourists differ in their preferred choices and needs. The Omani tourists who reside in the country come for a short visit and go back. Moreover, families with children might have concerns about securing appropriate accommodation and facilities. In WBK, international needs are not met, and neither are the requirements of domestic tourists. A barrier to providing facilities is, in part, due to government approval procedures.

6.5.4 Multi-stakeholder Approvals and Lengthy Procedures

The complex and lengthy procedures involved in obtaining government approval for tourism projects are a major challenge impeding potential local investors’ ability to participate in the tourism industry. This issue is widely discussed among

government authorities and has been highlighted in different official reports; for example, *The Vision for Oman Economy 2020* (Ministry of National Economy, 1995) and *Diversifying the Economic Plan* (Supreme Council for Planning, 2016). Since the preparation of Oman's Vision 2020 in 1995, this issue has been on the top of a list of challenges concerning the private sector (Ministry of National Economy, 1995). Nonetheless, it remains one of the main issues preventing the local community from investing in tourism projects, as most of the local interviewees agreed, especially local community members, such as a local youth entrepreneur and investors in WBK who had experienced this lengthy process:

“Omani youth are being encouraged by the government to start their own business. However, once an individual commences government procedures for their start-ups, they are met with lengthy procedures which last for more than one year. As a result, the government must adapt its procedures to investors' needs and reduce the current bureaucracy levels” (LW-F5).

“The only challenge we have is the Ministry of Tourism's requirements, lengthy investment procedures and complicated regulations... This is hindering the ability of people in WBK to invest in tourism and to benefit from its development in the area” (LW-F1).

The above statement is supported by another local community member, clarifying the reason behind lengthy procedures and explaining the lack of tourist facilities in WBK:

“If an investor from WBK wants to invest, it requires a long period of time to finish the procedures. For example, it takes six months to get the approval to develop tourism projects, and sometimes one year. Therefore, individuals are not encouraged to invest, and therefore there are a lack of facilities on the site” (LW-F1).

One of the local interviewees had almost finished building tourist accommodation, but he was still suffering to obtain the required license to officially open his “green” lodge:

“When the Ministry of Tourism announced the decree of green lodges, I applied for it. They gave me preliminary approval and requested a permit from the Ministry of Agriculture, being the responsible ministry for farm lands. This took more than six months for testing the soil and water on the land ... Also, it will require approval from the Ministry of the Environment and approval from the Civil Defence in addition to other authorities ... Endless procedures that discourage you from continuing while you are in the middle of obtaining the approvals from the relevant authorities” (LW-F1).

When clarifications were sought from an official representative of the MOT, he confirmed this as an issue, explaining that lengthy procedures for obtaining a license for tourism projects do not relate to the process of approval from the MOT, but is mainly due to the requirements of other authorities related to tourism:

“The issue of procedures has two aspects. The first one is related to the Ministry of Tourism’s approval, which is simple and does not take more than a couple of days—not even a week. So if the investor would like to have approval for a hotel, the required documents are minimal: they include the project’s site plan, land ownership documents and project drawings ... These requirements and all classification guidelines are available on the Ministry of Tourism’s website. Also, the preliminary approval for the project does not take more than three days... However, the second aspect is a challenge, because it involves several authorities, such as the municipality for the project giving approval, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs for the environmental study approval, and the Civil Defence for the emergency exits approval. Each authority has their requirements, which take time, hence taking months or even years ... People blame the Ministry of Tourism, and we understand that after a while and with all these approvals, the project remains on paper” (NG-T3).

According to Jamal and Getz (1995:186), “the lack of coordination and cohesion within a highly fragmented tourism industry is a well-known problem to destination planners”. This case shows that although the MOT has taken great

steps to simplify the process by which tourism projects obtain approval and licensing, little effort has been made by other government agencies to support the development of the tourism industry. This is reflected by the lack of cooperation among partners that have a shared vision and responsibility towards the tourism sector. This situation indicates a critical issue that disables the local community from investing in tourism projects to gain economic benefits from tourism development. Hence, there is a gap between the MOT's goals to enable the local community to gain a source of income from tourism and other governmental authorities' guidelines in proceeding with this aim. To overcome such a challenge, the development of collaboration mechanisms among related stakeholders to influence the process is essential (Tosun, 2000). This is what the MOT has been dealing with, as stated by a national government representative:

“We aim to resolve this issue through Tanfeedh [a national program for enhancing economic diversification under the responsibility of the Supreme Committee for Planning]. Due to the significance of this challenge, there is a team from the Ministry of Tourism and related authorities with the private sector currently working on simplifying government procedures and giving each process a specific timeframe, as at the moment, the procedures period is open. We hope this challenge will be resolved soon ... Also, last week the Ministry of Tourism initiated a connection with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on ‘Invest Easy’ [an online one-stop shop] where the investor can apply for the project through this website and it will be reviewed and approved electronically. So, yes, this is an issue and it is a challenge, and it is very clear that the decision-makers are aware of this issue; hence, it is one of the key initiatives in Tanfeedh ... For the Ministry, there is a great improvement, and we hope with Invest Easy and Tanfeedh's initiatives, we will solve this issue” (NG-T3).

Government initiatives, such as Invest Easy, to ease procedures for investors demonstrates the government's concern and awareness of this issue. However, the challenge here does not only involve multiple approvals needed from different authorities, but also lies in the lengthy procedures within each ministry. This is another issue that the government is trying to solve through the Tanfeedh

Initiative by simplifying regulations and confining procedures to specific timeframes. Nevertheless, a problem rests within the implementation of the Tanfeedh Initiative itself, which has more than one year to go; generally, dealing with different stakeholders requires governance systems of all government stakeholders responsible for tourism development.

6.5.5 Conflict of Interest Between Government Regulations and Investors' Desires

A new tourism product introduced recently by the MOT is called “green lodges”, a type of accommodation that enables farmers to generate income by offering tourist accommodation on their farms. The legal frameworks and policies to regulate this type of product were set up by the MOT in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the Ministry of Agriculture wants to maintain these areas as agricultural lands, which is contrary to the economic interests of investors, who want to achieve a visible return on their investments in green lodges:

“The Ministry of Agriculture allows building only on 25% of the total size of the land [to protect agricultural lands] and I exceeded that. I built a small accommodation project with around 28 rooms, and because 25% of the size of this land does not allow me more than 9 rooms, which is not feasible ... Therefore, after two years the issue rests with the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, and the project remains unauthorised ... They are disappointing and tiring procedures ... The Ministry of Tourism should take the lead in tourism projects and should exclude WBK from these requirements, but whilst considering the law ... I cannot irrigate this farm due to the lack of water supply, therefore I should have an exemption from the condition of building on only 25% of the land, and if this project is opened it will employ numerous individuals; many youths are jobseekers in WBK ... Various challenges exist regarding the development of tourism projects, and everybody is aware of such procedures, so people are discouraged from becoming involved in tourism development in WBK” (LW-F1).

Licensing these green lodge projects is related mainly to the approval and regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture (being projects developed on farm land). However, when clarification was sought from the MOT on the reasons for setting the specified size for the green lodges, a national government official stated:

“For the green lodge projects, we ask for minimum requirements in order to support the small investors to initiate their projects. Also, we want to differentiate between small projects and hotels. For small projects, the regulations do not allow for more than nine rooms and the minimum is three rooms, so a small investor can convert their house into tourist accommodation as a guest house or green lodges. For green lodges, developing the project is conducted on agriculture land and is subject to the Ministry of Agriculture’s authorisation. Therefore, the approvals process starts there in the Ministry of Agriculture, not in the Ministry of Tourism. After it gets their approval, we license the project immediately.” (NG-T3).

This case sheds light on the conflict of interest between government regulations to protect agricultural lands and business interests that want to convert agricultural lands for tourism. In the project described above, the Ministry of Agriculture aims to protect farmlands in Oman, hence it established a regulation that 9 rooms or 25% of the total land only is allowed to be developed. The investor’s main objective is to gain sufficient return on his investment, but this is hindered by the limitations imposed.

Dadvar-Khani (2012) observes the socio-economic impacts of tourism development in Iran have seen a change in rural land use from agricultural to second homes for urban tourists, resulting in increasing the land’s value. Streifeneder (2016) also finds that the Italian agritourist experience faces similar obstacles in maintaining the balance between agriculture and tourist accommodation; the number of rooms or beds has to be balanced with the workload to be conducted on the farm. This development emphasises the government’s need for procedures to deal wisely with tourism’s diverse impacts on an area, and the importance of maintaining a balance between the need for the financially sustainable development of tourism projects and the conservation of agricultural lands.

6.5.6 The Challenge of Costly Licenses for Tourism Projects

Another challenge obstructing people from developing tourism projects in WBK involves the costs involved with issuing the required licenses for a project. As a local community member maintained:

“If you have an idea to initiate a project, it will require you to set up a commercial registration account and pay fees for it, and you will need approval from the municipality, which requires additional fees ... Also, funds are required by the Ministry of Manpower to obtain employees ... As a result, you will approximately pay 10,000 OMR (£18,500) whilst your project is still on paper. Therefore people in WBK do not invest in tourism projects” (LW-F5).

The multiplicity of fees required of private sector businesses and the number of uncoordinated authorities responsible for acquiring these fees is one of the key challenges stressed in the long-term economic development strategy report for the Omani Economic Vision 2020 (Ministry of National Economy, 2007). Although this issue was discussed in 1995 in the Ministry of National Economy’s report Vision 2020 (Ministry of National Economy, 2007), it remains a challenging factor to this day, hindering the local community from investing in tourism within WBK.

This demonstrates the importance of the role of institutional governance among related authorities. Wan (2013:166) emphasised that “in tourism planning, institutions often refer to the decision-making rules, procedures, established practices, systems, and organizational arrangements”. There is a need to review the fees regulations system in order to retain the local community’s interest in investing in tourism projects. Predictably, costly investment licensing fees have resulted in a reluctance from the community to be engaged and benefit from the growth of tourism.

6.5.7 Lack of Linkage Between Local Community Businesses and the Tourism Industry

Akama and Kieti (2007), Ashley and Mitchell (2008), Brohman (1996), Choudhury and Goswami (2013), Meyer (2007), and Sharpley and Ussi (2014), in their studies on the socio-economic impacts of tourism have found that a lack of linkage between tourism businesses and a local community's economic activities is a main reason for limited economic benefits existing from tourism in the local economy. They have also found that a lack of marketing inhibits the effective participation of the local community in the tourism industry. Furthermore, they have found that leakages of tourism-derived earnings occur due to limited-skilled local people in tourism destinations. In WBK, government officials' views differ in relation to enabling the local community to access the tourism industry. Some of them believe in the importance of collaboration between the government, businesses and the local community to secure economic benefits for the local community; while others believe that locals lack awareness and understanding about tourism's economic opportunities, and that that is why locals are not participating in tourism. Alternatively, local community members acknowledge their desire and interest to be involved in tourism activities, which raises the question: what means could be used to engage businesses in the local community with tourism? Stronger collaboration between businesses and the tourism industry has been put forward by government officials as a solution.

Examples of government belief regarding the importance of collaboration include the following quote by a national government informant:

“It is important to have a collaborative system between stakeholders: the government who initiates visions, policies, plans, and strategies to ease procedures; the Ministry of Tourism who should improve investment procedures, and the private sector who should invest in tourism projects. On the other hand, it is important to empower the local community ... This will be an appropriate collaborative system” (NG-P2).

One government official asserted the importance of all parties' roles in enabling sustainable tourism development:

“It is important that all related parties in tourism cooperate: the local community, the government and businesses. In tourism, we need governance between these stakeholders ... It is essential to specify the role of each party ... We need the government to initiate systems, regulations and procedures, while the local community should understand their role in developing tourism products, as they are the experts in Bidiyah's and WBK's history and tourist attractions. The businesses involved in tourism should be responsible for supporting the local community, respecting the local culture and preserving tourism resources” (NG-P1).

One member of the national government proposed an example of another sector in Oman that has successful experience in this issue:

“In Oman, we have a successful experience in supporting local companies in the oil and gas sector and there is an opportunity in tourism ... The important point here is working as a team, either at the government level, at the business, or the local community level. If the local community in Bidiyah or WBK does not cooperate with tourism businesses, the economic benefits will remain limited” (NG-P1).

Other government officials thought that the local community's limited awareness of tourism's economic benefits is reducing their ability to gain economic benefits from tourism:

“We have made several efforts and initiatives to create awareness among the local community to benefit from tourism development, through meeting them and presenting examples of successful projects in other sites ... We suggested that they sell their farm products to visitors. Especially in WBK, which is a farming community, they have a red banana which is solely produced in WBK, and other types of fruits such as dates, lemons and pomegranates ... We suggested that they do

barbecues and sell it to the tourists ... Honestly, I do not know what is stopping them from investing in the sector” (NG-T2).

However, the following example shows the local community’s understanding and efforts to participate and gain economic access to the tourism industry and some of the barriers they face as stated by a local tourism business:

“There is a great number of international and domestic tourists visiting the Wadi. Daily, I see hundreds of tourist cars passing by; however, I do not benefit from tourism at all. Nobody stops in front of my shop, although the shop is on the main road to the water pools, and I have put up two signs to indicate the location. Nonetheless, nobody stops. And when I ask the tour operators, ‘Why do you not visit my shop?’, they said, ‘It is not integrated into our program and we do not have any explicit instructions from the Ministry of Tourism to stop by your shop.’ ... When I asked the Ministry of Tourism about the possibility of advising the tour operators to stop by my shop, they said, ‘We cannot force the companies to do so.’ ... Hence, we want the Ministry of Tourism to support us and to open marketing outlets for us. We want to contribute to the country’s economy” (BW-1).

When clarifications were sought from a tour operator on this issue, he responded:

“I know there is a handicraft shop in WBK, but I do not stop there because it is not in my program. But if the handicraft maker offers his product at the water-pool site, all the tourists will buy it. However, I take my tourists to the handicraft shop in Bidiyah, as most of the tour operators do, because visiting the Bedouin handicrafts shop is part of the experience for the tourists visiting the desert, as they expect to see the Bedouin lifestyle in the desert and this product is part of the Bedouin lifestyle, so it has become part of the tourism product in Bidiyah” (NBW-2).

However, when a craft maker was questioned on the reason for not exhibiting his handicrafts at the water-pool site, he presented a letter of refusal from the MOT

regarding displaying his products on the site, due to the limited space as well as the Ministry's plans for future development. This decision clearly shows contradictory views between the MOT's stated goals of supporting the local community to obtain economic opportunities in WBK and their actions.

From the residents' perspectives, all locals without exception agree on their desire to participate in tourism activities and gain benefits, as the following examples taken from across the spectrum of the local community demonstrate:

"The youth want to work in tourism because the majority are unemployed. If they were provided with the opportunity to work in tourism, they would, similar to the local community in Bidiyah [...] If there were an organised and managed reception area to receive the tourists at the entrance of WBK, they could take the tourists on tour to the different locations in the area" (LW-F5).

"I am a housewife looking for a source of income for me and my children. Like any woman, I could help to finance my family. I work in handicrafts, but due to the limited demand for handicrafts in WBK, I don't sell my products. I could make Omani bread and I could weave Omani dresses ... I started a business, but due to the lack of support I stopped my project" (BW-F1).

"We have unemployed and disabled members of our society who are interested in working in the handicrafts industry. This is the only opportunity for them to work. We have trained them in the handcraft center. They need support and encouragement. They have an excellent ability and capacity for producing handicrafts; hence transforming it into a source of income" (BW-F1).

From the above discussion, limited local community engagement in tourism is not related to their limited knowledge or awareness of tourism's economic opportunities, but rather to planners' roles in linking, or failing to link, the local community with tourism businesses. According to Akama and Kieti (2007:743), "local people, particularly the more vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, need to be provided with a chance to build individual and collective capability in

order to gain access to economic opportunities and basic living conditions”. Brohman (1996) argues that without government intervention, tourism development will lack the direction needed to sustain itself over the long term. Ashley and Mitchell (2008) suggest local or national government interventions occur on regulations and business conditions to remove any barriers to microenterprises.

In WBK, there is a clear gap between the local community's desires for tourism growth and the government's efforts to incorporate local resources within the tourist system. The government's failure as a collaborative enabler for the local community to benefit might be reflective of the government's lack of understanding and experience regarding this important role, which can have an effect on benefit-sharing and the use of local community skills and abilities. This challenge might lead to negative local community reactions towards tourism development in the area (Saarinen, 2010).

The government's role to include products sourced locally in the tourism business and creating communication channels between local businesses and the tourism industry is a critical issue. Ndlovu (2014) states that one form of local community participation in tourism is through the development of joint ventures between tourism investors and skilled locals. He takes the example of the Torra Conservancy in Namibia, where following local consultation their ideas were prioritised in running the tourism venture. The tourism business had access to the tourism market and the local community had the essential skills needed for the tourism product (Ndlovu, 2014). One of the key challenges facing the local community in accessing the tourism market in WBK is connecting them with tourism businesses to utilise the advantage of their indigenous knowledge about the place and attractions offered there.

6.5.8 Type of Tourism Product

According to Swarbrooke (2002), a tourism product should be consistent with the local culture and any tourist activities should be inoffensive to the local community. WBK is a natural swimming pool tourist attraction, drawing tourists to swim and enjoy the natural beauty of the place. However, this type of tourism

activity has created a major clash of cultures between the hosts and guests (as discussed in Section 6.4). International tourists swim in attire deemed unacceptable by the local community, which has resulted in avoidance on the part of the local community residents towards tourism development in the area and a reluctance by local residents to be present at the tourist site. As a result, this has limited tourist-related activities engaged in by the local community, minimising the benefits they gain from tourism opportunities. Moreover, this issue has led to the alienation of the domestic and regional tourist markets, as potential tourists are deterred. This has also led domestic tourists to call for the enforcement of regulations:

“The law should be above everything. If the country has a rule, it should be clear for the tourists. They should not be allowed to wear clothing above the knee as they are in Oman and they should respect Omani rules and values” (DTW-1).

Although such tourism activity has created concern among government representatives interviewed, they held differing views about the policies that could be applied to address this issue. One opinion focuses on creating tourist awareness rather than imposing rules:

“Yes, the Omani penal law includes the dress code in addition to penalties and fines for disrespecting the rules. There was a suggestion to present penalties at the entrance of WBK, but there was a worry that this will alienate the tourists and will create a bad impression, while we are trying to expand the tourism industry in the country as a source of economic diversification. Therefore, creating awareness is more important than imposing rules” (RG-H1).

Another government official supported the need to enhance tourist awareness on this issue and raised a concern regarding the difficulty of changing the government’s marketing strategy, maintaining worries about other similar tourist sites in the country:

“There is a need to ‘inject awareness doses’. We cannot take a step back as we are currently marketing WBK on an international scale as a destination for swimming. If we stopped people from swimming, this would affect the tourism industry in the region ... We are not only talking about WBK, but we also have Wadi Shaab and Wadi Tiwi [other natural water pool destinations in the North AL Sharqiyah region] ... Also, we have more than 3,000 kilometres of coastline in Oman ... Are we going to stop the tourists from swimming there?” (NG-T2).

The government’s intention in solving this issue focuses on enhancing tourists’ awareness of the local community’s cultural values through installing more signs in WBK. However, the problem is not the number of signs posted in the area, but the failure to communicate clear messages and information regarding the culturally accepted dress code for swimming (see Subsection 6.4.3). Inappropriate swimming attire disrespects the local cultural and religious values, creating a culture clash between the local community and the international tourists.

In contrast to the previous respondent’s worries about market demand, an opposite view and possible solution were obtained from another government informant:

“If there are worries that a decision to stop any inappropriate attire will affect the tourist demand for WBK, consider that international tourists visiting the Grand Masjid in Muscat are obliged to cover themselves properly, yet there is still huge demand to visit this place ... The tourists are happy and are willing to cooperate by wearing the appropriate attire and they do not have any issues” (RG-T2).

This interviewee pointed to a successful experience in managing a tourist site to prove that it is possible to address the issue, and thereby showing an interest in solving this matter. However, as a religious place the Grand Masjid has its own compulsory regulations regarding required attire which is respected and applied by all tourists. Tourists are informed regarding the required attire prior to their arrival to the Masjid. WBK offers a different type of product as it is an open-aired swimming location that comes with its own unique environment and tourist

activities. Nevertheless, when managing tourist behaviour in WBK it is worth experimenting based on the Grand Masjid experience; especially since both destinations are associated with a conservative religion and cultural values.

6.5.9 Lack of Local Community Participation in Tourism Planning and Development

It is widely supported in the literature on tourism planning and development that for successful long-term tourism planning, it is vital to involve the local community (Howie, 2003; Jamal and Getz, 1995; Malek and Costa, 2017; Reid, 2003; Saarinen, 2010; Swarbrooke, 2002; Tosun, 2000). The participation of the local community, “as a principle stakeholder”, in shaping their locality’s future is essential, especially when developing the “good” of a community related to the comprehensive impacts of tourism (Howie, 2003:170). Malek and Costa (2017) believe that the participation of local residents in the planning process will contribute to the achievement of the best development strategies to protect local communities and improve their quality of life through tourism.

In WBK, two stages of planning for tourism development were highlighted by the local community interviewees. During the first stage, the MOT did not involve the local community in the development of tourism and facilities provision, resulting in the current problematic situation which is associated with the implementation of foreign rather than local expertise, as indicated by a local community member:

“The current strategies have been implemented without taking into consideration the local community’s views. The strategies that have been implemented are based on international experiences, hence being inapplicable to a conservative Muslim community. This has created a problematic situation for the local community” (LW-F1).

According to Kinseng *et al.* (2018), any tourism plans that marginalise the local people will lead to cultural obstacles. This reflects the assumed passive participation of the local community in tourism development, as Tosun (2000) found that several cases of local community participation in developing countries have been “manipulative participation or passive participation”, based on Pretty’s

(1995) typology. Especially during the early stages of tourism development in WBK, the limited experience of tourism planners, who had little idea about involving the local community in tourism planning, could be the main reason the local community was excluded from being involved; they only discovered the issue once a tourism product was developed as a natural swimming pool destination that was promoted internationally without the local community's input and the situation had worsened. Avoiding the conflict by having the knowledge to include local values before developing ideas and implementing the project would have resulted in a better situation. Considering that such tourism activity is taking place in the middle of a conservative Muslim community, the occurrence of such misunderstandings between Western tourists' behaviour and the local community's values ought to have been anticipated in advance of its implementation.

Tosun and Timothy (2001) assert that in order to achieve sustainable tourism development, it is essential to consider local conditions. This cannot be achieved by taking a national approach. Destination-specific planning is a vital requirement. Therefore, for the government to gain economic benefits from the tourism sector, it is important for them to consider local conditions and cultural specificities in tourism development plans.

In the new WBK development plan—and according to the consultancy report (the feasibility study for sustainable tourism development of WBK) (Ministry of Tourism, 2011)—local community consultation was undertaken to ensure their involvement in the new development plan for WBK. This consultation included a group of 12 individuals representing the local community and a group of 20 women from the local community via the Omani Woman's Association, as well as 20 tourists that consisted of 5 Omani nationals, 3 expatriates and 12 international tourists. The consultation report highlighted social, environmental and physical key issues and areas of concern raised by this varied group of stakeholders. Proposed projects for WBK's development were also presented and agreed to by the local community (Ministry of Tourism, 2011).

However, the MOT was criticised for the community involvement approach undertaken. Although it consulted the local community in the planning process,

not all community members were satisfied with the extent to which they were consulted or with the results of this consultation:

"If the Ministry of Tourism had utilised a large number of local community members, similar to what you are doing, you could convene meetings with the community and discuss the different topics at hand. If we were allowed to present our ideas for the development of the site and such ideas are taken into consideration during the implementation of the developmental projects, this would benefit all stakeholders involved, including the Ministry of Tourism, the tourists and the local community" (LW-F1).

Although a local community's involvement in the development processes of the tourism industry is widely recommended, this method has limits when it comes to representing various views among the local residents of a destination (Simpson, 2001; Tosun, 2000). The social structure of local communities is one of the challenges limiting the local community's participation in tourism development in developing countries (Tosun, 2000).

In WBK, the social structure of the community is based on tribal participation in the office of the Wali (local governor). For example, when the MOT was planning the new development plan for WBK, they consulted the local community through the participation of the tribal sheikhs (heads) of the tribes area in the Wali's office. However, although this process was undertaken in order to gain the local community's insights on tourism development, one of the issues highlighted by the local community is the poor representation of youth in WBK. Hence, this approach created dissatisfaction, as explained by a local community member:

"We do not want the ministry to only take into consideration the views from that Wali's meeting ...The Wali will simply invite the community's sheikhs, whose ages range from 40 to 90, and will only discuss their ideas from their personal perspective... It is essential to involve the community's youth in the development process, as the youth consider their generation's needs" (LW-F1).

In the Omani community tribal sheikhs and elders often represent the local community in government meetings which aim to obtain the local community's views on their plans for development. As these tribal sheikhs and elders are highly respected, this discourages younger generations from voicing their views; especially when they differ from those of the elders. In WBK, this situation results in the needs of the youth not being taken into consideration. One of the essential needs of the youth is to have access to job opportunities, so including their voice is essential to maintain sustainable tourism development.

In WBK, different perspectives based on age differences between elderly leaders and youth reflect different needs and priorities within the same community. Consequently, those who are in power impose their views, while the young generation's needs go unspoken, costing them vital economic opportunities in tourism. Nepal (2007) found a similar challenge in a case study of tourism development in Annapurna, Nepal, where due to elders dominating the decision-making the young were excluded; thus many young people have migrated to other places to join the army or live in cities. Also, he found that elders are reluctant to give the younger generation a leadership role in decision-making (Nepal, 2013).

The idea of involving the local community's views in the planning stage of tourism development is commendable, but this also creates conflicts related to different generations' needs. As a result, a gap has formed between the government's aim for the local community's involvement in considering their requirements, and the results of the consultation process. This is due to the specific interests of each group (for example, elders being more conservative towards tourism development, and youth being more interested in securing job opportunities for their futures). This creates conflict between different generations' desires which requires managing in order to meet their different needs, as is maintained by a local community member:

“[What is needed are] constructive proposals with clear aims to suitably enhance the development of WBK ... In this light, you can build a tourism destination in WBK based on the community's ideas. Once such an idea has been developed and implemented, no one can oppose them as the community has already agreed to them” (LW-F1).

The MOT has done a considerable job in involving the local community by including local representatives and the women's community in the planning and decision-making process for WBK's new tourism development plan (Ministry of Tourism, 2011). However, the heterogeneous community of WBK is creating conflicts between different local groups. Different perspectives among the youth and the elders stem from their priorities and desires for tourism development, with the result that not all needs are being considered; thus dissatisfying the misrepresented youth population. Therefore, to revive job opportunities for the young and a source of economic income for the local community from WBK's new development plan, the MOT plays a significant role in managing the local community's involvement process through better participatory methods. Methods that include women, youth and socially disadvantaged people, as well as the tribal leaders of WBK.

6.5.10 Needs for A Holistic Tourism Development Plan for WBK as A Tourist Destination Rather than A Tourist Site

Gunn and Var (2002:26) argue that for appropriate tourism planning and management, the "first step is to make a complete study of existing attractions and resources with future potential". The economic benefit of tourism growth is not optimised locally in WBK which offers a diverse range of tourist attractions (such as the Hawer water-pool site, the Badah water-pool site and Husn Al Awaynah Castle), yet only the Muqul water pool and cave site are promoted as tourist activities.

Interviews conducted with stakeholders in WBK revealed that there is a disparity between the local community's desire for a tourism development plan and the MOT's plans for development. The local community expressed that they would like the Muqul site to be improved, as well as the development of other tourist attractions in WBK. However, the Ministry's previous development was focused on the Muqul water pool, and the new development plan for WBK also concentrates on upgrading the Muqul water pool's facilities (rehabilitating the visitor center, moving tourist parking and providing a sensor system to protect the site from flooding) without considering other tourist sites in WBK.

The majority of the community members and local government informants strongly agree about the importance of developing a holistic development plan for WBK. One which highlights the fact that there are many tourist attractions that are not being developed or promoted for the international tourist market. For instance, one local government informant urged policymakers to include other tourist locations on WBK's tourism map:

“The Ministry of Tourism should pay attention to WBK in an integrated manner and not only to one site, as at the moment tourists are only attracted to the Muqul water pools, while other villages are not being promoted ... We have tourist attractions in villages such as Beda village, Hawer village, Al Adfan village and Ain Al Saroj village ... We also have the Awina Castle, a historical site that has been maintained by the government” (LG-WW).

When clarification was sought from the interviewees representing the local government, the main reason given for wanting to develop these locations was to strengthen the local community's economic benefits to be derived from tourism activities.

Another participant from the local community proposed a management strategy for WBK tourism to solve several issues of concern for the local community by introducing additional tourism attractions into the WBK area:

“Facilities and vital infrastructure have not been provided for different areas. For example, Hawer village in WBK is a beautiful attraction; however, it does not have a paved road ... We informed the Ministry of Tourism, but unfortunately, we have hardly received any response, and the distance is only around one kilometre ... Thus, some of the tourists park their cars and walk the distance ... Also, Hawer leads to other areas that attract mountain climbers, which might create another source of income ... It is important for the Ministry of Tourism to consider the road to Hawer, which will attract two-thirds of the tourists visiting the water pools in Muqul, because Hawer is a beautiful place with waterfalls, and it is cooler, it does not need shade, and tourists can stay overnight as

the destination is located far from the local community's residents" (LW- F2).

This point of view was supported by another local community member:

"At present, the tourists are only aware of Muqul, but we have forts and castles, spring waters and the Hawer waterfalls. The current situation and the uneven distribution of tourists is causing great congestion in Muqul during the weekends and holidays" (LW-F4).

The local interviewees propose alternatives to tourist overcrowding at the Muqul site by suggesting distributing them to other sites, so as to utilise the available historical and natural resources in WBK and create potential economic benefits. Some of the local interviewees suggest Hawer waterfalls specifically because it is far and hidden, so that international tourists' swimming behaviour is not viewed by local residents. This perspective is congruent with what Weaver (2005) highlights regarding the strategy of spreading out tourism-related activities in order to distribute tourism income and employment opportunities across regional, local and site levels. He presents Nepal and the Maldives' policies of opening new tourism places to disperse economic benefits while preventing congestion in specific tourist sites. Furthermore, the Maldives launched this strategy with the aim of reducing the contact between the local community and tourists to preserve residential areas (Weaver, 2005).

However, the MOT's perspective differs in its strategy for WBK's development, as stressed by one government representative:

"For WBK, and any unique tourist destination attracting a great deal of tourist demand, usually the ministry plans to develop the location, which includes all attractions in the area. However for WBK, due to the challenges of high demand and the urgent need to control the current situation in Muqul, the Minister directed to undertake the first phase of the development plan for this site as an urgent step to manage the site and to control emergent obstacles while considering other attractions'

development in the second phase of the WBK development plan” (NG-T4).

The same government interviewee also clarified another perspective which was considered by the MOT’s decision-makers for WBK:

“Due to the cultural sensitivity of tourism development in WBK, it was suggested that the development is to be studied carefully to avoid any potential for future problematic situations” (NG-T4).

The above perspectives demonstrate that different views are held by the local community and WBK’s official decision-makers. The local community supports developing tourism in other potential sites in WBK in an integrating manner. This strategy favours the provision of roads and infrastructure to other tourist locations; thus, solving several issues of concern to the local community, such as creating economic opportunities for locals, decreasing culture clashes (as suggested sites are far from residential areas) and reducing congestion. However, the government has different views and priorities. Their opinion is that the most urgent need involves the development of the Muqul site to resolve congestion and cultural issues, and to create economic benefits for locals through the provision of required facilities. The plan is to then develop WBK on a wider regional level in a second developmental phase that requires detailed studies and development plans (based on the tourism potential of the sites and their cultural sensitivities) before any action can be taken.

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that although there different views and priorities exist between the government and the local community, both views are of equal standing and importance. The local community’s desire is to gain economic benefits and to reduce congestion while decreasing culture clashes (through the development of new sites that are far from local resident areas), while the government is prioritising the most urgent needs in Muqul. However, in order to avoid further negative social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts of tourism development, it is necessary for the government to accelerate the implementation of its urgent plans for WBK, while the local community needs to be aware of the benefits and costs of tourism development in other WBK sites.

6.5.11 The Necessity for Site Management and Entrance Fees for WBK's Water Pools

Tourism development in any destination requires funds for the management and maintenance of natural attractions. One funding option is to charge visitors fees for entering sites (Cooper *et al.* , 2005; Reynisdottir *et al.*, 2008; Swarbrooke, 2002). Many of the respondents from the local community and tourism businesses who raised this issue agreed on the importance of introducing entrance fees:

“Last year 180,000 tourists visited WBK. If each of those tourists paid one OMR (£2), this will bring in 180,000 OMR (£360,000) ... That means that services and facilities would be provided by the tourists' fees ... WBK would not need government funding ... If a point of entry were set up and the tourists pay entrance fees, where the funds generated do not go to the government budget, but rather to WBK's budget under the Ministry of Tourism's management for development” (LW-F1).

Another community member supported this view:

“We suggest having entrance fees for WBK. This is what is implemented in most tourist attractions around the world, and here tourists are surprised to enter the site for free ... That is what we want from the government. This at least will help partially in the development of the location” (LW-F2).

Another local community informant agreed with the above views:

“The entrance fees will benefit the Ministry of Tourism and WBK” (LW-W4).

Although introducing entrance fees might affect the tour guides' businesses, they also agreed with this proposition, as one of them stated:

“WBK has to have entrance fees. This will help in preparing the site with the required and essential facilities ... But we do not suggest five OMR [£10]. We suggest half OMR [£1]. It also will help” (NBW-1).

Cooper *et al.* , (2005:372) suggest that the principle behind entrance fees is that the “polluter should pay”; from this standpoint, the price is not just economically oriented, but it is to compensate for the social and environmental costs incurred. However, this might concern policymakers that introducing entrance fees might lead to a decrease in tourist demand. Nonetheless, according to a case study conducted in Iceland by Reynisdottir *et al.* (2008), the introduction of minimal entrance fees for outdoor attractions, or increasing marginal fees, does not impact tourist demand dramatically. The most important issue when introducing entrance fees is ensuring that the quality of the tourism product meets the tourists’ expectations (*Ibid*).

In Oman, there are many successful cases where entrance fees are charged to manmade attractions, such as forts, castles and museums, as well as to natural attractions. The government’s experience in developing an ecotourism product in the natural turtle reserve in Ras Al Jenz is a model that could potentially be applied to WBK. The natural turtle reserve in the AL Sharqia South Governate has been developed as an ecotourism destination in a partnership between the MOT, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs and the private sector. It receives between 300 to 500 tourists daily during the summer season and holidays—in 2017 41,244 tourists in total (Wejhatt, 2018). According to Wejhatt (2018) the aim of developing this reserve is to manage an increasing tourist demand for the reserve and to provide guidance to tourists to make them follow the reserve’s rules; for example, to avoid any noise or lights that could impact the turtles. The special requirements of this reserve have been successfully communicated to tourists in an effective manner that could serve as a model for WBK. The reserve’s management included well-trained Omani tour guides managing tourist numbers based on a planned carrying capacity for the reserve. Furthermore, the site provided an information centre that educated tourists about turtle life and related environmental issues.

6.5.12 Conflict of Power Relations Within the Local Community

One of the major issues that has led to a loss of economic opportunities from tourism growth is the conflict between social groups who are in power in WBK. As one local community member argued:

“The Ministry of Tourism’s sole challenge in WBK is local community disputes” (LW-3).

People within opposing parties, and factions within society, compete with each other to further their agendas, resulting in barriers to the implementation of the decision makers’ plans (Hall, 2007). Hall (2007: 307) utilises the concept of power in relation to “the importance of non-decision making”. Lukes (1974, in Hall 2007:310) defines non-decision as “a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced ... Or destroyed in the implementation stage of the policy process”.

Tense relations between social groups in WBK are cited in this local community member’s argument:

“If you do not want a project to be implemented, find three people to oppose this project and it will stop” (LW-F1).

The lack of agreement between different groups in WBK has led to the canceling and controversy of several projects and events proposed by the MOT to economically benefit the local community. The Eid holiday event is an example as raised by a local community member:

“A while back, the Ministry of Tourism planned to organise an event during the Eid holiday and it designated a budget of 6,000 OMR (£10,000) for this event in WBK. A meeting was held in the Wali’s office to discuss the event, and some people opposed having it, but they were persuaded to change their perspective towards it. Eventually, all participants of the meeting agreed to hold this event. It included

presenting traditional folklore, selling local cuisine and presenting the community handicrafts in one day ... However, a group of people from the local community sent a letter to the Ministry of Tourism demanding that the event be cancelled, and as a result, it was cancelled. The group of locals raised the issue of Halal or Haram [Islamic terms used to identify what is prohibited or allowed]. So if the Ministry of Tourism tries to develop projects that the locals are continually opposing, how will tourism develop?” (LW-F1).

This issue of canceling events was raised with a MOT representative:

“To my knowledge, local community members did not agree ... And because in some Wilayats the demographic structure includes more than one tribe, maybe one of the tribes was not in favour of the event, while the other tribe was interested. As the Government is the owner of the event and there is no consensus between all tribes towards it, the government respects all views. Therefore, the Ministry cancelled the event due to the objections raised to avoid favouring one party over the other” (NG-T2).

However, the Ministry’s decision to cancel the event resulted in favouring one view over the other. The core aim was to create economic opportunities from tourism for the local community, but this opportunity was lost due to differences in people’s views. Thus, a member of the local community criticised the Ministry’s decision:

“The Ministry of Tourism should stick with its vision and development plans, as people’s satisfaction is an unreachable target ... If they are not happy, the Ministry should present solutions that consider their concerns without canceling the event, as nobody benefits from such cancellations as this event was planned a year in advance and people were expecting great benefits” (LW-F1).

Therefore, more than one member of the local community believed that the MOT should intervene strongly and impose its decisions:

“The Ministry of Tourism should have a strong say when such objections are made” (LW-F1).

Paradoxically, a similar event had been implemented in previous years in WBK with great benefits to the local community, as maintained by a national government representative:

“I implemented several events and activities in WBK, but they have been implemented outside the water-pool site, because the water-pool site during the Eid holiday become congested and does not accommodate more people and we did not want to create more traffic jams on a site that was already congested with tourists ... It was a successful event where the tourists enjoyed the water pools, then moved to the event, which was located at a distance and on the path leading to the water-pool site ... I know from a planning perspective and from my background about the limited carrying capacity of the carpark, taking into consideration the villagers, those who came back home from different regions to enjoy the holidays with their families” (NG-T2).

When the decision maker has a clear aim and considers the possible social and environmental issues, they are able to reach well-informed and well-planned decisions. Thus, local community members assert the importance of the MOT having the professional knowledge and skills to make tourism development decisions. This knowledge and an understanding of the differences between various groups can support the decision-making process:

“The Ministry’s expertise should evaluate the feasibility of such projects and decide based on that. If the Ministry continues to listen to everyone, it will not achieve anything” (LW-F1).

Dredge and Jamal (2015) maintain the importance of considering power relations when engaging in tourism development with different social groups. In the case of WBK, the influence of various social groups on tourism governance in the region resulted in some events and projects being canceled, which meant certain segments of society suffered from having to be subordinate to more experienced

or older members of the community. As a result, who wins and who loses is based on such power relations. The main problem resulting from this is a loss of economic opportunities for the local community, especially disadvantaged jobseekers.

This section has argued for involving the local community in decision-making processes. During the development of tourism their knowledge is essential to enable planning authorities to structure a beneficial tourism industry for the local community. Clearly, infighting within the community is a challenge affecting the development of the tourism industry in WBK, but it must be noted that no objections voiced by the local community are made without reason. For example, some were opposed to the development of a hotel near the water-pool site due to their concerns about the provision of alcohol, which contradicts their religious principles. Also, people opposed the planning and implementation of the Eid event due to congestion issues, which could disturb the local community's enjoyment of the Eid holiday. Above all, people have been opposing any development to the tourism industry because they see the negative cultural and environmental impacts of tourism without any positive economic return.

The final section of this chapter considers what actions can be taken where the capacity for tourism development is limited by natural and environmental constraints.

6.6 Natural and Environmental Constraints

For many communities residing in mountainous regions the capacity for tourism development is limited which, in turn, limits the potential of opportunities offered through tourism to the local community (Nyaupane and Chhetri, 2009). The limited availability of land constrains opportunities for investment in tourism projects and tourist amenities. Vulnerability to climate change and flooding is another aspect characterising mountainous destinations, limiting the potential benefits of tourism growth.

According to the Ministry of Tourism (2011), the land in WBK is dominated by agricultural and residential use: a series of villages and settlements are located in the vicinity of the pools, while agricultural land consists mainly of terraced plots

nearby the Wadi. In addition, flooding causes the Muqul access road to be washed away on a regular basis and terraced farms within the main Wadi channel are highly vulnerable to damage from high flash floods (Ministry of Tourism, 2011). Together, this limited land availability and vulnerability to flash floods illustrate the difficulties inherent to tourism development and its economic benefits in mountainous areas. In the following subsections, these issues are discussed in regard to natural and environmental constraints facing WBK.

6.6.1 Geographical Challenges

WBK is located in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, which is situated on the east coast of the Arabian Sea and links with the Al Hajjar Al Sharqi Mountains (Ministry of Tourism, 2011). The geographical location of WBK as a natural water-pool site is challenged by the limited availability of land that can be developed for tourism projects (Plate 6.3).

Plate 6.3: The Geographical Location of WBK



Source: Ministry of Tourism (2011)

One natural constraint that limits the local community's opportunities to benefit from tourism growth in WBK is its topographical challenge, as raised by a local community member:

“There is limited space for the growth of tourism projects. Most of the area in WBK is residential and is used for commercial purposes, so when local people search for locations to invest in tourism facilities, they do not find any available ... At the moment I have applied for an accommodation project, but it will be located on the top of the mountain due to space limitations” (LW-1).

One of the MOT's representatives confirmed this issue:

“WBK is a small-town destination consisting of residential and privately-owned farms ... Not much space is available for tourism projects. Therefore, the Ministry of Tourism's main focus is on the provision of site access and amenities” (NG-T3).

WBK's geographical characteristics as a mountainous water-based destination located in a valley, surrounded by agricultural lands and residential areas, are constraining locals' abilities to participate in the tourism industry and develop tourist facilities. In such niche tourist destinations, it is recommended that wise land-use policies be imposed to ensure sustainable tourism development, such as small-scale tourism projects to support the local economy (Nyaupane *et al.*, 2009). Ramsey and Malcolm (2018) suggest farm tourism as more appropriate accommodations in this context.

6.6.2 Lack of Infrastructural Capacity

In WBK, the majority of key respondents from the local community and local government agreed on the lack of the capacity of the road infrastructure leading to the water-pool site. There was also widespread agreement regarding the limited capacity of the carpark, which is creating a major problem for tourists and local residents (see Plate 6.4). This issue has resulted in the disturbance of the local community's daily activities, as highlighted by a local community member:

“In the tourist season, the area becomes congested and bottlenecked with tourist cars and those who bring them, as they stop behind the local residents’ cars or in prohibited places, blocking the entrances and exits of the villages, which makes it difficult for the local people’s movement and is highly problematic in emergency situations” (LW-2).

This issue, confirmed by a local government representative, raised concerns surrounding emergency situations which maintains the importance of solving this problem:

“Entering the carpark over the holidays and weekends is a difficult situation due to the inadequate capacity of the carpark, which does not accommodate tourist numbers, as the road itself is narrow. It is very difficult, especially if somebody is sick or in a critical condition ... The services need to be improved for the village, especially if the site is classified as a first-class tourist destination and is promoted internationally” (LG-WW).

A local resident, as a member of the management team for the water-pool site, described an extreme occurrence:

“There was a death due to a drowning accident in the water pools. After searching and finding him, we contacted the Civil Defense and the police, but when they arrived they could not enter the place due to the intensity of the traffic. Therefore, an emergency exit is essential to avoid such situations” (LW-2).

Another local community member explained their concern of overcrowding during national occasions and public holidays, which makes it difficult for locals to reach their villages:

“During Eid, tourist congestion increases as the road is narrow with limited parking capacity. Most of the villagers park in the suq [traditional markets] and every four or five people carpool to avoid this tourist congestion” (LW-F4).

Moreover, the disturbance to the local community's daily life leads them to seek the police's help to manage the site:

"We always turn to the police to ensure the movement [of traffic] does not stop; especially in the case that someone is sick or an emergency has occurred" (LW-2).

However, calling on police intervention to manage the site is a short-term solution. This critical situation requires a sustainable, long-term plan. The low capacity of the road infrastructure is related to the characteristics of WBK as a mountain destination that requires specific strategies and a management plan to control tourist activities.

Plate 6.4: Carpark in WBK



Source: Ministry of Tourism (2011)

When I questioned locals about whether they supported increasing tourist numbers, they agreed but on the condition that the required infrastructure be provided to support and meet the needs of the increasing demand for tourism,

and without disturbing the local community's daily life. As a local government representative maintained:

“Yes, we agree with increasing tourist numbers on the condition of increasing the road infrastructure or creating another alternative such as a tunnel shortcut, as at the moment there is only one entrance to WBK, and with a tunnel alternative there would be less traffic congestion” (GW-2).

Another local community interviewee proposed an alternative solution:

“It has been suggested that the tourist carpark be moved to the entrance of WBK so that the tourists will be transported by the local community to different tourist attractions in the area” (GW-8).

Other members of the local community felt that it was difficult to answer this question:

“I agree and disagree with increasing the number of tourists. I agree because tourism is benefiting the country's economy. However, I disagree because it does not benefit WBK's economy as the site is not Capable of receiving an increasing number of tourists” (LW-2).

Alternatively, from the MOT's perspective, a development plan was prepared to overcome the limited capacity of the road and the carpark, as maintained by a government interviewee:

“To decrease tourist pressure on the carpark and the road in WBK, we already have an agreement with the traffic police to move tourist parking to the new proposed visitor center [two kilometres away from the water-pool site] [...] And the tourists will be transported by small, eco-friendly shuttles to the water-pool site. This will create job opportunities for the local people while reducing congestion on the road, and the carpark will be for local use only” (NG-T4).

In essence, the government has exhibited great efforts to resolve the road and carpark congestion challenge, yet the fragility of WBK's ecology and its sensitivity to tourists' extreme demand remains a critical issue. The need to consider the characteristics of WBK as a nature-based tourist destination located in the mountains calls for special attention to be paid to the environment's carrying capacity and its vulnerability to intense pressure from tourism activities. Moreover, the uncontrollable and excessive demand of tourism for the water-pool site will in the near future mean that the site is converted into a mass tourist destination, which will impact negatively on the site itself and the tourists' experience without careful planning.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed five factors influencing host-guest relations in WBK. Socio-cultural aspects and religious values are the most important factors that are negatively influencing the local community's residents' relationships with international tourists in WBK. The international tourists' lack of adherence to the religious values and morality of the conservative Muslim local residents, particularly with regards to swimming attire, has created a clash of culture between the Omani hosts and the international guests. The negative perceived socio-cultural impacts of tourism have caused tourism development in WBK to reach the final stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, at which the local community has antagonistic feelings towards the international tourists. This has resulted in local community opposition to tourism development in the area.

Weak enforcement of the national regulations on respecting local cultural values and an absence of guidance and clear information about appropriate swimming attire are important factors that have contributed to the continued host-guest misunderstanding and cultural clashes. Also, the limited provision of essential tourist facilities such as changing rooms in a swimming destination has exacerbated the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, resulting in host community members avoiding the tourist destination to prevent the contradiction of their religious values. This has resulted in limited host-guest interaction, which also negatively influences the economic benefits brought to the local community by tourism development in WBK.

The limited socio-economic benefits of tourism in WBK, is another important factor that caused the local community to perceive tourism development negatively. The limited tourists' spending in the destination resulted in a negative host community attitude towards tourists and tourism industry in WBK. Furthermore, the limited availability of tourist accommodations in WBK has turned the destination into a short stop for tourists, resulting in limited tourist spending at the site. Lengthy government procedures for licencing and approving tourism projects discourages potential local investors from developing tourist accommodations in the area.

In addition, the planning and development aspect of tourism is a key obstacle that has contributed to the local community's irritation with tourism growth. The limited provision of tourist facilities such as parking in WBK has turned this destination into a congested place, with tourists' cars sharing the same parking as the residents' cars, resulting in stress on the social capacity and irritation as the host community's quality of life is affected.

Moreover, the lack of a holistic plan for tourism development has created another obstacle. The limited utilisation of available tourism resources has resulted in only the Muqul water-pool site being promoted internationally, while other historical and natural tourist attractions in WBK have not been incorporated into the marketing strategies of the tourism product. Consequently, the optimal potential economic benefits of the destination are not being realised, which limits the economic benefits generated for the local economy.

The lack of a collaborative approach to tourism development among the various stakeholders is another key issue that has led to tourism projects being delayed. Long delays due to differing opinions further discourage potential local people from investing in tourism. All of these obstacles hinder the local community's involvement in the development of tourism facilities, resulting in the local people receiving limited economic benefits from tourism development in their area.

The geological and environmental characteristics of WBK are another factor contributing to the local residents' irritation with the increasing demand of tourist. Geological constraints associated with mountainous destinations limit the

availability of land for tourist amenities, such as the provision of roads, parking and tourist accommodations in the Wadi. Furthermore, because WBK is a natural water-pool site, it is vulnerable to damage by flash floods. This means investments in the site are subject to natural hazards, further discouraging the local community from becoming economically involved in tourism growth.

Table 6.1: A Summary of the Perceived Positive and Negative Impacts, Planning and Regulation Issues Related to Tourism Development in WBK

Aspect	Description
Socio-cultural impacts	The negatively perceived socio-cultural impacts of the clash of culture between the conservative Muslim hosts' religious values and the international guests' swimming code of ethics and behaviour have resulted in the hosts resenting tourism, limited host-guest interaction and oppositional attitudes of the host community towards tourism projects' development. This situates WBK tourism and host-international guest relationships in the antagonistic stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model.
Socio-economic impacts	The negatively perceived socio-economic impact was found to be that tourists spend little money in WBK, which is a consequence of its lack of tourist facilities, making it a short-stop destination. As well, economic benefits are negatively affected by the host community's limited interaction with international guests and the hosts' avoidance of the water pool site to prevent contradicting their religious values.
Social and Environmental impacts	The negatively perceived social and environmental impacts were found to be overcrowding and congestion. This affects the host community residents' parking, which aggravates the local community's social capacity and quality of life, resulted in host-international guest

	relationships in WBK entering the Irritation stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex.
Planning and development	Poor planning of tourism development is a key obstacle standing in the way of the local community benefiting from tourism development in WBK. A key issue is the limited provision of tourist facilities, such as accommodations and restaurants, which limits the tourists' spending in the area. As well, the limited tourist facilities such as changing rooms have contributed to negative socio-cultural misunderstanding. Furthermore, the lack of coordination and cooperation between local businesses and government stakeholders has contributed to delays in the licencing and approval of tourism projects and limited tourism facilities in WBK.
Regulations challenges	Weak enforcement of national regulations on respecting the local residents' cultural value of <i>Al hayaa</i> and the absence of guidance and information about appropriate swimming attire are key obstacles that have contributed to the clash of culture between the conservative Muslim host residents and the international guests, resulting in antagonistic hosts attitudes towards tourists and tourism development in WBK.

Source: Author (2020)

Chapter 7: The Discussion about Bidiyah and WBK

7.1 Introduction

As has been revealed in the review of the relevant research (Harill, 2004; Nunkoo et al., 2013, Dolezal, 2015) and throughout this thesis, the subject of host-guest relations has long been a focus of academic attention. However, although Jafari and Scott (2004), Zmani-Farhani and Musa (2012), Al Balushi and Wise (2017) and others have conducted several studies into host communities' attitudes towards the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, little attention has been directed towards tourism's socio-cultural impacts and its influences on host-guest relationships in conservative Muslim communities. Hence, there is a need for a contemporaneous study of host-guest relationships, particularly in emergent conservative Islamic countries, to enhance the understanding of the effect of religiosity on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism.

The strength and contribution of this research is that it addresses the limitations in the extant research, focusing on the attitudes and perceptions of host residents on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in a conservative Muslim setting. This chapter discusses, compares and contrasts the main findings of the two case studies: Bidiyah and WBK. It also reports on the perceived socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism development on the host community and their influence on host-guest relationships. It further engages with the theoretical model of Doxey's (1975) Irridex, elaborating on host-guest relationships within the stages of tourism development in both destinations.

Significantly, an important outcome of this research was that while the cultural and religious differences did not appear to be an issue in Bidiyah as the host community perceived the socio-cultural impacts of tourism positively, the host community residents in WBK have extreme negative perceptions of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on their religious values. The type of tourism product in Bidiyah involves international tourists being attracted to the cultural aspect of the host community's Bedouin life and experiencing the desert while maintaining a respectful attitude towards the local culture; for the hosts' part, they

experience cultural pride. However, WBK's tourism product involves swimming in a public space, which has created a clash of culture between the international tourists' swimming behaviour and Muslim residents' religious values.

However, despite their relative satisfaction with the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, the local community residents in Bidiyah are extremely concerned about the damaging effects of tourism on the desert's fragile ecology and the quality of their social life. In WBK, tourism growth has been achieved at the cost of the local residents' religious values, their economic benefit, and the environmental capacity of the area, resulting in an antagonistic host-guest relationship. Hence, while the negative environmental impacts of tourism are perceived as threatening the sustainable socio-economic benefits of tourism in Bidiyah, the socio-cultural impact of tourism in WBK is excluding local residents from having positive interaction with international tourists, thus limiting their economic benefits of tourism development. In Table 7.1, Bidiyah and WBK are compared based on the perceived positive and negative impacts of tourism and their influence on host-guest relationships.

Table 7.1: A Comparison of the Perceived Positive and Negative Impacts of Tourism and their Influence on Host-Guest Relationships in Bidiyah and WBK

Tourism impacts	Bidiyah	WBK
Socio-cultural impacts	Positively perceived among the host community residents for being a source of cultural pride and income	Negatively perceived among the host community for being a source of culture clash and the disrespect of religious values
Socio-economic impacts	Positively perceived among the host community for being a source of youth employment, family entrepreneurship and tourism business opportunities	Negatively perceived among the host community for its limited economic benefits and lack of job opportunities for the local residents
Social and Environmental impacts	Negatively perceived among the host community for damage to the fragile ecology of the desert and causing overcrowding, littering and noise pollution, aggravating the	Negatively perceived among the host community for congestion and overcrowding in the carpark and aggravating the

	social capacity and quality of life for the local residents and their livestock	social capacity and quality of life of the local residents
Regulations	Absence of land use plans and regulations for tourism development and for controlling domestic tourists' activities and behaviours	Lack of enforcement of national regulations on international tourists' dressing and swimming behaviours
Stages of Doxey's (1975) Irridex	Apathy stage for host-international guests; Irritation for host-domestic guests	Antagonism stage for host-international guests

Source: Author (2020)

7.2 Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism on Bidiyah and WBK

This research revealed two opposing perceptions of the cultural impacts of tourism. While, there is a strong positive relationship between cultural resources and the local community benefiting from tourism in Bidiyah, the local community of WBK developed negative feelings surrounding cultural differences with international tourists, which resulted in irritated host-guest relations and limited interaction and economic benefits from tourism being obtained. In Bidiyah, the Arab Islamic culture was a reason for host-international guest's positively perceived relationships; yet in WBK, conservative Islamic religious values became a cause of misunderstanding and culture clash between hosts and their international guests.

The people of Bidiyah tended to hold a positive perception of the cultural differences between themselves and their international guests. The cultural differences between Western tourists and the Bedouin lifestyle are a core point of attraction for international tourists, and a source of pride and income for the local community. The host-guest interaction is perceived as a mean of learning from each other, where the international tourist is interested in learning about the Arab Islamic culture. This is situation, the local youth learn English, have a greater awareness and appreciation of the desert's natural resources and maintained the importance of time constancy from the international tourists. The

positively perceived cultural impacts of tourism in Bidiyah has placed tourism development and host-guest relationships at the apathy stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, which supports the development of tourism in Bidiyah for a longer term.

The positively perceived socio-cultural and socio-economic impacts of tourism in Bidiyah have led to a cultural exchange as some of the host community members have learned English from the Western tourists. The host community has also learned to appreciate the desert as a valuable natural resource and as a source of income. In addition, the youth have learned new respect for punctuality from the tourists; this reflects the beginning of the acculturation processes, which is a positive change, as not all changes are undesirable. However, cultural change needs to be controlled in order to be able to maintain the authenticity of the tourism product that is offered in Bidiyah.

Cultural clashes in WBK, however, reflect negatively perceived socio-cultural impact, cultural differences and misunderstandings around international tourists' swimming dress code and behaviour, such as tourists' enjoyment of swimming in revealing attire in a public space, in contrast with the values of a conservative Muslim community's residents. In WBK, the difference between the local community's religious values and international tourists' swimming behaviour is the central factor discouraging positive host-guest relationships. As a Muslim community residents of WBK, the issue of improper dress while swimming in public spaces is highly sensitive and unacceptable conduct, such as the *Awrah* covering for men and women is central to Islamic dress codes of conduct (Boulanouar, 2006).

Therefore, local community residents choose to avoid being present at the pool sites to avoid contradicting their religious values. This reaction of contact avoidance with international tourists reveals a strong feeling of anxiety among the local community concerning the survival of their religious values. As detailed in Doğan's (1989) framework, the retreatism stage of destination development occurs when dissatisfied residents choose to avoid tourist contact rather than engage in direct resistance. This also reflects Islamic guidance of "lowering the gaze" to

avoid having a prohibited look at an improperly covered body (Eniola, 2013), see section 2.7.4.

Hence, if locals are avoiding interaction with tourists to avoid embarrassing encounters, it will discourage them from investing in any tourism project that is based on serving and interacting with tourists. This consequently leads to a loss of economic opportunities on the local community's part. This concurs with MacCannell's (1992) concept of empty meeting grounds: hosts and guests meet in WBK without forming human relationships or bonds due to the clash of culture between the religious values of the Muslim hosts and the international guests' swimming dress code and behaviour. This limits the two parties' successful interaction, creates tension and contributes to the lack of local community participation in tourism development, preventing local residents from obtaining the economic benefits of tourism growth.

In addition, due to the above-mentioned socio-cultural aspects of tourism in WBK, the local community residents actively oppose any tourism development of any shape or kind to take place in WBK. As it has been reflected in chapter two and discussed in chapter six, this concurs with Dogan's (1989) framework that identifies this to be a resistance reaction towards tourists and tourism development, which again reflects negatively perceived socio-cultural impacts of tourism. However, an important outcome of the research in WBK is that the Muslim residents' avoidance and oppositional reactions to tourism development reflects their rejection of acculturation to the international tourists' swimming culture and behaviour, resulting in the host community's withdrawal from the tourism industry due to the negatively perceived socio-cultural impact, which in turn results in limited economic benefits being gained from tourism growth.

In the specific case of WBK, cultural conflict between the conservative Muslim hosts and Western guests' swimming dress code and behaviour, which contradicts the Islamic value of *Al Hayaa*, has resulted in WBK entering into the *irritation stage* at a relatively early phase of its tourism development. Namely, WBK's *euphoria/welcoming tourists' stage* has been quickly followed by the irritation of cultural values, resulting in the avoidance of tourists by the local community.

In WBK, locally collected information provides insights that Doxey's model did not justify host-international guest interactions when considering the cultural context of destinations. Feelings of annoyance arising from cultural clashes between hosts and international guests did not create hostile behaviour among the local community towards international guests, but led to negative cultural impacts in terms of prevalent tourist avoidance; particularly, around swimming areas where in conservative communities locals avoid interacting with international tourists in order to prevent clashes relating to opposing religious and cultural values.

Furthermore, inappropriate dress and lack of adherence to local codes and culture not only cause tension between international tourists and local residents in WBK, but are also extended to a clash of culture between the domestic guests and international guests. The difference between the cultural values of Omani and international tourists in WBK has resulted in Omanis avoiding visiting WBK during the international tourist season. The socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the domestic tourists reflected in the number of international tourists, which increased by 30% between 2016 and 2017, representing a share of 61% of the total tourist number in WBK; where's domestic tourist numbers increased only by 0.6%, and tourists from neighbouring Arab countries decreased by 10.8% (Ministry of Tourism, 2018), reflecting the existence of culture clashes between different market segments resulting in a decrease in the domestic and neighbouring Arab countries' tourism demand.

The socio-cultural issue was cited as one of the key issues to be considered by the government in the new Oman Tourism Strategy Report: "If tourism development does not respect and integrate local culture, Omani society could develop a critical attitude and rejection of tourism in general" (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). Therefore, this "unhealthy" host-guest relationship in WBK should alert tourism planners to the necessity for proper regulations and management plans that control cultural misunderstandings, while at the same time bridging the local community's access to the economic benefits of tourism development.

Thus, it is necessary to develop key relationships between people across cultural boundaries, adapting the protocols of hosting within a local cultural context. When it comes to the sensitivity to local cultural values, guests need to know what

is accepted and what is not within their hosts' culture, and they need to accept these norms within a local community context. Hence, including the local community residents in the early stages of tourism planning is important to ensure that any area of concern within the local community is taken into consideration. Furthermore, finding effective mechanisms for enforcing the national regulations and policies on different sensitive matters such as dressing ethics and behaviour in public places in Oman is crucial to ensure respect for local culture and values.

7.3 Socio-Economic Impacts of Tourism in Bidiyah and WBK

The driving motivator for developing tourism is its potential contribution to a tourist destination's economy (Telfer and Sharpley, 2016). In Bidiyah, tourism has proved to be an economic success for both the local community and the country's scale as an economic sector. Nine tourist desert camps are offered in the area; seven of which are owned by members of the local community who receive a great deal of local economic benefits. For instance, the tourism industry in Bidiyah has generated job opportunities for local youths who are employed as tour guides and tourist drivers. Tourism growth has facilitated the development of local family entrepreneurs in tourist related services. Tourism growth is also responsible for the introduction of winter house businesses. Thus, tourism is having a positive impact on the residents of the local community and is a source of income for the local entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the economic impact of tourism has reached the wider business community and has boosted the town's overall revenue earnings. For example, commercial shops, the petrol station and livestock owners have seen a rise in profits as a result of tourism. Therefore, there is a strong support for the tourism industry among the local community in Bidiyah. This concurs with Dolezal's (2015) findings regarding community-based tourism development in Northern Thailand, which reflect positively perceived tourism development among local residents.

According to Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, Bidiyah is in the *late apathy stage* of development which indicates a positive interaction between hosts and

international guests. Tourists are perceived as a source of income for local tourist camp owners and Bedouin family business entrepreneurs, as well as generating employment opportunities for local youths who work as tour guides and drivers.

Bidiyah has been a tourist destination for over 20 years. Even with the increasing demand of international tourists wishing to experience the desert and Bedouin culture, the local community continues to welcome international tourists with enthusiasm. This is due to the responsible behaviour demonstrated by international tourists towards the desert ecology and, as well as being a source of economic benefits for the host community. Furthermore, indirect economic impact to other businesses, such as the petrol station and commercial shops in the area, has also been positively received.

In contrast with Bidiyah, despite an increasing number of international tourists and their important provision for foreign exchange earnings to Oman's economy, as well as creating employment opportunities for Omani and non-Oman nationals, WBK has failed to achieve its socio-economic potential for the local community. Their objection to international tourists' dress codes and behaviour (which contradicts the local community's religious values) has caused tension between hosts and guests. This tension has resulted in the social economic estrangement of the local community and the tourism development process. Indeed, the local community holds negative attitudes towards the tourism industry and equally negative perceptions of its social and economic impacts—in relative terms, when compared to Bidiyah.

The situation in WBK clearly supports the findings of other studies such as Sanlioz-Ozgen and Gunlu (2016), which also fail to confirm the liner evolution of host attitudes that is indicated in Doxey's model. As previously mentioned, cultural conflict between the dress code of conservative Muslim hosts and Western guests' swimming behaviour, which contradicts the Islamic value of *Al Hayaa*, has resulted in WBK entering into the *irritation stage* at a relatively early phase of its tourism development. Namely, WBK's *euphoria/welcoming tourists' stage* has been quickly followed by the irritation of cultural values, resulting in the avoidance of tourists by the local community and their withdrawal from the tourism industry.

This has resulted in the exclusion of the host community from the socio-economic benefits of the tourism industry, due to an incomplete host-guest relationship and limited economic benefits for locals of the potential economic opportunities in WBK. This exclusion leads to negative attitudes and the local community is dissatisfied with the tourism economy and the majority perceive that tourism does not provide any economic benefits. This perception is held especially, by handicraft makers, women and the younger generation who are desperate for job opportunities. Culture clash has also encouraged host community opposition to the development of tourism facilities and events in WBK, which has resulted in a lack of tourist facilities and limited economic gains from tourism growth for local residents, as the tourists spend their money on plane tickets and tour guides prior their visits to WBK, or they spend it on accommodation, restaurants and cultural activities in Bidiyah after their visit. The host community residents' negative attitudes towards tourism could be overcome or avoided through more community consultation and involvement in tourism planning and development issues. Host residents' cultural and religious values should be considered as important factors when developing tourism, as well as local youth empowerment and training in tourism activities such as tour guiding, and opportunities need to be created for local youth to access tourism employment or entrepreneurship.

7.3.1 The Creation of Jobs for Local Youth

One of the challenges currently facing the Omani government is the increasing number of Omani jobseekers. This situation is critical, with an estimated 30,000 registered jobseekers every year (Al Balushi, 2018). The AL Sharqia North Governorate, where Bidiyah and WBK are located, is characterised by a high percentage of young people. Under 24 year olds represent 40% of the total population in the region (NCSI, 2018c). Thus, the availability of the future work force is substantial, which highlights the necessity for the creation of job opportunities for these youth; especially with the instability of oil prices: as historically, oil has always been one of the major sources of income for the Omani economy.

Tourism has been considered a labour intensive sector with the potential to generate employment opportunities (Sharpley and Ussi 2014). Thus, most national

strategies in Oman, such as Vision 2020 (Ministry of national economy, 2007) and Vision 2040 (SCP, 2016), identify tourism as being one of the recommended sectors for diversifying the economy and creating job opportunities for the growing Omani population.

Although the government implemented the Omanisation policy which aims to replace expatriate workers with trained Omani nationals, it failed to meet its targets in the tourism sector due to social and cultural concerns (AL Balushi and Wise, 2017). Working in tourism, especially in the hotel sector, is perceived to be an unwise career choice for Omani nationals (AL-Balushi, 2008). This is due to low salaries, an inconvenient working environment and the profession's association with negative images of serving alcohol, which contradicts Islamic values and Arab culture (AL-Balushi, 2008).

However, the tourism industry could be one of the most important employment generators to tackle the limited number of job opportunities currently available. The government is the main employer for the Omani people. It is the preference of Omani's to join the government sector where they are able to accrue better benefits. These include: lifelong employment, additional educational opportunities, wages, other benefits, working conditions, working hours and retirement benefits (SCP, 2018). As a result, from a total of 232,063 job opportunities offered in the government sector Omanis occupy around 84%, while expatriates represent 16% (NCSI, 2018c). In contrast, from a total of 2,034,377 jobs in the private sector, Omanis represent 12% of the total number of employees, while the expatriates represent 88% (NCSI, 2018c). The private sector is the largest employment sector in Oman, but it heavily relies on imported labour. This clearly highlights the high level of revenue being lost from the Omani economy.

Given Oman's unemployment rate of 1.7% (NCSI, 2018c) Omani workers represent only 19% of the total number of workers. Alternatively, imported labour covers 81% of total workers in the country. Hence, for every 10 workers, 8 of them are expatriates and only 2 are Omani nationals. The AL Sharqia North Governorate is no different to the rest of Oman. From a population of 279,223, only 25,406 of the workforce are Omanis, while the total number of expatriate employees is

98,255 (NCSI, 2018c). This demonstrates a challenge facing the government; most available jobs are taken by expatriates, rather than local nationals.

A good example of the challenge of this employment structure appears in the hospitality sector in Oman, where job opportunities are considered unattractive for Omanis; therefore, most of these jobs go to expatriates rather than locals. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (2019b) 30.9% of job opportunities in the hotel industry were occupied by Omani people. This shows that although the tourism industry in Oman is growing in terms of tourist numbers and Oman's share in the GDP, a large amount of the revenue generated from tourism is being leaked out of the country's economy due to expatriates dominating employment in the tourism market.

However, as a cultural tourism destination, Bidiyah has succeeded in attracting local residents to the tourism industry as tour guides, drivers, family entrepreneurs and owners of desert camp accommodations, while the tourism industry in WBK has failed to attract local residents due to tourism's negative socio-cultural impacts. Therefore, more has to be done to deliver suitable job opportunities for Omani youth that meet their economic desires, cultural requirements and religious values, as it will be discussed in the following section.

7.3.2 Oman's National Tourism Strategy

The new Omani national tourism strategy proposed creating 535,000 job opportunities in the Omani tourism industry by 2040 (MOT, 2016). The strategy aims for 70% of these opportunities to be occupied by Omanis by 2040. This goal is to be achieved through creating awareness among local communities about the economic benefits of the tourism industry, improving education and training in tourism, narrowing the focus on hospitality and tourism, and improving curriculums; as well as refining coordination among related government authorities that are responsible for tourism education, training and supported regulations (Ministry of Tourism , 2016). An additional target is to create and support 70 small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism industry. However, the issue is not about creating job opportunities it is about how to link Omanis with these opportunities. In order to maximise tourism contribution to local

people there is a need to create linkage between the tourism industry and the existing local economy (Bello *et al.*, 2017). Bello *et al.*, (2017:314) suggests developing programmes that support communities, with a focus on “non-capital intensive” enterprises that promote local handcrafts and local foods. Beaumont and Dredge (2010) also suggest that effective governance in tourism consists of clear roles and responsibilities for participants, within clear networks. Lacher and Nepal (2010), in their study on the development of ecotourism and cultural tourism in Northern Thailand, note that development of strategies on the village level can increase the local economic benefits of tourism. They also find that four major sources of tourism revenue for local communities are restaurants, souvenir shops, guiding services, accommodation and entrance fees.

In Oman, one of the results of the tourism national strategy revealed a new scheme of supported training which was initiated by the MOT in coordination with Tanfeedh. The focus of this scheme is to train Omani nationals in tour guiding, linked with a job opportunity in tour companies (Al Hatali, 2019). Developing tour guiding training schemes is a useful strategy to attract Omani youths into the tourism industry; particularly, as this job type meets their interests and desires in the tourism industry. The successfulness of this scheme was approved recently by the MOT’s announcement of the licencing of 362 Omani youth positions for tour guiding training incorporating several international languages (see Section 3.7.4).

Yet, one condition of this training is that job opportunities are linked to tour operator companies that are mainly located in Muscat (the capital). Not all local jobseekers are interested in working for companies in Muscat. Some prefer to work independently in their region as maintained by local interviewees in Bidiyah and WBK. To ensure local youths are interested in these jobs, the researcher suggests the introduction of integrated policies and supported regulations to govern job opportunities that represent the cultural aspect of the local community. If training was offered without the condition of working for tour guiding companies, Omani tour guides would have a greater interest to provide services for tourists in their regions, such as Bidiyah and WBK. This training approach could also provide a more authentic experience for tourists. For example, capitalising on specialised Omani tour guides in cultural tourism, environmental tourism and adventure tourism

could create job opportunities for the local community, as well as providing a more authentic experience for tourists.

Moreover, on a village level Omani cuisine and restaurants are an important aspect of any Omani cultural tourism product and could create another economic opportunity for local communities in tourism destinations. Thus, there is a need for capacity building in this segment of local community businesses to ensure the quality of tourism products and to encourage more local community participation in the tourism industry.

7.3.3 The Handcraft Industry

The makers of handcrafted products in Bidiyah and WBK almost share the same challenges relating to their limited access to the tourism industry. In Bidiyah, it is mainly the producers of woollen products and key holders, which are made by females within the community, who now have the opportunity to gain some economic benefit from tourism. Yet, this research has established that whilst some producers of handcraft items have been excluded from the economic benefits of the tourism industry in Bidiyah, in WBK most handcraft producers have been precluded from obtaining any socio-economic benefits from tourism. This is due to the lack of coordination between them and the tour guides to link them to the tourism business. Additionally, the lack of coordination between tourism planners and handcraft producers has severely reduced producers' potential to gain any economic benefit from this industry in Bidiyah. This supports the findings of Fabeil et al. (2015) and Dhamija (1981) that the marketing challenge facing handicraft makers discourages them from selling their crafts.

The government has implemented initiatives to introduce handcraft training centres in Bidiyah and WBK; however, the production of these centres is not incorporated within the tourism product of these areas. These findings highlight that proper planning and coordination between government officials, tour guides and handcraft producers is urgently needed; this change could greatly improve locals' economic benefits from tourism growth in both areas. In addition, a collaborative approach among related stakeholders is needed to support the

development, marketing and advertising of handcrafted products in both tourist destinations.

7.4 The Environmental and Social Impacts of Tourism in Bidiyah and WBK

This research has revealed that there is a negative association with the environmental impacts of tourism and the local community's social capacity and quality of life in Bidiyah and WBK. This association is threatening the positive host-guest relationships and the sustainability of tourism to boost the economy and generate income for the local community.

In Bidiyah, the local community expressed negative feelings towards domestic tourist for a number of reasons: disrespectful behaviour, overcrowding, littering and their destruction of the desert environment. Domestic tourists' noisy driving is a major source of noise pollution. This irritates locals and their camel as the noise exceeds the limits of the community's social capacity and quality of life. It has also had a negative impact on the tourism industry overall, as domestic tourists annoyed international tourists seeking peace and quiet at tourist desert camps. This finding concurs with a number of researchers who have found significant relationships between the perceived negative social and environmental impacts of tourism and irritated host-guest relationships (Mbaiwa, 2003; Mbaiwa, 2005; Mahgoub, 2014; Eshraghi and Ahmed, 2010; Ap and Crompton, 1998; Uysal et al., 2012; Butler, 2019; Nolan and Seraphin, 2019).

Domestic tourists' irresponsible driving, overcrowding, littering and noisy driving has moved the welcoming euphoria host-domestic tourist stage of tourism development on Doxey's (1975) Irridex model to the irritation of the fragile ecology of the desert and the local community's social capacity and quality of life (see Subsections 5.5.1 to 5.5.3). This has resulted in considerable feelings of resentment from the host towards domestic guests within a short period. It is less than 10 years since domestic tourists started to explore Bidiyah. This emphasises that host-domestic guest relationships may not follow the linear direction suggested by Doxey's model.

The case of Bidiyah also shows that tourist's activities and behaviours could classify the same destination at the same time in two different stages of host-guest relationship in Doxey's (1975) Irridex. Whilst Bidiyah's host-international guest relationship reflects the *late apathy stage* of tourism development, the host-domestic guest relationship shows the *irritation stage* of the destination. Therefore, the concern is that if both international and domestic tourist numbers continue to grow without any management and control plan on tourists' activities and behaviour, host-guest relationships will move into the antagonism stage of Doxey's model, leading to the final stage of the destination's lifecycle, where tourists spoil what they come to visit in Bidiyah, causing them to search for other destinations. Hence, an extension to Doxey's model that considers the environmental capacity of the destination area and its local community's social capacity is essential for planners to maintain longer-term positive host-guest relationships and sustainable tourism development.

This capacity is dictated by which behaviours and activities are accepted by the social, cultural and environmental context of the destination and its host community, rather than how many tourists can be attracted. It also needs consider what types of products could be offered that suits tourists' characteristics, desires and interests in activities that are available in the destinations without damaging the destinations natural resources.

In 2018, the estimated number of international tourists reached a total of 48,000 visitors (SCP, 2018) spread throughout the six months of the tourism season. This is relatively moderate compared to the population of Bidiyah which is 40,817. This highlights the need for tourism planners to balance the increasing demand of tourism with an area's available tourism facilities, the fragile ecology of the desert, and the social capacity of the local community. This research has identified that the environmental and social capacity of the distention are important factors for considering current perception among the local community in Bidiyah towards domestic tourists and tourism development.

To overcome environmental challenges in Bidiyah, responsible policymakers have proposed a Management and Land Use Plan that includes zoning law to prevent any further deterioration to the desert's ecology, and to preserve the well-being

of the local community and their livestock. However, lengthy procedures and protocols for approving and implementing new policies are delaying the urgent need for these policies to be enforced. The problem of environmental deterioration should be addressed immediately as it is a precious and finite resource. Despite this, it has taken over three years for any new laws to be approved. The desert ecology continues to be harmed by tourists' activities, so it is extremely urgent to formulate a policy and implement the Management and Land Use Plan that ensures the responsible use of the desert's resources so as to maintain the balance with tourism development and sustain the economic benefits of the local community.

In addition, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs introduced a national initiative in October 2018 to promote sustainable lifestyles to deal with the environmental issues (Mohammad, 2019). To maintain the community's environmental awareness decreasing plastic overuse and introducing alternatives is one initiative, as well as, promoting a culture of recycling and support for the creative recycling business. This is another governmental initiative that could decrease the negative impacts of plastic overuse in Bidiyah, but it also requires unurgent implementation to be enforced in the country.

Similarly, in WBK the local community has developed a strong negative view of tourists. This is the result of congestion and overcrowding in car parks during the tourist season, and particularly during national and social occasions and events. This has irritated the local community and exceeded the limits of their quality of life. When considering the natural location of WBK, it is blessed and cursed by geography. Being a valley in a mountainous terrain makes road and parking opportunities extremely limited. Access through the area has been difficult, but in the past few decades a new road has eased the local community's life. However, tourist numbers are continuously increasing. Between 2009 and 2017 tourist numbers have tripled from 59,368, to 182,648 (Ministry of Tourism, 2018), these tourists are concentrated over six months of every year in the winter season. Such numbers are relatively high in comparison to the population of WBK which is 11,654 (NCSI, 2016a). This phenomenon has made WBK become overcrowded at certain times of the year where the local community has to cope with high levels of tourist demand.

According to Doxey's (1975) Irridex, WBK is in the late *Irritation stage* of development which indicates a negative interaction between hosts and international guests. WBK is heavily promoted as an international tourist destination for its natural swimming pools; thus, it has experienced rapid growth in international tourist numbers. This growth of international tourists perceived as a cause of overcrowding that exceeded the limits of the local community's cultural values, social capacity and quality of life. This irritation of the local community towards tourism development in WBK, has created a situation where the local community oppose any kind of tourism projects or events to be developed.

To meet the increasing demand of tourism and to overcome the social and environmental challenges of tourism development in WBK, the MOT has proposed a new tourism project that will upgrade tourist facilities at the water-pool site. It provides new restaurants, changing rooms, a private setting for families, extended car parking for the local community, and an information centre to deliver required facilities and information to tourists. It is planned that tourist car parking will be moved to the information centre site; this will be accompanied by a management plan for tourists' transport to the water-pool site. This project studies originally started in 2007, but due to the financial crisis in 2008 the project studies was stopped. However, project studies and a master plan were recently finished, and the MOT is in contact with the relevant organisations in the private sector to begin the process of implementation.

However, besides the social and environmental dimensions of tourism, the core challenge in WBK is the contextual threshold of the host's religious values, cultural identity and their interaction with international tourists. International tourists dress code when swimming, such as wearing revealing clothing and inappropriate behaviour, is highly offensive and goes against the local community's firm religious values. If this issue is not tackled properly by implemented regulations and a management plan, the local community will be held back from interacting with tourists and actively participating in the tourism industry. On the contrary, this will guarantee that the avoidance reaction international tourists currently receive from the local community will continue.

These negative attitudes towards tourists and tourism development can be overcome through more participative governance in WBK. Environmental issues like congestion and the parking capacity of the area should be considered essential factors alongside controlling and managing tourist numbers. Developing other tourists attractions in WBK, such as Awina Castle and Hawer water pools, could help the distribution of the tourists in several sites and decrease the congestion on Muqal water pools. Ways should be found for cultural and religious values to be present in tourist sites to maintain respect and positive host-guest relationships.

7.5 Regulation and Management Policies for Tourism in Bidiyah and WBK

To ensure local community relations to domestic tourists do not remain at the *irritation stage*, a process of environmental boundary maintenance is required in Bidiyah. Environmental regulations and management policies that consider the fragile ecology of the desert and the local community's quality of life are crucial. This would allow a move to the *apathy stage* and consequently help Bidiyah to develop their tourism industry sustainably. Martin and Uysal (1990) suggest establishing policies during the foundation stages of tourism development, including zoning regulations and environmental protection laws.

To develop a more useful tool for tourism planners and policymakers, it is suggested that Doxey's (1975) Irridex model should integrate environmental, social and cultural regulations at the euphoria stage (stage 1), or even before the tourist destination's development. This process could effectively manage tourist behaviours, control their activities and, ultimately, prevent them from exceeding the limits of the destination's environmental and social capacity. This, in turn, would lead to a lengthier, positive host-guest relationship. Planners could also dictate the host-guest relationship during the destination's development stage and provide adjustment regulations during the *irritation stage* (stage 3) of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model. This could minimise damage caused to the local community residents and enable them to avoid moving to antagonism (stage 4).

For WBK, Doğan's (1989) theoretical framework to explain the host-guest relationship based on intercultural contact suggested, one useful strategy is a well-defined *boundary* between international tourists and the local culture which is based on a destination's threshold and a local community's cultural traditions.

In WBK, core tourism threshold that hinders positive host-international guest relationships in tourism development is the cultural clash between international tourists' dress codes (swimming behaviour) which is offensive to the local community residents' religious values. Therefore, to effectively nullify the negative impact of tourism and these tourist behaviours, well-defined boundaries, enforced regulations and information pertaining to the local community's culture and religious values should be introduced in the euphoria stage (stage 1) of the destination development and be presented to international tourists prior to their arrival and during their visit.

This communicated information should clearly state what is acceptable in terms of swimming behaviour and dress code, and also implement deterrent regulations on site. These acceptable codes of practice should be put in place at the beginning of a tourist destination's development stage to avoid conflict and minimise the negative impacts of tourism on the local community. In addition, employing a strategy that capitalises on the Islamic tourism product as a unique selling factor could be a useful alternative for WBK tourism and should be promoted for responsible tourists who are seeking an authentic experience of Arab Islamic culture. It could also be promoted for regional neighbouring countries that share similar religious values and culture.

7.6 An Extended Doxey's (1975) Irridex Model

The finding of this study reports a divergence from Doxey's (1975) Irridex model in two ways. In Bidiyah, the host attitudes may occupy two stages at the same time, and indeed host-domestic guest relationship may not follow the linear path suggested by Doxey. Similarly, in the case of WBK, the host community-international guests did not follow a linear path. In addition, the divergence of having two stages of host-guest relationships occur simultaneously in Bidiyah was identified by applying Doxey's to different market segments: the international and

domestic tourists. Each different market segment is consuming different type of tourism products at the destination, and their relations with the locals are at different stages on Doxey's life cycle.

The type of international tourists who travel on organised trips to experience the desert nature and the Bedouin lifestyle stays in desert tourist camps and does not appear to be negatively affecting the fragile ecology of the desert environment or the host community's social capacity. This puts the host-international guests' relationships at the apathy stage of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, indicating positive host-guest relationships. Domestic tourists arrive in Bidiyah in large groups with noisy cars and camp in the desert, putting high pressure on the desert ecology and the host community's social capacity due to overcrowding, littering and noise pollution, resulting in the annoyance stage of host-domestic guest relationships being reached. This raises an important question: can two different tourism segment markets continue in the long term? If the situation is left to continue, there is a strong possibility that both tourism markets will enter into decline. Hence, there is a need for planners to consider appropriate management for tourists' activities and tourism growth that helps maintain positive host-guest relationship in both segment markets and supports sustainable tourism development.

In WBK, host community residents have moved from the overall welcome stage on Doxey's (1975) Irridex model to a form of resistance and even antagonism. Some host community residents has reacted more strongly than others, with some of them opposing the development of tourism projects in WBK. This non-linear path taken by host-international guest relationships can also be illustrated by applying Dogan's (1989) strategies for socio-cultural impacts as the host residents of WBK maintain a retreatism strategy by avoid the water pool site out of concern for their religious values and cultural traditions, which results in excluding host community residents from the socio-cultural and socio-economic benefits of tourism.

The findings also reveal that the contextual dimension of both destinations plays a fundamental role in shaping host-guest relations. This research has identified that the central tendencies of host-guest relations in Bidiyah and WBK are

important contextual thresholds of both respective destinations. Exceeding the limits of the environmental capacity of the desert's fragile ecology, the local community's social capacity and quality of life was the tourism development threshold in Bidiyah. In WBK, the local community's religious values, the community's social capacity and quality of life, as well as the environmental capacity of the area was their tourism development threshold.

Thus, implementing policies with well-defined boundaries of regulations, relevant information and management plans, detailing the host's cultural values, environmental and social capacity, is essential to maintain positive host-guest interactions and promote a long-term tourism development. In Bidiyah, for example, the introduction of a land use and management plan for *Remal Al Sharqia* during the *euphoria* stage of tourism development could have helped prevent the negative environmental impacts of tourist activities and behaviours on the desert fragile ecology and the local residents' social capacity and quality of life. Now, as the tourism industry is developed and host-domestic guest relationships have reached the irritation stage, there is an urgent need to implement the proposed land use and management plan that designates specific areas for different tourist activities in order to avoid any interaction with the host community and their livestock areas. As well, a follow-up evaluation of tourism's impacts during the apathy stage of tourism development is important to control and manage the tourists' activities.

In WBK, participative governance for appropriate tourism products and accepted tourists behaviours and dress code ethics that do not contradict the conservative host community's religious values and cultural traditions during the *euphoria* stage of tourism development could have helped prevent the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the host residents. Now, as the tourism industry is developed and the host-international guest relationships have reached the antagonistic stage, there is an urgent need for implemented regulations and site management to control tourists' swimming dress code and behaviours. As well, a follow-up evaluation of tourism's impacts during the apathy stage of tourism development is important to control and manage the tourists' activities.

Thus, Doxey's (1975) Irridex model for host-guest relationships needs to be extended to help planners maintain the development of sustainable tourism and positive host-guest relationships. Table 7.2 shows *host-guest relationship stages* based on Doxey's index of irritation Model, in a comparison with the two case studies (Bidiyah and WBK), and proposed Doxey's extended model of tourism development. From this research, it is suggested that cultural, environmental, social and local community quality of life and lifestyle boundaries should be introduced, defined and integrated during the foundation stages of tourism development (the *euphoria stage* of Doxey's (1975) Irridex) through a participative governance. The contextual dimension of destinations could also be maintained at the *irritation stage* of Doxey's (1975) Irridex for longer term tourism development. This extended model of Doxey's (1975) Irridex could help develop a more positive and lengthier interrelationship between hosts and their guests; especially in countries which are new to tourism development.

Table 7.2: Comparison of Doxey's (1975) Irridex, Bidiyah and WBK Tourism Development and Suggested Extended Doxey's (1975) Irridex

The Model Stages	Doxey's (1975) Irridex	Bidiyah	WBK	New Suggestion: Extended Doxey's (1975) Irridex
Euphoria	The local community are euphoric about the potential economic benefits of tourism	Random designations of lands for tourists' desert camps projects due to absence of land use and management planning for tourism projects and tourist activities.	Development of tourists' swimming facilities without host community residents' participation and involvement.	Defining destinations' environmental constraints and host communities' social and cultural capacity through participative governance. In Bidiyah, for example, the introduction and implementation of a land use and management plan for tourism projects and tourists' activities through consultation with the host community. In WBK, the introduction of site management and clear interpretations of the host community's cultural and religious values, with the provision of essential facilities that meet tourists' needs and help avoid

				culture clashes through the host community's participation. This calls for the introduction of protocols and procedures of Omani panel law enforcement on dress code ethics in public places.
Apathy	Tourism growth and economic benefit is taking place in the tourist destination	Government designated lands for tourism projects resulted in 8 tourists desert camps developed by the local community. Positively perceived socio-economic impacts with international tourists as they are seen as a source of employment for the local youth as tour guides and tourist drivers and a source of income for family entrepreneurs and the wider business community in Bidiyah, and tourism is seen as a means of cultural pride, which is reflected in the state of host-International guest relationships for Bidiyah in 2019	Marketing is the main focus of government plans; the tourists demand in 2009 was 59.368 thousand. However, the increasing demand of tourists resulted in Irritation of the local community by international tourists' behaviour, and feelings of resentment towards tourists' inappropriate swimming dress codes, result in a clash of culture and opposition to tourism projects developments	Host-Guest relation monitoring, follow-up and evaluation of tourism impacts on host community socio- cultural capacity, destinations environmental resources, and socio-economic gains, such as employment and local income

Irritation	The host is irritated by increasing demand without being able to cope with this increase	Domestic tourists are seen as sources of irritation, being detrimental to the desert ecology, the local community's social capacity and quality of life due to overcrowding, littering and noise pollution. Host-domestic guest relations are at the irritation stage for Bidiyah in 2019.	The local community residents avoid international tourists to prevent contradictions of cultural and religious value, resulting in the host community withdrawing from tourism development and being excluded from the tourism industry's socio-economic and socio-cultural benefits. The host-international guest relations are in the late irritation stage for WBK (as of 2019), and the tourist numbers tripled to 187.107 in 2018.	Maintaining boundary of implemented regulations considers the host's cultural values, social capacity and quality of life, and maintains the environmental constrains of the area through land use and management plans for tourism projects and tourists' activities.
Antagonism	The local community doesn't welcome tourists any more	NA	NA	Modifying tourism development goals and plans and Continuing research on effective measures for positive long-term host-guest relationships

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has compared Bidiyah and WBK's host-guest relationship and the issues of socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the conservative Muslim community and its influence on their attitudes towards tourists and tourism development. It also identified the socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism on the host community and its influence on host-guest relationships on the stages of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model. To manage tourism development in these two destinations it is vital to understand the host-guest relationship based on a contextual threshold, of local residents' communities', their cultural and religious values, environmental sensitivities, social and quality of life capacities.

Doxey suggested the Irridex model to evaluate host-guest interrelationships and levels of irritation in tourist destinations. Such a model can be a useful tool for planners when developing tourist destinations. However, this model does not necessarily provide an indication of the level of irritation in the host-guest relationship based on the contextual framework of destinations. Thus, this research adds the contextual dimension of the destinations to Doxey's (1975) Irridex model in analysing host-guest interaction and relationships in Bidiyah and WBK.

Doğan (1989) proposed strategies for adjustment of the host-guest relationship based on the social and cultural framework of host destinations. These strategies involve boundary maintenance of the regulations that organise host-guest relationships. Such strategies could be integrated to Doxey's *stage of euphoria* and at the early stages of tourism development. They also, could be used when host-guest interaction reaches the *irritation stage* to improve interactions (e.g. a shift towards a lower stage of irritation) and extend a destination's sustainability over the long term.

Implemented regulations that prevent any possible negative impacts on local cultural and religious values is important to develop a positive host-guest relationship in destinations. As well as implemented environmental protection laws, a zoning strategy to detail the uses that can be made of lands, such as the desert in Bidiyah, are important to prevent any possible deterioration to the

destinations. Including these regulations within tourism development is important to support a longer tourist lifecycle in each destination.

This research reveals that the contextual aspects of Bidiyah and WBK is the main factor which, potentially, impacts the host-guest relationship. In Bidiyah, the fragile ecology of the desert and the social capacity of the local community are the main irritating issues; in WBK, however, the religious values of the local community clash with international tourists swimming dress code. These contextual aspects indicate that the Arab Islamic culture that attracts international tourists and contributes towards building a positive host-guest relationship in Bidiyah, creates negative feeling among the local community in WBK which contributes towards the formation of a negative relationship with international tourists.

Additionally, none of the hosts resident mentioned any negative cultural impacts of tourism in Bidiyah, cultural tourism is based on the learning experience between host and guest, is a means of pride and a source of income in the local community, and is a source of knowledge and experience about the Arab Islamic culture for tourists. However, tourism in the natural water pools in WBK leads to cultural clashes between the conservative Muslim residents and the irresponsible international tourists' swimming dress and behaviour. This has been a source of opposition to tourism development from the local community, causing a loss of economic opportunity for local residents.

These examples of contextual aspects indicate that the type of tourism product is an important dimension of the host-guest relationship for Bidiyah and WBK. If the tourism product is applicable for the host's values and perceptions it creates a positive relation, otherwise it does not. Moreover, the foundation of these host-guest relations is responsible for the type of tourist activities that occur in an area and tourist behaviour: it could enhance a local community's socio-cultural aspects and quality of life, or it could estrange them.

Saarinen (2010) asserted from his study, about the role of community-based tourism in Namibia, that sufficient knowledge about tourism and its impacts prevent uncontrolled problematic situations arising from tourism activities. In this

case, a government needs to review and prioritise specific types of tourism product development and promotional plans that do not contradict with important values of the local community. If the government is willing to proceed with sustainable tourism development in WBK, for example, necessary regulations and associated codes of conducts for local and International tourists would be warranted. Implementing a tourism policy in this culturally sensitive destination might not be an easy task; especially for a government who is new to developing the tourism industry and lacks experience in dealing with such problematic situations. Hall (2013) advocates that policy failure can be a learning process in which information becomes knowledge that provides better understanding and opportunity for policy change. Therefore, trial and error might be a useful model to improve the required policies and regulations to overcome this challenge in WBK.

But any adjustment and revision should be made in a timely manner considering the development stages of tourism destinations. For example, to improve cultural sensitivity one approach is to reformulate the tourists' message that has been misinterpreted in brochures and in signs at WBK's water-pool site with a clear message for tourists about what swimming dress codes are acceptable. Moreover, providing the site with alternative acceptable swimming attire might help tourists to adhere to the area's cultural rules. Finally, policing the site with official regulators is an important step to ensure the required management rules are sustained in WBK.

Recalling Beaumont and Dredge's (2010) words that an important dimension for effective governance in tourism consists of clear networks, in order to have successful governance an essential tool to achieve tourism that is beneficial to all partners consists of effective coordination and cooperation between the government, the local community and tourism businesses. Therefore, before any plans for development are actioned, it is vital to begin with community capacity building, local community empowerment and support, while opening communication channels between planners, the local community and tourism businesses (Reid, 2003); namely, a partnership effort among tourism stakeholders (Ndlovu, 2014), as previously mentioned under important planning aspects in Chapter 6 (Subsection 6.5.7).

Following on from the above discussion chapters (Chapters 5 to 7), Chapter 8 will draw conclusions from the research.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Implications

8.1 Introduction

Addressing the socio-cultural impact of tourism and its influence on host-guest relationships is primarily a planning issue. Good planning implies having a strategic vision with clear goals and developing implementations that consider the cultural context, the social well-being of the local community and the environmental sensitivity of destinations (Becken and Simmons, 2019). Good planning also engages all tourism stakeholders to govern an area, putting the local community's economic benefits, cultural values, social well-being and environmental concerns, alongside tourists' needs at the centre of tourism development. Thus, the role of planning should be to balance the needs of the local community, tourists and tourism businesses (Joppe, 2019).

This concluding chapter summarises the research findings that have been drawn from the field work. It is divided into three sections. The first section presents the key findings and how they address the research questions. The second section focuses on the implications of these findings for policymakers, the local community, tourism businesses and tourists. Then looks at the contribution this study makes to theoretical knowledge as well as practice. Finally, the third section provides suggestions for further research.

8.2 Key Findings

The aim of this study was to assess the socio-cultural impact of tourism and its influence on host-guest relationship in conservative Muslim community of the Sultanate of Oman; specifically looking at the case of Bidiyah and WBK. In order to meet this aim, five objectives were set (see Section 1.3) which led to the main findings below.

Objective 1 was approached in Chapter 2, by reviewing the literature on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the local community. Despite the economic benefits tourism can bring (on a national level and governmental level), tourism offers

limited meaningful employment and economic benefits to local communities; in fact, tourism can have adverse impacts on the destination and the host community. Thus, to promote successful host-guest relationships, long-term sustainable tourism development, local community participation and to allow local people to enjoy the benefits of tourism growth, it is essential to ensure cooperation and coordination among all related parties, particularly the government, the local community and tourism businesses (Wilson *et al.*, 2001).

A study of the literature revealed that Doxey's model (1975) can help planners to understand host-guest interrelationships and stages of tourism development in destinations. However, these models have limitations because the first is unable to consider the socio-cultural context of a destination's host community; while the second does not help tourism planners understand how to prevent the occurrence of negative host attitudes towards tourism. Based on the literature review, the researcher suggests that residents' morality and religious values play a major role in shaping their attitudes towards tourists and the tourism industry. Therefore, for successful long-term host-guest relations, there is a need for integrated tourism development policies and management plans that consider their socio-cultural sensitivities when developing tourism in their areas. This research fills the gap in the literature on considering the Arab Islamic socio-cultural context when developing tourism, through investigating the socio-cultural issues related to tourism development in conservative Muslim destinations. In doing so this research found that modesty and maintaining the cultural value of *AL Haaya* is considered one of the important Islamic values that could shape host-guest relationships in tourists' destinations.

Objective 2 focused on Omani government efforts to develop tourism. In Chapter 3, this research found that Oman, as an oil-producing country that has chosen tourism as an alternative to diversify its economy, faces a paradoxical challenge: it wishes to develop desert tourism while preserving the natural resources of the desert, and while considering the social carrying capacity of the local community. It also faces the challenge of developing water-based tourism while respecting the cultural constraints of the local residents. This research revealed that the Omani government has expanded a lot of efforts to develop tourism sector in Oman which resulted in an increase in the inbound number of tourists from 1.9 million in 2013

to 3.3 million in 2017 (NCSI, 2018c), that in turn resulted in an increase in the tourism share of the country's GDP from 2.1% in 2013 to 2.6% in 2018. Yet despite these governmental efforts to increase the economic benefits of tourism in its national economy, tourism has perceived negatively for its socio-cultural and environmental impacts has resulted in negative host attitudes towards tourists and tourism development (Ministry of Tourism, 2016c). This research found that socio-cultural issues, environmental constrains, lack of implemented regulations and limited land use and management plans are the main issues influencing host-guest relationships and the sustainable development of tourism in Oman. In 2016 a new national tourism strategy was introduced to utilise the country's wealth of tourism resources. A long-term development plan was introduced for the period 2016-2040 to meet the government aims to increase the tourism industry's contribution to its national economy and to create job opportunities for Omanis youth.

Objective 3 was approached by comparing two Omani communities' experiences. Through the case studies of Bidiyah and WBK, in Chapters 5 and 6, this study shows that the positive interaction and host-guest relationships can be affected when the Muslim value of *Al Haya* in the host community clashes with the dress code and behaviour of international tourists (particularly when it comes to swimming activities as in the case of WBK). This has resulted in members of the host community avoiding the tourism industry and international tourists, which has prevented the interaction and positive host-guest relationships which resulted in limited local community residents gaining economic benefits associated with tourism growth.

This culture clash and the local community's avoidance of tourists and the tourism industry, which have resulted in limited benefits to the WBK local economy and the loss of job opportunities, are due to two major factors: 1) issues related to a lack of host community involvement in planning for tourism development in WBK; and, 2) the absence of implemented regulations focused on the ethics and the behaviour of tourists.

Existing models of tourist destination development that are based on host-guest relationships do not easily address these challenges. Such models have limited generalisability and applicability to the case of WBK and Bidiyah; they do not

address how religious values shape the host-guest relationship, and so are required to include the socio-cultural dimension to examine the issue of a conservative Muslim community's interaction with international tourists participating in natural water-based tourist destinations like WBK. Also, in relation to distinctive characteristics of the desert's destination constraining the host-guest relationship in Bidiyah, the region's desert fragile ecology and its Bedouin people's lifestyle need to be taken under consideration in Bidiyah to analyse local people's interaction with domestic tourists' irresponsible driving and noisy behaviours.

To understand and evaluate a tourist destination's development, models such as Doxey (1975), which analyse stages of host attitudes within tourist destinations based on host-guest relationships, required to include the contextual dimensions of destinations' cultural and religious values, as well as the environmental constraints of destinations with fragile ecologies. Therefore, models such as Doxey's (1975) Irridex should be expanded to include contextual dimensions of destinations' cultural aspects. Also, Doxey's (1975) Irridex model for tourist destinations required to consider different tourism demand markets behaviours; for example, tourist behaviours and their simultaneous relationships with the local community. This situation can be seen in Bidiyah, where international tourists' environmentally responsible behaviour creates a positive relationship with the local community, maintaining the *apathy stage* in Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, while locals are in the *irritation stage* with domestic tourists due to their irresponsible behaviour towards the desert environment and the local community's social capacity.

Objective 4 in this study contributes to knowledge about host-guest relationships in conservative Muslim community to inform the planning and future development of tourism to consider the contextual threshold of tourist destinations (see Chapter 8, Section 8.4). It corroborates the findings of limited studies on other tourist destinations with conservative Muslim settings, which also identify the profound limitations of countries with limited experience in tourism development. This study further adds to this body of work by identifying challenges threatening the sustainable development of tourism and the long-term positive host-guest relationships associated with desert attractions in the Arabian Gulf.

Objective 5 will be addressed in the next section of this chapter as it requires in-depth consideration for each stakeholder. In the interim, the core contribution of this study is the proposed extension to Doxey's (1975) Irridex model (Objective 6) for tourist destinations; in particular, for countries with limited experience in tourism planning and development. The extended version of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model includes setting visions and clear goals for a tourist destination's development, with the implementation of regulations and management plans that consider the destination's characteristics and host-guest relationship threshold at the beginning stages of tourism development. This is followed by evaluating and monitoring tourism's impacts on the destination, as well as the long-term state of host-guest relations to be able to make adjustments when required. Hence, regulations and management plans can be maintained based on the impact they are seen to be having (through evaluations and monitoring) on local cultural values and the environment.

8.3 Research Implications

Two categories of implications emerge from this research and will be discussed in turn. First, the implications for tourism key stakeholders to maintain sustainable tourism development. This concerns policymakers, the local community, tourism businesses and tourists. The second implication is for our knowledge about factors determining host-guest relationships in destinations that have a fragile ecology and conservative religious values, as in Bidiyah and WBK.

8.3.1 Implications for Tourism Stakeholders

To develop a healthier relationship between the tourism industry and the local community, one which is sensitive to Bidiyah and WBK's contextual characteristics while remaining economically viable, several actions should be conducted by tourism stakeholders. These stakeholders include policymakers, the local community, tourism businesses and tourists.

- **A. Policymakers**

To develop a positive host-guest interrelationship, the government could introduce the following course of action:

1. Set goals for tourism development plans.
2. Introduce codes of ethics for tourists.
3. Implement the enforcement of regulations at tourist destinations.
4. Provide tourist facilities where needed.
5. Improve the interpretation and management of tourist destinations.

A.1 Setting Goals for Tourism Development Plans in Bidiyah and WBK

Setting plans for tourism development based on clear goals and objectives is an essential step prior to developing tourism (Cooper *et al.* , 2005; Getz, 1986). Getz (1986) suggests that sufficient research enables planners to set comprehensive goals and objectives for tourism development in a particular destination. Therefore, this research finding can advise that research should consider the contextual characteristics of the destination, its needs and constrains, to enable the monitoring and evaluation of tourism's impact and improve host-guest relations. Thus, the involvement of local communities in this advance research is vital, as they can voice their requirements, needs and reservations, so that limits can be set accordingly to control the growth of tourism.

In Benmecheri and Veirier (2007) guide for decision makers for the sustainable development of tourism in deserts, they suggest three types of tourism: ecotourism, solidarity tourism and fair tourism. These types of tourism offer slightly different tourism products but are based on similar ethical principles. In Bidiyah, ecotourism is the most suitable type as environmental issues are their main concern, while the other types named by the Benmecheri and Veirier (2007) are specifically concerned with financial support and the equal rights of producers. According to Benmecheri and Veirier (2007) the ecotourism type of tourism product is based on the following guidelines:

- It contributes to protecting the natural and cultural resources.
- It involves the local community in the planning, development and management of tourism to ensure the enhancement of their well-being.

- It offers the tourists interpretations of the natural and cultural resources of the place.
- It suits individuals better than organised travel in fragile areas.
- It encourages ethical commitment to local communities and contributes to destinations conservation and local community development.

These guidelines could provide planners with general guidance for Bidiyah and WBK. However, to maintain suitable tourism development in both places, these guidelines could be developed based on the unique attributes of cultural values, environmental sensitivities and the local community's needs in each destination. Therefore, Bidiyah could utilise the example of the Sonoran Desert in Arizona and their experience in conservation planning and the protection of their desert ecosystem, all of which is managed by the local community with the slogan, "To protect the past is to preserve the future" (Benmecheri and Veirier, 2007:6). This conservation plan should also incorporate the social capacity of the Bedouin people residing in Bidiyah and their livestock's well-being. This management and conservation plan might be more effective if it is implemented in coordination with the related government authorities and in cooperation with other tourism stakeholders.

In WBK, the essential aim of tourism development plans should be to ensure respect for the religious values of the local Muslim community residing in the area. The tourism product in WBK should be developed, as Bramwell and Sharman (2000) reflect, based on the local community's needs rather than tourism's demands. A tourism product could be offered that provides an authentic experience for the international tourist seeking to know more about Arab and Islamic culture. The development of this type of tourism product would help maintain a positive host-guest relationship; it will also help with the sustainability of their cultural values and the local community's acceptance of and engagement with the tourism industry, when local community members' religious values are respected and this main barrier to participating in tourism is removed.

The key point this research wish to emphasise is the involvement of the local community in setting limits for acceptable changes in their locality. This should include the local people's social and cultural carrying capacity and environmental

constraints to maintain their quality of life and well-being in the area. In WBK, for example, besides controlling issues of cultural values, the management of congested car parking is needed. A management plan that considers tourism demand could help prevent overcrowding and reduce its negative environmental impacts, as well as enhancing the quality of tourists' experiences (Bramwell and Sharman, 2002).

A.2 Introduce Codes of Ethics for Tourists

According to Telfer and Sharpley (2016), codes of ethics are a useful tool to influence and promote responsible tourist behaviour. Therefore, it is vital to produce implemented codes of ethics for appropriate tourist behaviours in Bidiyah and WBK. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation published a *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* that aims to promote and develop responsible tourism (UNWTO, 1999). These comprehensive guidelines could help tourism destinations develop their own specific codes of ethics to minimise the negative impacts of tourism on their environment and local communities' cultural values, and to maximise the potential economic benefits of the tourism industry for the local community. Wight (1993) maintains that all stakeholders in the tourism industry share the responsibility for implementing codes of ethics; therefore, all a tourist destinations stakeholders, such as the government, the local community, tourism businesses and tourists, should all be consulted in developing codes of ethics and their guidelines to ensure that they are appropriate for the industry.

For Bidiyah and WBK, codes of ethics should consider each destinations' specific characteristics and requirements to support the effective management of tourism development. For example, a code of ethics and guidelines that is focused on the desert's environmental sensitivity and the local community's social capacity is required for Bidiyah, while codes of ethics that emphasise the local community's cultural and religious values are essential for WBK.

A good example of a code of ethics can be found on the UK government's website, which provides advice to UK nationals travelling to Oman. It is a clear message about the importance of adhering to local community dress codes and religious values to avoid culture clashes:

Local laws reflect the fact that Oman is an Islamic country. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times and be aware of your actions to ensure that they don't offend, especially during the holy month of Ramadan or if you intend to visit religious areas. ... Women should dress modestly in public areas ... Clothes should cover the tops of the arms and legs, and underwear should not be visible. You should not wear swimming attire in public areas, except on tourist beaches or at swimming pools. Women wearing shorts, or tight-fitting clothes, are likely to attract attention (GOV.UK, n.d.).

This example of a code of ethics could be applied for international tourists visiting WBK, and other water or pool-based destinations in Oman, such as Wadi Shab, Misfat Al Abryeen and Wadi al Arbyeen.

Another example of a code of ethics that could be utilised for WBK is that developed by O'Grady (1980, in Telfer and Sharpley, 2016:255), which calls for tourists to consider the expected social, cultural and economic impacts of tourism (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1: A Code of Ethics for Tourists

<p>1. Travel with humility and with a genuine desire to learn more about the people of your host country.</p> <p>2. Be sensitively aware of the feelings of other people, thus preventing what might be offensive behaviour on your part. This applies very much to photography.</p> <p>3. Instead of looking for ‘beach paradise’, discover the enrichment of seeing a different way of life, through other eyes.</p>	<p>4. Acquaint yourself with local customs and people will be happy to help you.</p> <p>5. Instead of the Western practice of knowledge, cultivate the habit of asking questions.</p> <p>6. If you really want your experience to be ‘a home away from home’, it is foolish to waste money on traveling.</p>
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Source: O’Grady (1980, in Telfer and Sharpley, 2016:255)

These codes of ethics could help to increase tourists’ awareness and knowledge of destinations. However, to ensure the implementation of these codes and to avoid negative impacts, legally binding regulations are required.

A.3 Implement the Enforcement of Regulations in the Destinations

According to Dye (1976, in Dredge and Jamal, 2015:286), “Policy is anything governments choose to do or not to do”. Because tourism has impacts on the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of destinations, there is a significant need for policies and regulations to control these impacts. This study has shown that either a lack of regulations and management guidelines exist governing tourism development and tourists’ activities, as in the case of Bidiyah, or that regulations exist but are not enforced, as in WBK. In both cases, the growth of tourism and tourists’ behaviour negatively affect the sustainable development of destinations.

In Bidiyah, the government should accelerate the approval process of development guidelines and management plan for tourist activities. Bureaucratic procedures that delay approving such regulations are contributing to negative impacts on Bidiyah's fragile desert ecology, threatening the long-term sustainability of tourism as a source of income for the local community. In addition, it is vital that these regulations and management plans should be implemented in coordination and cooperation with all related government authorities, such as the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, the Ministry of Regional Municipality and Water Resources, the Royal Oman Police and the Wali's office (the local government). Moreover, the workability of regulations should be enhanced by decreasing bureaucratic procedures associated with enforcing the rules which is necessary to ensure regulations are effectively implemented.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, the MOT can tap into the desert's environmental natural resources, the local community's lifestyle and their camel husbandry, to safeguard the desert landscape as a natural reserve. Based on the above, tourist scale, activities, behaviours and entering time into protected areas can be managed.

Furthermore, in WBK the absence of a mechanism to implement the Omani penal code regarding the ethics of dressing appropriately in public places has contributed to ineffective management of international tourists' behaviour. Article 294 punishes anyone who appears in public places in a way that undermines public modesty or contradicts the local community's religious and cultural values, and this includes any inappropriate dressing or behaviour that harms public morality, or any practices related to values and decency (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2018). Therefore, a clear coordination between the MOT and the Royal Oman Police on the role of each authority is essential to ensure proper monitoring and management of tourists' behaviour to ensure that it respects the conservative local community's religious values.

A.4 Provide Tourist Facilities Where Needed

This study has shown that the lack of tourist facilities provided in both destinations has contributed to the ineffective management of tourism growth. In Bidiyah, limited affordable accommodation for domestic tourists has created an environmental dilemma, with domestic tourists randomly camping in the desert, resulting in the spread of the waste and litter. Thus, the provision of camping locations is central to managing these domestic tourists' behaviour. It is vital for the government to designate a camping area with the essential facilities to manage tourists' activities in a controlled, monitored area. Regulations should prohibit camping outside of the designated locations. This camping area could be managed and operated by the local community, which would create a source of income as an alternative for the lost economic opportunity of renting *Ezbas* to tourists.

In WBK, the limited provision of essential facilities for tourists has contributed to a clash of culture between hosts and guests; therefore, the government could proceed with the provision of essential tourist facilities, such as changing rooms. It is also suggested that local community participation and investment be encouraged in necessary tourist facilities such as accommodation, restaurants and coffee shops; this would require the government to ease investment procedures and decrease the lengthy bureaucracy involved in licencing tourism projects in cooperation with the related authorities.

To encourage Omani families and tourists from the neighbouring Arab Gulf countries to visit WBK during the international tourist season in winter, it is suggested that shaded and private places be provided to ensure families' privacy, in keeping with cultural requirements. In addition, it is recommended that a children's playground be provided for families visiting with kids; this would encourage longer stays and greater expenditure.

A.5 Improve Destination Interpretation and Management

Destination interpretation is a useful tool to communicate important messages and to manage tourists' activities and behaviour. Therefore, communicating clear

messages on accepted behaviours and activities is suggested to create tourist awareness. For example, in Bidiyah an information centre at the entrance of the most popular route to the desert would be a useful tool to provide the necessary information about appropriate driving routes in the sand dunes to prevent environmental damage. Also, messages could be communicated about acceptable driving behaviour and the right time of day for passing villages to enter the desert to avoid disturbing the local community and livestock with noisy cars. Furthermore, the information centre could be a useful location to present and sell the local community's handcrafts. It could also be an important stop that provides food, beverage and toilet facilities for tourists before they enter the sand dunes.

In the case of WBK, it is necessary to raise international tourists' awareness of the social and cultural dimensions of the local community by communicating a clear message about accepted swimming attire; this communication is significant to facilitate international tourists' understanding and to avoid culture clashes. Moreover, having rescue rangers or MOT employees on site could be a useful measure to successfully implement the country's dress codes at public water sites.

However, the destination's marketing should also do its part in communicating the country's policy (Telfer and Sharpley, 2016). Therefore, in parallel to presenting this message at tourist sites, it is essential to include the same information in the country's tourism brochures and advertisements to ensure international tourists' awareness of this information prior arrival. It is also suggested that the required swimming attire be available to buy on site.

In order to provide balanced regulations that consider the local community's religious values without compromising tourists' desires and experiences, it would be useful to investigate the extent to which international tourists are willing to cooperate on this issue.

A.6 Funding Mechanisms

Some countries have introduced specific policies to finance the infrastructure and the daily management of tourist destinations, such as Botswana's eco-tax to support conservation (Becken and Simmons 2019:246). Introducing entrance fees

and paid parking could also control overcrowding and the management of tourism during peak tourist season (Bramwell and Sharman, 2002). Thus, entrance fees in WBK could be utilised as a tool to manage tourist over-demand, particularly regarding parking. Introducing entrance fees in WBK is a way of reorienting tourism in a sustainable way to ensure a well-managed, healthier growth of tourism. This type of financial support could be introduced for WBK in the form of development and conservation entrance fees. The direct investment of this fee could help to develop WBK's required facilities and the operating costs of management plans for environmental issues.

A.7 Local Community Capacity Building in Tourism

It is necessary to create an enabling environment for local community participation and engagement in tourism development through policy and planning, as well as by supporting local community initiatives in tourism. Utilising the experience of the Irish Republic over the past 40 years, Baum and Szivas (2008) suggest that the government has a role to play providing the required education and the skills necessary to develop tourism. Thus, to encourage local community participation in tourism in WBK, it is suggested that essential knowledge and skills be provided for local community members, especially youth. Providing local youth with the required skills and knowledge could encourage their involvement in the development of tourism products, such as acting as tour guides, developing traditional restaurants and engaging in farm tourism, all of which will create job opportunities and generate local income from the tourism industry.

However, Moscardo (2008) argues that enhancing the local community's participation and engagement in tourism businesses not only requires education and training, but maintaining the local community's leadership in tourism activities is also essential in the face of large tourism companies operating in an area. Local community's leadership in the tourism business can be seen in their participation and control over the tourism system in Bidiyah. However, the case of WBK is different due to local opposition towards tourism and tourists' activities from some local people as well as from some of social groups; thus, challenging local business leadership. Therefore, the government could take the lead and support start-ups and businesses in WBK. There is also a need for government

support for local entrepreneurs to access tourism markets by helping them participate in international tourism exhibitions, and connecting local businesses with mega-tour operator companies in Oman. Furthermore, the government could provide long-term soft loans to help fund local start-up projects in tourism, such as traditional restaurants and farm accommodation, in WBK.

- **B. The Local Community**

Interaction between the local community and tourists is the core of any tourism product; it makes the tourism experience more appealing and valuable (Yu and Lee, 2014). Therefore, youths, women, handcraft makers and farm owners in WBK's local community could capitalise on their indigenous knowledge and cultural resources to enrich tourists' experiences and gain economic benefits.

Local youth could offer guided tours to other springs within WBK, such as Ain Hamouda, Ain Al Sarooj, Ain Dawwa and the Hawer waterfalls. They could show tourists the ancient terraces, with their traditional irrigation system and diverse crops of red bananas, palm trees, limes and mangos. However, these tour guide programs would require cautious development and management plans that consider the local community's privacy, which might be disturbed by the increasing demands of tourists.

Local women could utilise their cooking skills by offering a diverse selection of traditional Omani bread and dishes to tourists; the surrounding farmland could supply small restaurants that provide authentic traditional cuisine experiences, and coffee shops offering Omani coffee and dates or soft drinks, tea and cold water.

Local handicraft makers could seize an opportunity to reap the economic benefits of tourism by exhibiting their weaving products at WBK's tourist sites. It would be especially useful if tour guide operators cooperated by including sites for these products in tour programs.

Local farm owners could convert some spaces into tourist accommodation, adding an enriching experience for tourists by allowing them to stay overnight on farms.

This would lead to tourists extending their stays in the wadis, which would generate greater economic benefits for the local economy. Of course, this would require considering the availability of spaces and farms' capacities to provide accommodation.

- **C. Tourism Businesses**

Tour organisers play an essential role to enhance tourists' awareness and knowledge of accepted behaviour in destinations. Telfer and Sharpley (2016:258) suggest that tour operators act as "gate keepers" of the tourism industry, and that they have an opportunity to convey positive messages about how tourists can contribute to the destination's environmental, social and cultural well-being. Tour operators can do this by adopting a responsible code of ethics and providing tourists with indispensable information on destinations' respective practices (Telfer and Sharpley, 2016). Therefore, tour operators could increase tourists' awareness about the fragile ecology of Bidiyah, as well as informing international tourists about respecting religious values and acceptable swimming attire in WBK.

Tour operators also play a central role in creating economic benefits for the local community by incorporating locally sourced products and skills into their tourism programs. In this way, they could promote local community handicrafts in both Bidiyah and WBK. They could also utilise local youth's knowledge and background by employing them as tour guides in WBK, as is the case in Bidiyah, where these youths are mainly responsible for acting as guides and transporting tourists. In addition, tour operators could include local cuisine in their itineraries, which would enrich tourists' experiences by exposing them to indigenous traditions.

- **D. Tourists**

Subsections A to C focused on what actions each group of stakeholders could take; alternatively, Subsection D addresses actions to be taken by the Omani government and tourism planners, to encourage responsible tourism. Attracting responsible tourists who are interested in experiencing authentic culture is fundamental when developing tourism in destinations with conservative communities and culture. These tourists help to maintain the sustainability of the

local community's cultural values while also developing the tourism industry. Thus, marketing with the aim of attracting international tourists who are interested in experiencing authentic Omani culture could be a useful approach. The MOT responsible for advertising tourism in Oman should specifically choose to advertise in media aimed at demographics who might be interested in a culturally enriching holiday, such as conservatively-minded groups that are less likely to breach local customs.

Linked to this point, is a need to control and manage the tourists' problematic behaviour, such as dressing inappropriately in WBK and causing environmental damage and disturbing the local community in Bidiyah. As mentioned in Subsection A.5, transparent and clearly explained controls are needed to address the problems that are created by tourists' activities. Related to this, the government might promote responsible dressing and respecting the local community's religious values by marketing a trip to WBK or Bidiyah as an authentic experience of Arab and Islamic culture, potentially showcasing best practice for these local communities. Moreover, targeting specific market segments could avoid misunderstandings and culture clashes. In WBK, attracting domestic tourists and regional tourists from Arab and Islamic countries would reduce cultural problems that the local community encounters with foreign tourists. Thus, increasing demand among this market could be an alternative to the international market.

However, Bidiyah presents an opposite situation, as international tourists generally engage in responsible behaviour towards the environmental resources of the desert, while domestic tourists' activities have contributed to damaging the fragile ecology of the desert and disturbing the local community's well-being. Nonetheless, according to Telfer and Sharpley (2016), domestic tourists are increasingly important to the tourism industry economy as their demand grows; therefore, considering their requirements and needs is essential for the growth of potential economic benefits associated with tourism. Thus, effective planning and the provision of facilities for domestic tourists, such as camping facilities in Bidiyah to manage activities and behaviour, is key for the success of the tourism industry in Bidiyah.

8.3.2 This Research's Implications and Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge and Practice

In attempting to understand the relationship between local communities and tourists in Bidiyah and WBK, a theoretical framework was suggested by Doxey (1975). Doxey's (1975) Irridex maps out the relationship between host and guest in four stages: from a local community's positive perceptions with very little tourist demand, followed by apathy, then irritation and finally antagonism due to excessive demand and overtourism. Doxey's (1975) Irridex is a useful framework to reflect on destinations' lifecycles based on the relationship between hosts and guests; it provides information for tourism planners, who should consider local attitudes towards tourism and tourists when they are analysing tourism development.

However, this study has found that Doxey's (1975) Irridex model lacks generalisability for host-guest relations in the context of countries with Islamic values and culture. The host-guest relationship in Doxey's (1975) Irridex model suggests that a destination's lifecycle, reflecting the tourists' relationship with the local community, is mainly based on the growing number of tourists and the capacity of a destination's infrastructure and facilities to absorb them (Butler, 2019; Mowforth and Munt, 1998). However, considering the case studies of Bidiyah and WBK this study shows that the host-guest relationship in Bidiyah and WBK has different determinants other than the factors considered by Doxey's model.

- A. Bidiyah

The case of Bidiyah report a divergence from Doxey's (1975) Irridex model in two ways: (1) host attitudes may not follow a linear direction, and (2) they may occupy two stages at the same time, as the destination facing the *apathy* and *irritation stages* of the host-guest relationship at the same time with different tourism markets. The different characteristics of international and domestic tourists in Bidiyah means that these two groups are simultaneously at different stages in their relationship with the host community—according to Doxey's model. Since international guests engage in respectful behaviour towards the desert's natural resources and the Bedouin lifestyle, this host-guest relationship is able to stay at

the *apathy stage* of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model. At the same time, domestic guests' irresponsible behaviour towards the desert's natural resources and the local community's social capacity lead to the *irritation stage*.

This shows that in destinations with fragile resources—such as a desert ecology with rich and diverse vegetation, wildlife and the specificity of a local community—tourists' respect for this sensitive environment and its people is a determinant factor that could influence the host-guest relationship. Therefore, including the environmental carrying capacity of these destinations and their local community's social capacity and well-being is essential in analysing host-guest relations. Thus, to ensure that the host-domestic guest relationship does not remain at the *irritation stage*, environmental regulations and management practices that consider the fragile ecology of the desert are necessary; these would allow a move to the *apathy stage*. If Bidiyah were to develop and promote socially and environmentally responsible forms of tourism, it could potentially maintain positive host-domestic guest relations.

- **B. WBK**

In the case of WBK, this study revealed that due to the culture clash between the religious values of the conservative Muslim community residents and international tourists' irresponsible swimming dress code and behaviour, the *euphoria/welcoming* host-guest relationship progressed into the *irritation stage*, resulting in hosts avoiding tourists and the tourism industry at the early stages of tourism development (see Table 2.1). This reaction by the host community has resulted in limited host-guest interactions, which is reflected in their lack of economic gains from tourism and a negative perception on the part of the hosts towards tourism and its socio-cultural and economic impacts. This exclusion of host community residents from the socio-cultural and socio-economic benefits of tourism leads to negatively perceived tourism development and even rejection of tourism projects development. These negatively perceived tourism development can be avoided or overcome through participative governance in the early stages of tourism development in WBK.

Furthermore, Doxey's (1975) Irridex model does not consider the non-homogeneous element of different tourism markets' demands and their interaction. In WBK, different cultural values that exist between domestic and international tourists has also created a culture clash that has resulted in Omani tourists avoiding the water pool during international tourist season. This has contributed to a decrease in the growth of domestic tourist demand and limited economic benefits for the area.

This indicates that in destinations with a conservative Muslim local community, the type of tourism products offered—such as natural water-based tourism associated with swimming activities in a public place—is a determinant factor that could negatively impact the host-guest relationship. Therefore, to maintain a positive host-guest relationship and to ensure that this relationship does not continue to be one of irritation, it is necessary to implement tourism regulations that respect Islamic values at an early stage of destination development; this would allow host-guest relations to progress to the *apathy stage* in WBK. Namely, if WBK were to develop its tourism industry further and promote a culturally responsible and locally authentic form of tourism, it could potentially invert Doxey's model, moving from irritation to apathy.

Thus, the concept of social and cultural carrying capacity should be included in Doxey's (1975) Irridex model as well as the physical capacity of destinations. The aim of this change to Doxey's (1975) Irridex model is to evaluate the social and cultural influence on host-guest relationship as a dominant factor to avoid negative host-guest relations and maintain longer healthy host-guest relations at different stages of tourism development in destinations with a conservative culture.

For these reasons, this research propose that Doxey's model should include the local communities' socio-cultural capacity and the destination's environmental carrying capacity when analysing the stages of a destination's host-guest relations. Additionally, tourism planners and other key stakeholders need to keep these two concepts in mind when developing tourist destinations, as these factors are vital in sustaining an area's socio-cultural context while maintaining the socio-economic benefits of tourism development.

8.4 Doxey's (1975) Irridex Model Extended

Doxey's (1975) Irridex is highly generalised and is more relevant to well-developed tourist destinations with long-term experiences of host-guest relations. However, it is a useful model for new tourism destinations with limited experience of tourism planning and development... *if* it is extended to consider the cultural context, the social capacity of the local community and the environmental resources of tourist destinations.

This study has identified that the central tendencies of host-guest relations in Bidiyah and WBK are related to the contextual threshold of each respective destination. The threshold of tourism development in Bidiyah exceeds the limits of the environmental capacity of the desert's fragile ecology or the local community's social capacity and quality of life. In WBK, the threshold of tourism development concerns the local community's religious values, their social capacity and quality of life, as well as the environmental capacity of the area.

Therefore, to sustain a long-term positive host-guest relationship in tourist destinations, Doxey's model could be extended by defining destinations' socio-cultural and environmental constraints through the participative governance of the host community residents and by providing a boundary maintenance of implemented regulations and management practices that maintain respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of the local community residents and optimise the use of environmental resources. This should be introduced during the foundation stages of tourism development at the *euphoria stage* of Doxey's index. According to Martin & Uysal (1990), if policies and regulations are established in the early stages of tourism development, tourist destination might never reach the decline stage. It should also be integrated into each destination's strategic vision, development goals and implementation plans at the beginning of a destination's development. Martin and Uysal (1990) suggest that regulations should include zoning laws and environmental protection laws. They could also include regulations related to the socio-cultural dimensions of the destination, meaning the clash of cultures that has arisen in the understudied case of WBK could be resolved instantly by communicating clear messages on the accepted swimming dress code and behaviour. As well, the provision of essential facilities that meet

tourists' needs in a natural pool destination, such as changing rooms, is necessary to avoid any unaccepted behaviour that leads to a clash of cultures. Another helpful measure would be the introduction of protocol and procedures of Omani penal law enforcement on dress code ethics in public. This would help maintain the local community's well-being, balanced with tourists' satisfaction, leading to a positive long-term host-guest relationship.

This could be followed by monitoring and evaluating host-guest relations at the *apathy stage* of tourism development. This should include setting measures on the destination's optimal carrying capacity and limits on the acceptable changes to the destination in order to maintain the desired level that takes into account socio-cultural concerns and the environmental sensitivity of the destination (Uysal et al., 2012; Martin & Uysal, 1990). Furthermore, socio-economic measures should be monitored to understand the economic benefits of tourism for the local economy, such as the number of employed local residents and the job opportunities offered by the tourism industry in a destination. As well, it is important to monitor and support locally owned tourism projects and entrepreneurial endeavours.

Additionally, at the *irritation stage* of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model the continued maintenance of the implemented regulations and management plans should be perpetuated, based on the socio-cultural and environmental capacity of host destinations. Martin & Uysal (1990) argue that in this stage of tourism development, the formulation of policy is critical to retain the balance of the destination and to prevent the destination's decline. For example, the problem of environmental deterioration in the desert in the understudied case of Bidiyah must be addressed immediately. This should be done through the immediate implementation of the proposed land use and management plan that designates specific areas for different types of tourist activities, which will lessen the environmental damage and control the tourists' activities and negative impact on the local community's social capacity and well-being. As well, the maintenance of implemented regulations that consider the host community residents' cultural and religious values will help maintain respect for local cultural value, which will result in more positive host-guest relationships.

At the *antagonism stage* of Doxey's (1975) Irridex model, development plans could be modified, as could their goals and strategic vision. Thus, continuing research and local studies on effective measures for positive host-guest relationship models could be a useful tool for long-term tourism development. Figure 8.1 shows the proposed extension to Doxey's (1975) Irridex model of host-guest relationship stages based on Doxey's (1975) Irridex model for a sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, the extension to Doxey's (1975) Irridex model and its influence on longer-term sustainable host-guest relationships and destinations' lifecycles is conceptualised in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.1: The Extended Doxey's Model

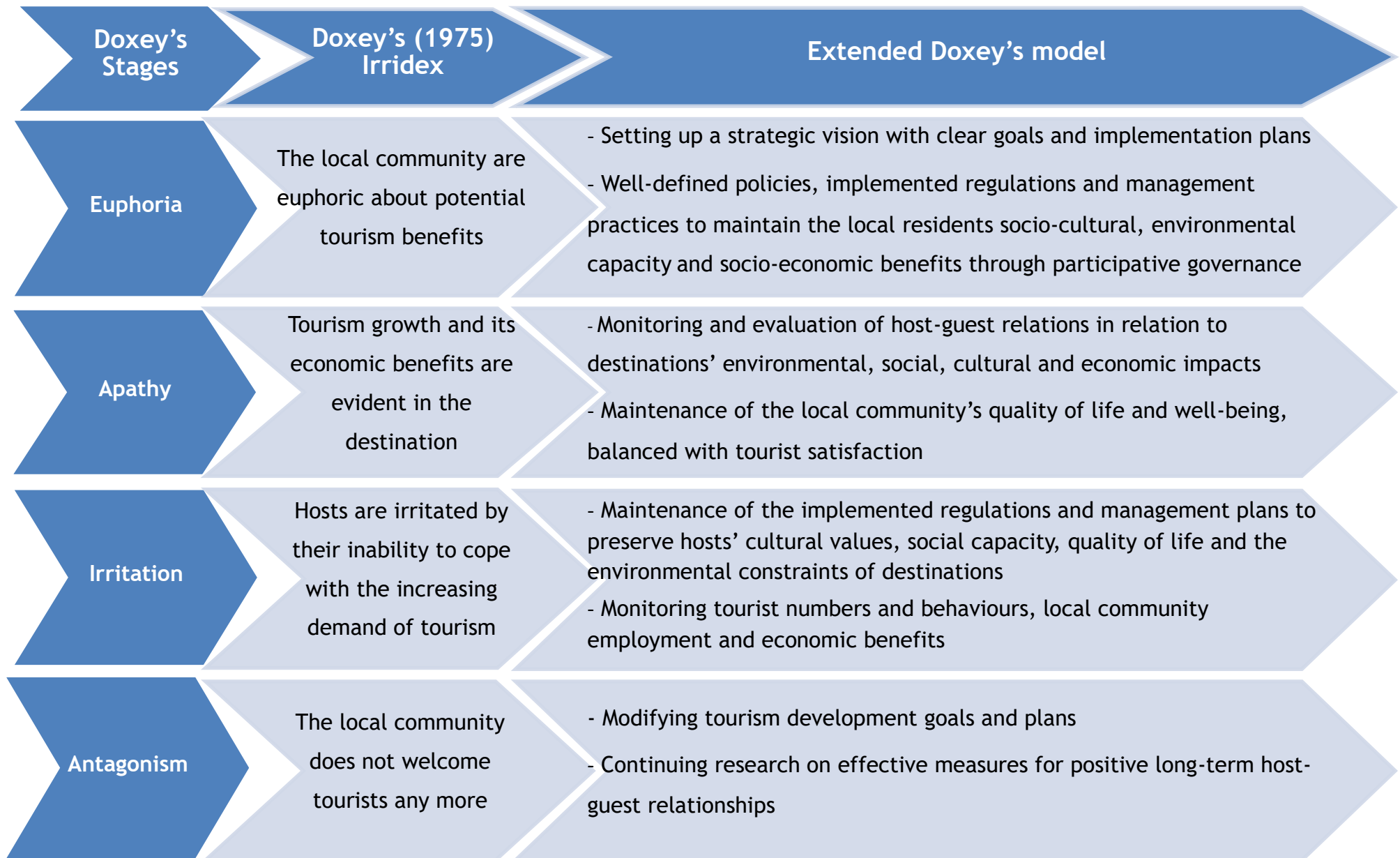
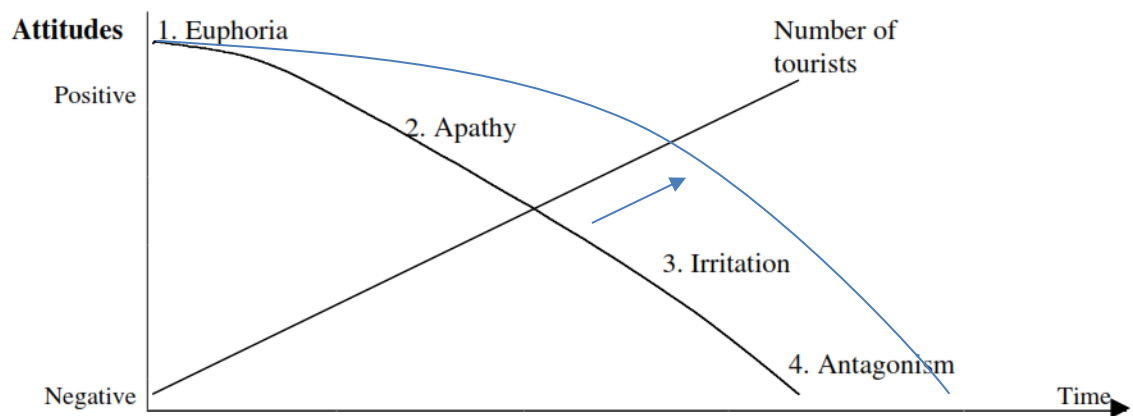


Figure 8.2: The Extension to Doxey's (1975) Irridex Model



Source: Adapted from Doxey (1975)

These findings might be generalisable to other tourism destinations with conservative Muslim values and cultures, as well as destinations worldwide with fragile ecologies in terms of vegetation, wildlife and people. Whether these findings are unique to the specific cases of Bidiyah and WBK would require further research but, nevertheless, this empirically based finding is a significant outcome of this thesis.

8.5 Contribution of the Study

This study enriches knowledge on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism and their influence on host-guest relationships in conservative Muslim settings. As the literature review demonstrated, although the socio-cultural impacts of tourism and their influence on host-guest relationships is a crucial aspect for the development of a sustainable tourism industry, limited attention has been paid to destinations with conservative Muslim settings. In this vein, this study helps fill the gap in the global literature about the impacts of tourism and their influence on host-guest relationships and tourist destinations' lifecycles in a particular conservative Muslim setting.

In addition, this study highlights the importance of considering the contextual dimension of destinations when adopting tourism development models. These contextual aspects include the fragile ecology of the desert in Bidiyah and the socio-cultural aspect in WBK. This study suggests extending Doxey's model of host-

guest relationships to consider the contextual dimensions of destinations, which could be a useful tool for planners when planning for tourism development for a longer-term positive host-guest relationship, as was emphasised in Section 8.4. Furthermore, the literature on the Arab Islamic context regarding aspects influencing host-guest relationships in general and socio-cultural aspects specifically is in short supply, particularly for Oman. There is limited research on the topic of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in the Sultanate of Oman (Al Balushi and Wise, 2017).

Oman is illustrative of the rapidly expanding tourism industry. As was mentioned earlier, many things are happening in tourism development in Oman, such as the development of a strategy for sustainable tourism development. The political stability of Oman acknowledges its economic and legal frameworks for attracting tourism investment and tourists into the country. Oman's beautiful desert, mountains, *wadis*, caves and natural springs, along with the rich Arab cultural traditions of its people and its historical and archaeological resources and welcoming locals, have created a uniquely authentic tourism destination. This study provides a knowledge base on the socio-cultural, socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism in two Omani distinct tourism destinations - Bidiyah and WBK - for the first time. This could be a starting point to assess the current impacts of tourism and make future tourism development plans. In addition, this study highlights the areas that tourism planners need to work on more in order to maintain long-term positive host-guest relationships and therefore sustainable tourism development in the conservative Muslim setting of the Sultanate of Oman.

This study has conducted a deep investigation of the issues that influence host-guest relationships in conservative Muslim communities, as well as understanding host-guest relations in destinations with fragile ecologies. It has been informed by the researcher's positionality as a female, a Muslim and an Omani. Such a perspective is rare in tourism studies, which is currently dominated by Eurocentric approaches and practices. In particular, this study has produced knowledge and understanding about the issue of tourism development in a conservative Muslim community from the standpoint of an "insider". This makes a significant contribution to knowledge and provides a better understanding of how tourism

can influence host-guest relationships in conservative Muslim communities, as well as serving policymakers in their efforts to form policies that are more effective for long-term sustainable tourism development through the proper planning and management of tourism development.

8.6 Suggestions for Future Research

There are several areas branching from this study that could be usefully pursued. Firstly, the present study invites other researchers to join an investigation into the field of host-guest relationships, and to improve local communities' participation and engagement in tourism development in Oman. This study has covered the present situation up to mid-2019. Therefore, future studies are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of Oman's new national tourism strategy in realising the impacts of tourism and its influence on host-guest relationships. This can be assessed periodically by tourism planners, and policies can be improved accordingly.

Secondly, host-guest relations in other water-based tourist destinations need to be assessed tourism planners and researchers, such as Wadi Shab, Misfat Al Abryeen and Wadi Al Arbyeen. This is in order to establish appropriate tourism development that considers a positive host-guest relationship and tourism development that is beneficial to the local community. Since this study was concerned mainly with host-guest relationships and evaluated its potential impacts on local communities in Bidiyah and WBK, intensive studies should be carried out on other popular tourist destinations in Oman, such as the Dhofar governorates and Musandam governorates, where tourism is a growing industry. Studies on these destinations could help ensure more responsible tourism development.

Finally, additional future research is required to develop or adapt Doxey's model, which considers the contextual characteristics of destinations. The local community's cultural values, especially in conservative destinations, their social capacity and the fragile ecology of environmentally sensitive destinations, are important dimensions that require evaluation when developing tourist destinations. Thus, extending theoretical models such as Doxey's to include

destinations' characteristics is essential when evaluating them for tourism development. This research extended Doxey's model to develop a model to support long-term positive host-guest relationships for tourism planners in the context of Oman, and destinations with a similar socio-cultural and environmental context.

Appendices

Appendix A. Open coding and themes for the government’s stakeholders about Bidiyah

Themes	Open coding
Government Tourism development plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National strategy for Oman tourism development - Land use management plan and regulations for the area around the Desert - Regulations towards sustaining tourism development - We aim at protecting the local community quality of life - Governmental committee to solve the negative impacts of the visitors - Tourist supporting facilities has been developed in the Desert such as WC - We don’t look at the tourist number but on the quality of the tourist, especially with the sensitive nature of the Desert - National strategy for regional development - In Oman we manage the tourist sites properly - No previous land use plan - No master plan for Bidiyah tourism development - The new regulation for the land use plan will be implemented by five government authorities - A committee issued to solve the challenge of lengthy procedures for tourism projects approvals
Planning and Development issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lengthy Government procedures - Slow Government process to solve the challenge - To control the tourist facilities in the Desert - The land use plan will solve all issues related to random camping and lettering - Lack of land use plan for the area - The study expected to be implemented in the next fifth year development plan - There is coordination between Ministry of Housing and Ministry of tourism for tourism projects development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate the lands to avoid clashes with other uses - Refuse the land request if it obstructs with the local residents residing or grazing areas - Any land request must be presented to the Municipal committee - Lands allocations based on the investors request - Lands allocations based on the Wail's recommendations - Random lands allocations - There is need for land use management - Cabinet approval for the new land use regulations expected soon - First plan for the Ash Shrqia Desert - New type of tourism accommodations - Four years working on developing the new regulations for the land use plan - There is different classification system for the hotels and the tourist Desert camps - Different requirements for each classification - We consulted the hotels and the other accommodations regarding the classification system before approved it - We are planning to update the classification system - The Ministry introduced three new type of tourism accommodations, the green motels, the boutique motels and bed and breakfast - We license the Green motels after having approved from the Ministry of Agriculture - online one-stop-shop to ease investment procedures
Local community complains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complain regarding the tourist negative impacts on the environment - Noise disruption to the local community - Disturbing the Animals life in the Desert - We did not receive official complain about the tourist Desert camps classifications - Agree on the lengthy procedures for tourism projects, due to the requirement for other authorities approvals
Government thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is great potential for economic benefits from tourism - There is job opportunity in the tourism industry - The opportunities are available

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is human resources and natural resources - There is community who accepting tourism - Bidiyah one of the important tourism destinations in Oman - There is good number of tourism projects in Bidiyah - There are nine Desert camps in Bidiyah and approvals for another three projects
Investment promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We designated lands for tourism projects development based on long-term leas - Advantages for the investors to choose the feasible land for his business - Large number of designated lands for tourism development - Ease the investment procedures - Encourage the private sector to invest in tourism - Awareness campaign - Infrastructure provision
Positive socio-economic impacts of tourism development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The local community is benefiting from tourism development - The local community have awareness regarding the economic opportunities - Most of the Desert tourist camps owned by the local community - Bidiyah widely known for its Desert camps - High demand on the Desert camps - Local tour guides - Local drivers - Local hand crafts - Great benefit - Petrol station benefits in the season - Restaurant benefits - Museum benefits - The forts and castles revenues - Bidiyah benefits 90% higher than WBK - Local community proud about their culture and history

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Camel riding - Positive cultural impacts - The occupancy rates in the tourist Desert camps 100% in the season
Sustainable tourism development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new land use plan and regulation will allocate lands for tourism use, for grazing use and for residential - Camping regulations - Collaboration among the stakeholders
Negative environmental impacts of tourism development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The tourist disturbing the local community - Massive quantity of tourist waste and lettering - Fauna and flora Damages - Negative impacts on the grazing areas - On the animals - Random camping - 4X4 wheel drive on the sand dunes - On the Bedouin life - Increase in land prices
Regulations requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spread of unlicensed Ezba - Need for law force - Needs for regulating the Ezba - Urgent requirement for land use plan - It is not known who must conduct the law enforcement - Requirement for tourism policing - Bureaucracy of law enforcement - Bureaucracy in adapting land use regulations - Requirement for camping areas designation for Omani visitors - The Ezba regulations not included - The Ezba is against tourism laws

Tourism growth challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of facilities for the domestic visitors
Bidiyah characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bidiyah is wide area, the tourists are away from the city- The residential area is far from the tourist- The Desert is an open area
New trends in tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Previously no body visit tourist place in the country but know the Omani do

Appendix B. Coding examples of socio-cultural impacts theme and quotes from tourism stakeholders in WBK

Theme	Tourism stakeholders' views	Tourism stakeholders' quotes in WBK
Socio-cultural Impacts	The Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Last year WBK received more than 100,000 tourists, but the local community’s economic benefits from tourism were almost zero. This resulted from the community being highly conservative; hence, not wanting to come in contact with the tourists” (RG-T1). - “Inappropriate dress is a challenge because not only it is affecting the local community, it is highly problematic for Omani tourists ... we have tourists from the north and south of Oman and other regions, they come with their families. Unfortunately, the inappropriate attire exhibited by large numbers of international tourists results in alienating Omani tourists...”(RG-T2). - “There is a need to ‘inject awareness doses’. We cannot take a step back as we are currently marketing WBK on an international scale as a destination for swimming. If we stopped people from swimming, this would affect the tourism industry in the region...” (NG-T2).
	Local community residents' different views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The tourists must respect the Muslims who live in this place. They have values and cultural traditions” (LW-1). - “We are Arab and Muslim. We have different a religious culture than the tourists. They should be directed to respect our feelings...” (LW-3). - “The old people are very upset from tourism, but the new generation, with access to advanced technology and the internet, they see this situation everywhere, this makes them accepting of tourists’ culture... However, the old people are very conservative towards their cultural traditions and they do not accept the tourists. They said that they didn’t receive the negative impacts until the roads were paved and the tourists arrived” (Bu-W2). - “The tourist has their freedom to wear what they want because this is their culture and we cannot force them to change their culture. This is similar to the case if I travelled to their countries, they don’t force me to change my dress code” (BU-FW3).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The local community are conservative, and they don’t like to see tourists swimming in the pools” (BW-1).
	Tour guides’ views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “When tourists arrive to Oman, they respect the local culture, but when it comes to swimming, this is their culture, and everything has its price. If the Government wants to open tourism, then the country should pay the price” (NBW-3). - “Usually we tell tourists to wear long dress when swimming and to swim inside not in front of people, but they don’t abide... it is different cultures, but some of them respect” (NBW-4). - “I have tourists mostly from Germany, they read and follow the instructions; some of them don’t, but the Omani Ministry of Tourism promotes WBK as a swimming destination and it is a contradiction... the tourists are not sure if they can swim or not... they come from Muscat driving two hours in order to swim and when they see the board they ignore it”(NBW-5).
	Tourism business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The local community are conservative and may be because the tourists do not dress properly, some of them swim naked and nobody is directing them” (BW-W1).
	Domestic and international tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “...If they designate a specific time in winter for Omani families it might be better ... As you know foreigners do not maintain the value of <i>Al Hayaa</i> [modesty], as they swim in extremely inappropriate clothing. It is unacceptable for your wife or your family to see such sights...” (DTW-1). - “We went to WBK by car and we swam there ... It was very nice, nice water and a nice place ... And yes, we saw the noticeboard with the swimming times and the other one to respect the local community’s culture and not to swim with short clothes, but it was full of people who were swimming in bikinis and very short shorts” (ITB-1).

Appendix C. Coding examples comparing socio-economic impacts of tourism in Bidiyah and WBK

		Coding			
Theme	Stakeholders Category	Bidiyah		WBK	
Socio-economic impacts	Local community residents	Positive economic benefits and views on tourism	“My son works with our neighbours as a driver, whereby they organise camping trips, and hence create valuable return for the local community. My son is gaining good experience, his English language has improved, and this will help him in the future. He is independent now with his own income, this helped the growth of his personality and to become confident in himself” (L2-B).	limited economic benefits and negative views on tourism	<p>“Apart from the tips that the children receive from carrying the tourists’ gear on their carts, there is almost no economic return for the local residents of the area” (LW-4).</p> <p>“The tourists leave the area without even buying a bottle of juice or a cold drink They come prepared from their initial starting point” (LW-1).</p>
	Tourism business	Tourism a source for job	“There are large amounts of economic benefits which come from the tourists visiting the area. For the Omani citizens who are looking for jobs, tourism offers full-time employment; for those who are	Limited job opportunities in tourism in WBK	“The youth want to work in tourism because the majority are unemployed. If they were provided with the opportunity to work in

		opportunities in Bidiyah	already working in another job, tourism offers part-time employment” (BB-1).		tourism, they would, similar to the local community in Bidiyah...” (LW-F5).
	Handcraft makers	Limited economic benefits	“The benefit of selling handcrafts is very limited [...] Although lots of tourists’ cars pass by, very few people stop [...] The tourists need to be informed about our handcrafts by their drivers and tour guides” (BB-F1).	Limited economic benefits	“There are great numbers of international and domestic tourists visiting WBK ... Every day I see hundreds of tourist cars passing by, but I do not benefit from that tourism at all” (BW-1).
Socio-cultural impacts	Local community residents	Happy and proud	“We are happy that international tourists are interested to see our Bedouin culture and we are proud to present it for them” (NGO)	culture clash	“There is lack of adherence to the customs and traditions of the community and to the Islamic religion by the tourists, you find them changing their clothes in the car parking area which is located next to a highly populated area; hence, gaining the disapproval of locals towards tourists visiting and swimming in inappropriate apparel” (LW-2).

Appendix D. Participant Information Sheet.



معلومات حول موضوع البحث للمختصين في الجهات الحكومية والقطاع الخاص والمجتمع المحلي

1. موضوع البحث وبيانات الباحث:

موضوع البحث: بحث التنمية السياحية المستدامة في المجتمعات المحافظة في سلطنة عمان

إسم الباحثة: أمينة بنت عبدالله البلوشي

كلية العلوم الإنسانية في جامعة جلاسجو في المملكة المتحدة

2. يسرنا دعوتك للمشاركة في بحث الدكتوراه الحالي، وقبل مشاركتك في البحث أرجو التكرم بالإطلاع حول خلفية البحث وموضوعه وفي حالة وجود أية إستفسارات يمكنكم الإستفسار من الباحث.

3. ما هو الهدف من دراسة موضوع البحث؟

الهدف من الدراسة بحث وجهات النظر والآراء حول الآثار الإقتصادية والإجتماعية والبيئية للسياحة، ومدى تنفيذ مبادئ التنمية المستدامة في التخطيط و التطوير السياحي في ولاية بدية/ ولاية وادي بني خالد بمحافظة شمال الشرقية بسلطنة عمان.

4. لماذا تم إختياري في البحث؟

بسبب خبرتك ودورك في تطوير السياحة في ولاية بدية/ ولاية وادي بني خالد.

5. هل يجب أن أقوم بتنفيذ المقابلة في البحث؟

الامر يعود لك في حالة رغبتك في المشاركة في البحث أم لا ، كذلك يمكنك الإنسحاب من البحث في حالة عدم رغبتك المواصلة وبدون أي تبعات أو مبررات، وفي حالة مشاركتك سوف يتم التعامل مع معلومات هذه المقابلة بسرية تامة.

6. ماذا سيحدث لي في مقابلة البحث؟

سوف يتم تنفيذ مقابلة واحدة فقط مدتها ساعة ، وسوف يتم التسجيل الصوتي للمقابلة بعد موافقتك.

7. هل مشاركتي في هذا البحث ستبقى سرية؟

هذا البحث مدقق من لجنة تدقيق خاصة في كلية العلوم الإنسانية في جامعة جلاسجو ببريطانيا ، والمعلومات التي سيتم الحصول عليها سوف يتم إستخدامها في هذا البحث فقط وسوف لن يتم مشاركتها مع طرف ثالث، وجميع المعلومات والبيانات الخاصة بك سوف يتم التعامل معها بسرية، وسوف لن تتم الإشارة لإسمك ولا لإسم الجهة التي تعمل بها في البحث ، ولا توجد أي خطورة للمشاركة في هذا البحث.

علما انه سوف يتم التقيد التام بالضمانات المتعلقة بالسريه و في حالة وقوع ضرر بسبب خطأ او تقصير في حينها يمكن للجامعه أن تتواصل مع الجهات القانونيه ذات الصلة.

8. لمدة كم سوف يتم إستخدام هذه البيانات وكيف سوف يتم حفظها وإيداعها؟

البيانات سوف يتم إستخدامها بغرض البحث وخلال فترة دراستي للدكتوراه فقط ، كما سوف يتم إستخدامها في المشاركة بأوراق عمل في مؤتمرات أو في مقالات لإصدارات علمية متخصصة، وأثناء هذه الفتره سوف يتم تخزين هذه المعلومات في أدراج مقفلة وفي أجهزة كمبيوتر لها رمز سري خاص للفتح والإستخدام.

9. ماذا سيحدث لنتائج البحث؟

نتائج البحث سوف تنشر على صيغة بحث دكتوراه أو سيتم المشاركة بها في أوراق عمل في مؤتمرات متخصصة ، أو على صيغة مواضيع أو مقالات في كتب أو إصدارات متخصصة ، وفي حالة رغبتكم الإطلاع عليها يمكنكم طلبها من الباحث.

10. من الجهة المموله لهذه الدراسة؟

وزارة التعليم العالي بسلطنة عمان

11. من راجع هذه الدراسة؟

هذا البحث تمت مراجعته من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحث لكلية العلوم الإنسانية بجامعة جلاسجو.

في حالة رغبتكم الحصول على مزيدا من المعلومات عن البحث يمكنكم التواصل مع:

المشرف على البحث: د. دونالد ماكليود طالبة الدكتوراه: أمينة بنت عبدالله البلوشي

Email: a.al-balushi.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Email: Donald.macleod@glasgow.ac.uk

إذا كان لديك أية استفسارات على البحث يمكنك التواصل مع المسئول في أخلاقيات البحث:

Dr Muir Houston, (email: muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk).

Appendix E. Plain Language Statement for the Government, Private Sector, Local Community and NGO Participants.



1. Study title and Researcher Details

University: University of Glasgow, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, Tourism planning

Research Title: Sustainable community tourism development in the conservative Muslim setting of the Sultanate of Oman

Names of Researcher(s): Amina Al Balushi, Doctoral Researcher

2. You are being invited to take part in a doctoral research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take your time in reading the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

Please ask the researcher if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. Take your time in deciding whether or not you would like to take part in the study.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to explore the views and opinions on the sustainability of the economic, environmental and cultural aspects of tourism development in Oman.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen based your experience and your involvement in tourism development in Oman.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Your decision to take part or not in the research will not affect your relationship with the researcher. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

In addition, if you have decided to participate, all the data and information gathered from you will not be disclosed to your superiors and subordinates, and in order to ensure your confidentiality where possible, rigorous steps will be undertaken for your protection as pseudonym will be used to codify the names for all participants.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

You would participate in 1 interview. Which would take approximately one hour of your time, and data will be audio-recorded, with your permission.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

- This research has been ethically approved by the University of Glasgow, College of Social Sciences. The responses and the information provided by the participants would be used only for research purposes and will not be shared with any third party. All the information will be held in strict confidence where your privacy is ensured. Furthermore, although, the participant consent will be named, it will be replaced by a code and pseudonyms will be used for all participants, no reference would be made in any report, which may link the participants to the study. There are no known or anticipated risks to the participant in this study.

- Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

8. For how long the data will be used and where it will be stored?

The data will be used during my doctoral study for 4 years, it will be stored in password protected systems and any hard copies generated from the process would be stored in locked filing cabinets.

9. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be published in the form of a PhD thesis, and possibly, contribute towards the production of conference papers, journal articles and/or book chapters. All participants can obtain a written summary of the results if requested from the researcher.

10. Who is organising and funding the research?

The Ministry of higher education in Oman

11. Who has reviewed the study?

The Project has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

Researcher: Amina Al Balushi

Research supervisor: Donald Macleod

Email: a.al-balushi.1@research.gla.ac.uk Email: Donald.macleod@glasgow.ac.uk

PhD Researcher (Tourism planning and development)

University of Glasgow

12 Southpark Terrace

Glasgow G12 8LG

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project, you can contact the College Ethics Officer by contacting: Dr Muir Houston, (email: muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk).

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